
Managing New(s) Conversations: The Role of Social Media in News Provision and Participation

François Nel and Oscar Westlund

1 Introduction

News organisations had for most of the twentieth century produced and distributed news to largely passive audiences. Direct responses were limited to occasional letters or phone calls and monitored indirectly through periodic reports on circulation and readership, supplemented by intermittent market research. For newsrooms, feedback and other information about audiences were deemed important to gauge the popularity of the editorial outputs in order to ensure relevance and reputation. For boardrooms, audience metrics were principally important to gauge the commercial opportunities the journalism products offered to advertisers in order to ensure financial reward. For both, “audiences” or “publics” tended to abstractions (Bolin 2012) conceived as, amongst others, “recipients” and “products” (e.g. Ang 1991). As that century drew to a close, those perspectives were increasingly tested by the advent of the World Wide Web and other networked digital technologies.

These technologies are seen not only to have impacted on the sweep of news producers’ activities—such as the platforms for news, production processes, news products and places of distribution—but also on their interactivity with news users (e.g. Fidler 1997). At the start of this Millennium, a key challenge for news publishers is how to profit from digital clicks and online conversations both editorially—and commercially.

F. Nel (✉)
University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK
e-mail: FPNel@uclan.ac.uk

O. Westlund
University of Gothenburg, Vasastan, Sweden
IT University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

2 Changes in News Production

Scholars examining developing and preferred forms of journalistic practices have noted the opportunities that arise from greater openness to cooperation, co-creation and conversations (e.g. Bruns 2008, 2010; Singer et al. 2011), which is becoming increasingly associated with social media (Nel and Westlund 2012).

Woven through these discussions are notions about the benefits derived from harnessing the collective intelligence and contributions of the population (Lévy 1997), which have also come to be associated with the plethora of collaborative, social sharing initiatives that express the conceptualization of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly 2007). Many prominent organisations in the contemporary digital habitat (e.g. Google, Amazon, eBay) have been built on structures that enable and encourage user participation—in stark contrast to traditional occupational journalistic logic of professional control (Lewis 2012). Following from this thrust, and more generally, there are studies suggesting that there has been a power shift from journalists to users (Heinonen and Domingo 2008; Deuze and Fortunati 2010), which has not been universally welcomed by journalists (Quandt and Singer 2009) because, as Raviola (2010) argued, this change challenges long-held perceptions about what journalistic work includes and excludes. Other scholars who have explored these tensions suggest that journalists have resisted embracing the more participatory logic that drives social media. However, the picture that is emerging is multifaceted. Some journalist have held audiences at bay by steadfastly adhering to traditional practices, while others have ensured the inclusion performance of their audiences kow-tow to these traditional norms (e.g. Williams et al. 2011; Westlund 2011, 2012a, Domingo et al. 2008; Lasorsa et al. 2011; Lowrey 2011). Ultimately, journalists have been seen to resist relinquishing their professional control, which has been attributed to their traditional journalistic culture, even though user participation has become almost a mythical ideal (Domingo 2008; Knight 2012). Nevertheless, the new digital and social media landscape that is emerging is one in which both the participatory logic, conceptualized as Web 2.0 (e.g. O'Reilly 2007), and traditional logics of “professional” journalism are converging for the production and consumption of contemporary journalism. Ultimately, there is a transforming tension between journalists as producers, and the changing faces of their audiences (e.g. Westlund 2012b).

3 Changes in News Consumption

In relation to other modes of accessing news, the role of traditional news media has also transformed over time. While navigational usage patterns of the web (based on recommendations by media producers), were dominant in the formative years of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, there has been an orientation towards search practices since the start of the 2000s. More recently, patterns of news accessing have changed. These changes are partly caused by third-party actors such as Pulse Reader and Flipboard, who are functioning as technologically led hijackers of the RSS feeds of content newspapers and others have made available to facilitate audience access. Some publishers strive to lock out such third parties, as their content is published

beyond their control and ways of profiting. Others appreciate the extended reach of their journalism, which they see as enhancing brand awareness and creating additional opportunities for audiences to discover their content.

Social media and sharing are also shaping the way audiences are accessing and interacting with news. In one sense, this marks a return to navigational usage patterns, but with the difference that ordinary citizens have become those recommending links and news content, stimulating and facilitating conversations. For example, in May 2008 Facebook launched the so-called Facebook Connect, which has made possible for users to easily share or like an article provided on a news site by a news organisation, making it accessible on their own Facebook profile and thereby visible to all their friends (Morin 2008). Facebook, and also Twitter, have become increasingly important for news accessing, hence the rise of mediated social discovery of the news (Newman 2011). With the number of redirections to news articles from social networking sites (SNS) growing, it makes sense for publishers keen on growing audiences to facilitate such activities. As result, news organisations are increasingly engaged in social media optimization (SMO). Furthermore, these new and powerful SNS have become inexorably linked to the sites of traditional news media providers. SNS are paving way for the virtual coffee house, in which conversations about, or at least recommendations of, news articles can take place. This is evidenced by, for instance, the partnerships of old media with social media, such as the creation of Facebook applications by *Washington Post* and the *Guardian*, in which users are functioning as social editors of news articles by their mere usage of news, which is being exposed to their peers. The applications proved to be immensely popular with audiences and The Guardian reported more than 4 million downloads of their Facebook app within the first two months of its launch (Arthur 2011), but the business case for such social media initiatives for news is still to be proven.

4 Changes in News Publishers' Position, Profits

Undeniably contemporary news publishers who aim to exploit social media need great dexterity to juggle the various conceptions of audiences simultaneously at play throughout the journalism organisation. The shaping of social media demands investment in appropriate technology (audience as recipient), sensitivity to new and lost business opportunities (audience as product), and equipping of journalists with new skills and attitudes to facilitate interactivity (audience as empowered network). Despite these hurdles, media executives around the world see social media as an important business opportunity, as reported in an annual industry survey by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Stone et al. 2010). There are clearly both opportunities and threats for news publishers when it comes to social media. A disadvantage involves that legacy media gradually have lost their monopolies of the old media world, in favour of a new media world in which news is both produced and distributed beyond their proprietary platforms. On the other hand, social media enable publishers to move closer to those inclined to access and discuss their news reporting. However, at the forefront of social media are new powerful global actors, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, who do not only grant more power to “ the people

formerly were known as the audience” (Rosen 2006), but also become intermediaries in commercial relations.

Against this background, this chapter analyses how social media facilitates the editorial and commercial relationships between journalism and audiences by examining three aspects of inclusion performance. Firstly, the *audience performance for inclusion* is analysed, involving three modes of accesses news: direct accessing (i.e. browsing and bookmarks), accessing via search sites, and accessing via social media. This inquiry draws on 2009–2011 UK industry news audience data from Experian Hitwise and from the Audit Bureau of Circulation. Secondly, the social media interactivity *performance for inclusion among journalism institutions* is analysed, drawing on all three role conceptions of audiences. This investigation draws on data from a robust annual audit of the digital activities of U.K newspapers over the same period. These datasets provide unique and empirically-based insights to contemporary practices and perceptions of social media business by newspapers that operate in a vigorous media market with high ICT-diffusion. Hence the third area analyses, the implications of these two aspects of inclusion for the emergent business of social media. The study expands the thematic gaze of research into journalism, business and technology in a digital era.

5 The Role of Social Media in the Inclusion Performance Practices of Journalism and Audiences

The transforming tensions between journalists and audience have been of interest to a growing number of scholars. The starting point is typically the traditional polarised view that put journalistic producers on the one side and recipients on the other (Berman et al. 2007). As the mediascape have evolved from a first phase (in which it was deemed to be insufficient) to a second (web 2.0) or even third (web squared) phase (e.g. O’Reilly 2007; O’Reilly and Battelle 2009), these tensions between news producers and news audiences have been seen to be re-negotiated and re-defined (e.g. Nel et al. 2006; Westlund 2011; Lewis 2012). Scholars have noted a transition into a so-called convergence culture (Jenkins and Deuze 2008). Many in industry and academia have (normatively) prescribed rather cyberoptimistic, even technologically deterministic, views on how the future will and should be shaped. Such sentiments have often been found in discussions on the “potential” of networked digital media and led to conclusions that imply traditional newspapers have yet to explore its “full potential”. Though these notions have not been universally welcomed by the journalism community, it is clear that the view that digital media is being shaped by the emerging social architecture has gained traction in many influential circles.

Some have suggested that there has been a power shift from journalists to users (e.g. Deuze and Fortunati 2010). The rise of social media and its capacity to enable audiences to engage through, for instance, “participatory journalism” (e.g. Singer et al. 2011) or “produsage” (e.g. Bruns 2010, 2012), has been seen to come down to more power being exerted by users and less by journalists. Perhaps unsurprisingly, research has found instances in which the loss of the traditional power of journalists

has caused journalists to battle against user involvement in journalism (Singer 2005; Domingo et al. 2008). While it seems as if journalists are becoming more positive to user involvement, partly through social media, this mostly involves activities that do not threaten the traditional role and tasks of journalists (Steenen 2011). Based on their cross-cultural investigation of editorial managers, a team of researchers conclude: “Despite a myriad of ways for audiences to take part in the news, we found that journalists retained control over the stages of identifying, gathering, filtering, producing and distributing news” (Hermida et al. 2011, p. 16). They further argue that the conception of “active recipients” were framed by the newspaper representatives as people who could contribute with observations and ideas on newsworthy stories for journalists to write, as well as commenting on the stories they did write. Audiences were, however, not conceived of as producers of articles in their own right (Hermida et al. 2011). Ultimately, the inclusion of audiences is often limited to more peripheral ways. So, while being more interactive with audiences has served as an almost mythical ideal and has put pressure on the journalistic community, it has frequently been resisted because of their established professional culture (Domingo 2008). Thus, whereas digital technology startups situate themselves within an ideology of open participation that welcomes collaborative innovation, legacy media seem to conform to the old journalistic logic of professional control (Lewis 2012).

Against this backdrop, the analysis of the relationship between journalists and audiences in this chapter draws upon Loosen and Schmidt’s (2012) heuristic model of audience inclusion in journalism, which builds on social inclusion theory, and also Nel’s (2011) four-part model of digital news interactivity, which draws from communication, journalism and informatics theory.

Loosen and Schmidt (2012) treat journalism as a social system that continuously scrutinizes and reports on society; as such, journalism has a performance role in relation to those who take up an audience role. The researchers argue that audiences can be perceived in three different ways: as “recipients” or receivers of journalism; as “products” with commercial value to advertisers and others; and, increasingly, as “empowered networks” in which, enabled by networked technologies, the distinction between journalists as senders and audiences as receivers is seen as blurred. Loosen and Schmidt posit that the long-term decline of newspaper circulations (in the industrialised world) is evidence that legacy news media are struggling to include the audience through traditional approaches and are increasingly being pressured to include audiences through more channels with a wider array of interactive features. In their heuristic model of audience inclusion in journalism, Loosen and Schmidt make use of some key concepts, first and foremost *inclusion performance* and *inclusion expectations*. The first involves practices and results, while the latter predominantly subsumes a cognitive dimension involving attitudes and perceptions. Each of the two is analysed for journalism and audience, respectively, and also in relation to each other, since they are inexorably intertwined. The relationship between inclusion performance of journalism and audience is conceptualized as *inclusion level*, focusing the degree of (in-) congruence between the two. In a similar fashion, inclusion performance of journalism and audience is conceptualized as *inclusion distance*. Their model comprises the enduring asymmetry and tensions between producers and users, and also lays forward a way for empirically

investigate transformations between the two in an era of digital media and augmented participation. It makes an analytical framework to systematize the performance and expectations of journalists and audiences (Loosen and Schmidt 2012).

While these researchers encourage investigating both inclusion performance and inclusion expectations to explore symmetries and asymmetries, this chapter will be focusing principally on inclusion performance by considering, in particular, on the role social media plays in the relationship between journalism and audiences. Furthermore, we will consider how inclusion performance relates to business performance.

More precisely, the chapter will explore in some detail how the communicative architecture of journalism enables the interactivity that is a prerequisite for audience inclusion whether conceived as recipients, empowered networks or products. In doing so, the chapter consider Nel's (2011) four-part model of digital news interactivity, which argues for the need to distinguish between the interactive agents (humans and computers) and the direction and control of the communication. The next section presents some notes on the two methods and data sets utilized for the study of social media inclusion performance among the journalists and the audience respectively. Thereafter follows sections on the inclusion performance of the audience, the inclusion performance of journalism and on how these activities might contribute to enhance commercial performance of journalism enterprises. Each of these sections firstly continues to discuss the operationalization of the theoretical measurements used, thereafter the data is analysed and conclusions drawn. The chapter closes with a discussion focusing on the implications for the business of social media.

6 Three Longitudinal Datasets Have Been Employed

There are many methods, such as surveys and focus groups, which can be used to generate valid responses on different aspects of social inclusion performance. In this chapter, we build our discussion on three different longitudinal datasets that cover the period from 2009 to 2011. The discussion on inclusion performance of audiences is built on both newspaper circulation and website visit data supplied by the Audit Bureau of Circulations and on data called Clickstream, collected by Experian Hitwise. This company, which has local operations on five continents, has one of the largest samples of online consumer behaviour data. Their dataset, which makes it possible to analyse how 25 million Internet users worldwide interact with more than one million Web sites, has here been used to primarily to explore the interplay between social media and news sites in the U.K. Their data, made available for this book chapter, measures the performance of audience and news accessing in terms of three categories. The measurement of audience performance has been categorized into accessing of newspapers news sites in three ways: *via social media*, *via search sites*, and *via direct accessing* (i.e. browsing, bookmarks etc.). The dataset open for analysis transforming patterns over time, making possible to determine whether social media has gained traction for the ways people access news online. The strength of the dataset is that it make possible to measure audiences more general patterns of including social media into their news accessing. A shortcoming regards that it does not explore the plethora of ways and nuances in which this comes into play.

The inclusion performance of journalism has been analysed by drawing primarily on quantitative findings from a longitudinal data audit of metropolitan newspapers in the United Kingdom. The purposive sample was constructed from the 66 UK cities listed on the website UKCities.com. Details of newspapers in England (50 cities), Scotland (6) and Wales (5) were taken from the Newspaper Society database (nsdatabase.co.uk), while the Audit Bureau of Circulation data was used to identify the newspapers in the five cities of Northern Ireland. The 66 newspapers in the research sample were owned by 16 publishers with the top four publishers—Trinity Mirror, Johnston Press, Newsquest¹ and Northcliffe—owning 51 (77 %) of the titles audited. Paid newspapers with the highest circulation for each city were prioritised in the audit, but when there was not a paid newspaper the highest circulating free paper or newspaper that covered the city was audited. Data on the newspapers' websites and then, where apparent, the concomitant mobile sites, smartphone and tablet applications was collected in June and July each year of 2009, 2010 and 2011 by two coders, who followed standard quality assurance procedures. The audit measured the social media and social sharing features of the newspapers' digital activities, conceived of more broadly as different forms of interactivity.

7 Audience Inclusion Performance

The World Wide Web emerged in the early nineties as a more user-friendly interface for information and communication through the Internet. The ways in which people access news and information through the Internet, described amongst “participatory practices” of audiences (Loosen and Schmidt 2012), has evolved in three important ways since the advent of the Web: (1) direct accessing, (2) search accessing, and (3) social media accessing. With each addition, there has been displacing effects (i.e. partial replacements) to the ways make use of the Web, while it is important to acknowledge that these three ways all co-exist.

During the nineties people explored sites mainly through direct traffic, that is, using bookmarks or inserting web addresses manually, as well as using hyperlinks to redirect from an email or from another website. These patterns of information discovery were in other words much influenced by the links offered by websites, often established institutions, in combination with the routines formed through bookmarking. Throughout the nineties different portals served as gateways to the web. In terms of conceptions of audiences, the browsing experience can be seen as one in which audiences are principally treated as recipients. While there obviously was a degree of activity, their usage for most part involved reacting on information and links pushed forward by established institutions. In the context of journalism, access to news sites was characterized by audiences in principle being only receivers of journalists output.

During the end of the nineties search engines were gaining traction. This is exemplified by the formation of the Google corporation in 1998, which has emerged from an academic project at Stanford called Backrub (which was initiated in 1996). At the start of the twenty-first century, Google has become the global leader for accumulating web traffic. Widespread use of search engines transformed the dynamics

of the web, empowering people to access information and journalism on a more individualistic and active level. Considering the uptake of search, it has obviously had a displacing effect on Web- and news usage via direct accessing. Search engines not only enable users to navigate news specific news articles based on the results generated via search queries, but also by personalising search engines such as Google to extract and deliver news stories that are presented on a Web site or through various mobile applications (Westlund 2013). The rise of social media has triggered a third phase, which has seen direct and search navigation complemented by social discovery, that is, Web access directed by recommendations through social media that greatly advance the social sharing options that previously had only been possible through email forwarding. Both the roles of e-mail forwarding and social media will be scrutinized in this chapter.

In practice, the platforms making possible for sharing the article one reads, and what one thinks of these, has shaped new roles for producers and receivers of journalism. These platforms make possible for people to act as recipients of news in one instance, while also reacting to what others recommend and share, while in the next instance utilizing sharing and commenting functionalities in ways which make them editors of news content more or less on behalf of their friends and followers. As discussed by Loosen and Schmidt (2012), audiences in that instance can be seen as empowered networks. Also the conceptualization of produsage by Bruns (e.g. 2008, 2010, 2012) encapsulates the essence of the mixed roles people nowadays take.

Figure 1 shows a three-year decline of 31 % in print circulation and a concomitant 247 % rise in website traffic, confirming that the inclusion performances of the UK regional news audiences in this study are in line with trends seen elsewhere in the developed economies. It is clear from Fig. 1 (above) and Figs. 2, 3 and 4 (below) that digital media, in general, and social media, in particular, occupy increasingly prominent places in the UK mediascape. The Experian Hitwise analysis¹ notes 1.3 billion UK visits to UK News and Media sites, a category which includes websites of newspapers, magazines, broadcast, and other media providers such as e-zines of a general nature, covering a variety of subjects. This is about 21 visits for every resident given a population of about 62,036,000.² Compare this to 4.4 billion in the US (or 14 visits per person based on a population estimate of 312,858,000) and 445 million in Australia (or 19 visits per person based on a population estimate of 22,268,000).

By contrast, in December 2011 there were twice³ (2.6 billion) as many UK visits to social media websites, a category in which Experian Hitwise includes websites that facilitate online communication and networking via profile pages. This can include

¹ The figures only include traffic from UK Internet users not visits from outside of the UK. The same is true for the US and Australian data.

² *Source for population estimates:* Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>, accessed 12/01/2012.

³ In the US there was 2.75 times the number of visits to social media sites than there was to news and media sites; in Australia, it was 2.5 times.

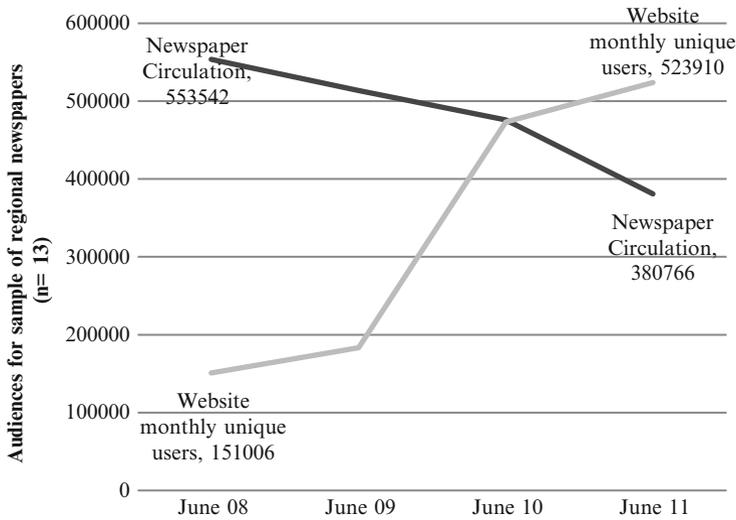


Fig. 1 Daily circulation and web visitors for a sample of UK regional newspapers. *Source:* Audit Bureau of Circulations. *Comment:* Only data from newspapers in our sample that had both verified circulation (ABC) and website traffic data (ABCe) was used ($n = 13$)

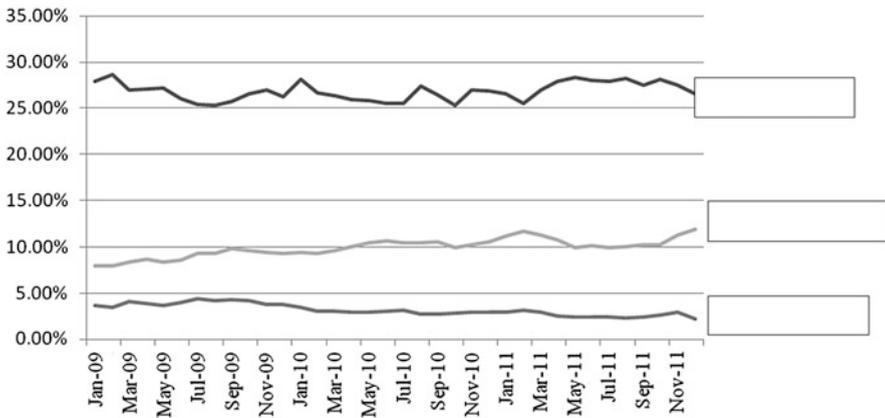


Fig. 2 Monthly traffic to news and media from social media and search in the from 2009 to 2011 (percent). *Source:* Experian Hitwise 2009–2011. *Comment:* Monthly upstream traffic percentage for ‘news and media’ through computers and Internet in the U.K. Upstream traffic flow to news sites from social media takes place as audiences click on an article in social media and are redirected to the news site. The article may be shared by their friends as well as distributed through the pages or people they subscribe to

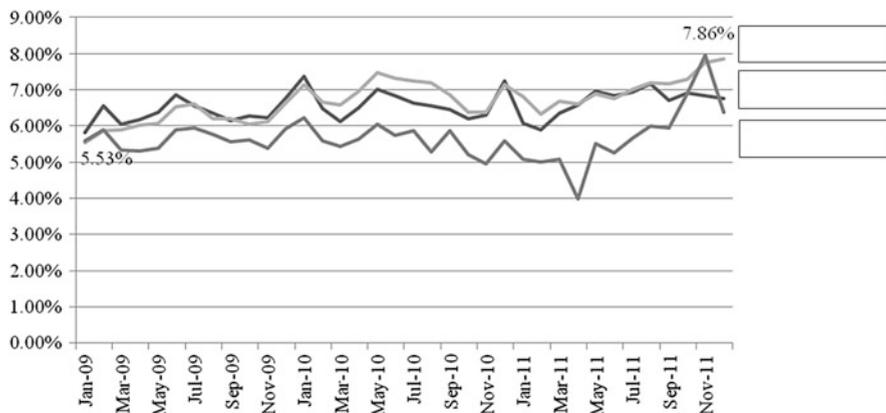


Fig. 3 Monthly traffic from news and media to social media, search and e-mail in the U.K. from 2009 to 2011 (percent). *Source:* Experian Hitwise 2009–2011. *Comment:* Monthly downstream traffic percentage for ‘news and media’ through computers and Internet based on U.K. Downstream traffic flow from news sites to social media, such as using Facebook connect to share an article read

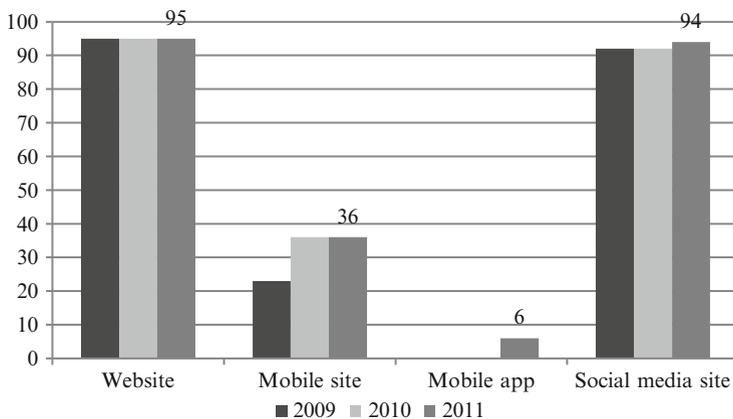


Fig. 4 UK regional newspapers initiatives to engage with digital audiences as recipients 2009–2011. *Source:* Audit of regional U.K newspapers 2009–2011. *Comment:* While both their websites and social media sites are widely used by the newspapers to include audiences, they have been considerable more cautious in their use of mobile sites and apps

sites where users are linked through regional/social groups or specific interests, as well as more general online networks. This category also features forums. Closer scrutiny of the data sheds light on the social media inclusion performance of the audience as recipient and also of the audience as empowered network. Figure 2 shows the evolving traffic to news and media from email, search and social media and search, respectively, from Jan 2009 to Dec 2011.

Different forms of direct accessing have not been included in the analysis presented, but can obviously be expected to represent most of the traffic coming to news and media sites. Figure 2 makes it clear that while search engines remain the most important route of audience visits to news and media sites among the three, traffic from social media is steadily increasing while there is a small decline for traffic generated by e-mails. More than a quarter of all visits came from search engines, while the proportion generated by social media rose almost 60 % over the last three years—growing from about 7.5 % in 2008 to almost 12 % in Dec 2011. Over the same period, the number of visits from free email⁴ accounts (such as Hotmail, Gmail and Yahoo mail) declined from nearly 4 % to just over 2 %. All in all, these results suggest that over 40 % of all traffic to news and media is accumulated from the recommendation of search engines and empowered networks of friends through social media. Following from that, it is reasonable to ask what the opposite relationship is.

When it comes to streams of traffic from news and media to social media, as reported on in Fig. 3, is comprised by actions such as when users actively decide to share a news article etc. through social media. For instance, utilizing Facebook connect, hitting the “share” button will redirect the user to their Facebook account, encouraging them to post a comment that supplements the publishing of a link to the news article on their private Facebook wall. Also various other forms of social media redirections are included in this measurement. The data shows the monthly share of such traffic to news sites grew from 5.5 % in 2009, which was less than for that for search, to nearly 8 % at the end of 2011, when it surpassed search traffic. In this context, search is represented by traffic direct from search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo.

The fact that there is more traffic travelling to news and media from social media and search, than in the opposite direction indicates that audiences only pass along/share a fraction of the information they access. Ultimately, however, it is also clear that, despite declining print circulations, news and media publish content that is relevant to people who, in ever larger numbers, seek it out online directly and via search engines, and who also find, share and discuss it through email on social media.

8 Journalism Inclusion Performance

The inclusion performance of journalism, as Loosen and Schmidt (2012) point out, can be assessed through various indicators and aspects of interactivity. However, while the notion of interactivity has been central to many discussions about shifts in journalistic logic, there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of the concept. Rafaeli, for instance, maintains that “interactivity is a widely used term with an intuitive appeal, but it is an

⁴This Experian Hitwise category features all free e-mail services, including those that provide web-based accounts and mail forwarding services. It excludes email sent from and opened on proprietary servers.

under-defined concept. As a way of thinking about communication, it has high face validity, but only narrowly based explication, little consensus on meaning, and only recently emerging empirical verification of actual role” (Rafaeli 1988, p. 110). As such, this section briefly introduces and on reflects on relevant discussions and models for interactivity, in order to lay the ground for an empirical measurement valid to the study of inclusion performance of journalism.

There are those who consider whether interactivity is best conceived as a process or as a perceptual variable (e.g. McMillan 2002; Bucy 2004), measureable through attitudinal and emotional scales. Though the value of insights from studies of interactivity-as-process and interactivity-as-perception is not disputed, this chapter recognises that an understanding of the evolution of communication architecture is an essential antecedent to further exploration into the process and outcomes of interactions. McMillan (2002) points out that much of the feature-based research grows out of Heeter’s (1989) conceptual definition of interactivity. She suggested that interactivity resided in the processes, or features, of a communication medium. Massey and Levy (1999) operationalised Heeter’s conceptual definition, and examined websites for interactivity based on the presence of functional features such as email links, feedback forms and chat rooms. A number of researchers, (e.g. McMillan 1998; Ha and James 1998; Thurman 2011) have expanded Massey and Levy’s list of website features that may be considered interactive to include bulletin boards, search engines, forms for registration, online ordering, curiosity-arousal devices, games, user choice and surveys. Nel and Westlund (2012) expanded the investigation from websites to explore mobile news services.

Nel (2011) has further argued for the need not only to distinguish between various form of interactivity, but also the importance of identifying the direction and control of communication, as well as whether the interactive agent is human or computer.⁵ In an attempt to understand who is interacting with whom, consideration in the first instance is given not only given to the interactivity between traditional news producers and the news audiences, but also to interactivity between users.

In addition to these collective and individual human agents, Nel consider whether technologies are simply channels, as generally conceived in communication literature since Laswell (1948), or if there are features that compel us to consider technologies as agents of interactivity in their own right. In so doing, his four-part model of news interactivity not only considers computer-mediated communication, but also human-to-computer interactivity and vice versa.

In particular, it considers *personalisation*, which is seen as a form of human-to-computer interactivity (HCI) that relies on technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users’ explicitly articulated preferences; *customisation*, view as the site’s technological response to the user-based on his or her explicit or implicit actions and therefore a form of computer-to-human interactivity (CHI). Two further forms of interactivity were also identified: *allocution* or dialogical communication where, though limited feedback channels may exist, the

⁵ Here the term *agent* is used in the general sense of something or someone that produces an effect.

significant consumer activity is pure reception; and *conversation*, which occurs when information is produced and owned by the information consumers who also control distribution. This is a case of traditional two-way communication. Nel (2011) argues that there are instances of conversation between human agents or Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and between computer agents, Computer to Computer (C2C), such as in the case of geo-located news that is updated as a result of an ongoing 'conversation' between a smartphone and a publisher's server.

With this in mind, this chapter empirically explores in detail the social media features in the communication architecture that journalism uses to include audiences. The operationalization utilizes the three conceptions of audiences, conceived as recipients, empowered networks or products (Loosen and Schmidt 2012) and also scrutinizes whether the interactive agents are humans or machines. This section emphasises the findings which are summarised in the tables below.

9 Interactivity Features of Journalism Institutions that Enable Audiences as Recipients

As the summary of the findings in Appendix 1 show, the UK newspaper publishers have widely adopted a variety of digital channels to enable interactivity with audiences as recipients of news and information. In 2011, 64 of the 66 newspapers in this study had individually-branded companion websites; the content of three others were included in portal site in 2009 and 2010 and were therefore excluded from the study in those years (i.e. $n = 63$), though one of those newspapers had established its own site by 2011 and was then added in (i.e. $n = 64$). Propriety mobile news sites were first audited in 2009 at which time 15 (23 % of the total number of websites audited) specific mobile sites were identified, with the number rising to 23(38 %) in 2010. No additions were noted at the time of the 2011 audit (June-July).

Software applications (apps) for mobile devices were offered by five of the 66 newspapers audited in 2011⁶ which, while still a relatively small percentage, was a marked increase from the previous year when only two apps, both only available for iPhones, was noted. The six apps, from four different publishing companies, varied significantly in structure, content, features and costs, indicating diversity of both editorial and commercial logics. Firstly, both "Web apps" and "Native apps" were noted. In the context of this discussion, the distinction is important as native apps are designed for specific platforms (apps for iPhones run only on iOS) and, typically, downloads content from the media's server onto the user's device where it can be consumed offline. A web app, however, is typically coded in a browser-rendered language such as HTML combined with JavaScript and relies on real-time connectivity to deliver content.

⁶The Manchester Evening News' app was launched in October 2009 (after the 2009 audit was completed), making it the first of all UK regional newspapers to do so. The London Evening Standard followed in May 2010.

While these lines are increasingly blurred, it is recognised that without real-time web connectivity the options of, in particular, conversational interactivity is curtailed.

The vast majority of the publishers in this audit had included some type of social media channel in their communication architecture, with the use of Facebook and Twitter the most widespread. In 2009, 86 % of the sites audited had Facebook pages and by 2011 that number had climbed to 92 %. In 2009, 71 % of the sites had Twitter feeds and the number continued to increase in 2010 (88 %) and 2011 (92 %). There was also a steady rise in the number of newspapers with branded channels on YouTube, which rose from 14 % in 2009 to 43 % in 2010 and 63 % in 2011. On the other hand, in 2009 only 23 % of sites had channels on the photo sharing site Flickr. That number rose to 24 % in 2010 and dropped slightly to 23 % in 2011. The first paper to create a Google Group (Southern Daily Echo in Southampton) was noted in 2011.

Not only did the newspapers differ in the variety of communication channels they adopted, but the manner and extent to which those spaces enabled interactivity with audiences as empowered networks varied greatly and will be examined next.

10 Interactivity Features than Enable Relationships Between Journalism with Audiences as Empowered Networks

While the incorporation of social sharing features (such as email forwarding) and social media channels (such as Facebook) are now almost ubiquitous, the channel use varied as closer scrutiny of the use of Twitter will show. For example, the 2011 audit revealed that one of the new entrants (Lichfield Mercury) had signed up but never tweeted, while 6 other titles (owned by different publishers) appeared to have stopped. Specifically themed feeds (e.g. entertainment or sport) rose from 8 % to 35 % in 2009 and appeared to drop in 2010 when examples from only 25 % of the news sites were noted. In 2011, 28 % of newspapers had specific feeds, most notably sport (25 %), entertainment (8 %) and business (6 %), but also including one each of events and culture, politics, race for life, sail Solent, heritage, websites and magazines, and the Beatles. Interestingly, although a myriad of individual journalists have their own Twitter feeds, only 3 % advertised the Twitter presence of individual journalists on their newspaper website. In 2011 there was an average of 3,317 followers for each site with a Twitter presence.

In 2008, 32 % of the 63 sites audited had a Facebook presence. By 2009, the number had risen to 87 % before dipping slightly in 2010 (83 %) and increasing in 2011 to 92 %. The extent of interactivity varied significantly. In 2011, a number of titles (14 %) merely had an information page that readers could “like” whereas the more interactive sites averaged 1,811 readers who either “liked” them or were their “friend”, with the Belfast Telegraph and Yorkshire Evening Post having 9,904 and 14,570 readers liking them respectively. Significantly, where features that enabled sharing from mobile sites were noted, Facebook and Twitter were the only social network site options.

Overall, the largest number of interactivity features was those that aimed at enabling audiences conceived as empowered networks to explicitly personalise their social media experiences (HCI) and which triggered an automated customisation response, or CHI, from the journalism institution.

The examination of the features that facilitate either allocution or conversation resulted in three key findings. The first was that while features such as comments on stories may be seen as facilitating asymmetrical communication between users and the media, it also enables symmetrical communication amongst users. Secondly, newspapers have rapidly incorporated features that enable social sharing through email forwarding as well as third party channels, such as Twitter, and on social network sites, such as Facebook. The third notable finding was that symmetrical communication occurred both between human and computer agents, challenging long-held views such as that conversational interactivity would remain principally in the interpersonal domain (e.g. Fidler 1997; Table 1).

11 Interactivity Features than Enable Relationships Between Journalism with Audiences as Products

Commerce is a key driving force of many technological developments and that is also the case in the news industry (Deuze and Fortunati 2010). However, though they have been exploring digital technologies since the 1970s, newspaper companies have struggled to make significant profits from their online ventures and that has not changed much over the course of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009; Nel 2010). Advances in interactive technologies have brought renewed optimism about the commercial prospects of digital. However, while increasing social media interactivity has resource implications for publishers, it is not yet clear if there is a direct relationship between greater customer interactivity and increased business performance. In fact, a survey of 54 news executives attending a global industry conference found no evidence to support such assumptions, which the researcher notes “is, undoubtedly, an unexpected result because customer interaction is usually accepted as a badly needed characteristic of the new media firms” (Van Weezel 2009, p. 129).

As such, perhaps it would be prudent to start off by pointing out that, as Table 2 shows, this study has identified a number of potential revenue streams that flow directly and indirectly from such inclusion performance. While determining the richness of those veins goes beyond the scope of this study, it is clear that social media and social sharing are significant sources of traffic to websites. Proprietary social media features also allow the media (and, by extension, their advertisers) to gain valuable understanding of the behaviour and preferences of audiences. Almost all of the newspapers (98 %) collect data during various registration processes.

While mobile platforms provides significant opportunities for conversational interactivity between and amongst users and publishers through, for example,

Table 1 UK regional newspapers initiatives to engage with audience as empowered networks 2009–2011 (per cent)

		2009	2010	2011		2009	2010	2011	
Personalisation: human to computer interactivity (HCI)					Customisation: computer to human interactivity (CHI)				
Website	Search facility	*	*	100		Personalized home page	2	3	3
	Registration for web content	95	98	98		Aggregated content filters	83	84	91
	Personal home page	2	3	3		Contextual recommendations	38	50	28
	Aggregated content filter	83	84	91		Email newsletters	86	63	63
	Games and curiosity devices	63	52	41		Twitter	70	88	94
Website	Registration for email newsletters	86	63	63	W	Games and curiosity devices	63	52	41
	RSS	92	95	92		Social Networking sites	92	92	94
	SMS alerts	22	2	0	M	Location-based services	*	*	0
	Twitter				App	IP-based services	*	*	17
Mobile sites	Content personalisation			7		User device filters	*	*	0
	Search box			17					
Apps	Search	*	*	0					
	Personalisation settings	*	*	4					
	Personalisation categories	*	*	5					
	Aggregated content filter	*	*	1					
	Link to web browser	*	*	1					
Allocation: features that facilitate asymmetrical two-way dialogue between journalism and audiences, as well as amongst audiences (C2C, CMC)					Conversation: features that facilitate symmetrical, two-way communication between journalism and audiences, as well as amongst audiences (C2C, CMC)				
Websites	Newsroom contact	98	98	98	Websites	User device filter	*	*	*
	Comments on stories	88	91	89		Location-based services	*	*	*
	Live blogs/chats	11	14	28		Comments on articles	88	91	89
	UGC	*	*	78		Email forwarding	94	95	94
	Twitter	*	*	44		Live blogs/chats	11	14	28
	Surveys & polls	59	50	47		User blogs	64	61	48

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

		2009	2010	2011		2009	2010	2011	
Mobile	Contact newsroom	2	2	57	Apps	Email forwarding	0	0	22
	Rating of stories	*	*	26		Twitter	*	*	4
	Share via email	0	0	22		Facebook	*	*	4
	UGC via email	*	*	52	Third Party Sites	Email forwarding	*	*	67
	Peer promotion	*	*	26		Twitter sharing	*	*	67
	Polls & surveys	*	*	9		Facebook sharing	*	*	67
Apps	Contact newsroom	*	*	17	Facebook	86	83	64	
	Share via SNS	*	*	67	MySpace	13	14	9	
	Comments on stories	*	*	33	LinkedIn	0	8	42	
	Rating of stories	*	*	17	Bebo	31	6	6	
TPS	Sharing via social networking sites	*	*	67	Flickr	13	25	23	
					Twitter	70	88	94	

Source: Audit of regional U.K newspapers 2009–2011

*signifies that this issue was not audited that year

Comment: This summary of the interactivity features on websites, mobile sites, apps and third-party social media sites clearly shows that journalism primarily includes audiences in asymmetrical communication, while aiming to facilitate symmetrical communication amongst audiences

features that enable real-time, geo-located news and information,⁷ there is no evidence as yet that newspapers are making use of these features.

However, it is also apparent that publishers need to contemplate the potential risks. Key amongst these are the implications of greater reliance on interactivity facilitated by third party social network services, such as Twitter (used by 91 % & of the papers) and Facebook (64 %), and the potential displacement effects of making their content available by such social media sites as well as via news aggregators such as HuffingtonPost.co.uk, which lists 30 UK regional newspapers amongst its 58 sources including 14 titles in this study sample (21 %).

⁷ Geolocation social networks draw on user-submitted location data or geo-location techniques to connect and coordinate users with local people or events that match their interests. On web-based social network services geolocation can be IP-based or use hotspot trilateration (both C2C). For mobile social networks, texted location information (HCI) or mobile phone tracking (C2C) can enable location-based services to enrich social networking.

Table 2 UK regional newspapers initiatives to engage with audience as products 2009–2011 (per cent)

		2009	2010	2011			2009	2010	2011
Revenue streams associated with personalisation, in addition to general advertising and/or subscriptions					Revenue streams associated with customisation, in addition to general advertising and/or subscriptions				
Website, mobile sites, apps	Data generation	95	98	98	W	Advertising or sponsorship n email newsletters	23	55	45
	Targeted advertising	*	*	*	W, M	Targeted advertising by location	*	*	*
	Targeted offers	*	*	*	W, M	Targeted advertising by device	*	*	*
	Content sales	98	94	94	W, M, A	Content sales	*	*	*
SNS	Promotion	*	*	*	W, M	Offers	95	98	98
	Audience recruitment	*	*	*					
Revenue streams associated with allocation, in addition to general advertising and/or subscriptions					Revenue streams associated with conversation, in addition to general advertising and/or subscriptions				
	Data on consumers	95	98	98		Promotion	*	*	*
	Subscriptions	39	56	42		Additional users	*	*	*
						Additional inventory for ads	64	61	48
						Higher value advertising	*	*	*

Source: Audit of regional U.K newspapers 2009–2011

*signifies that this issue was not audited that year

Comment: This table summarises those revenue streams that, in addition to regular advertising or subscriptions, might be associated with audience interactivity features on websites, mobile sites, apps and third-party social media sites. At the time of the audits, only one of the sites charged for access to any of the sites or apps (Belfast Telegraph)

Conclusions

This book chapter bear witness to an increasing level of inclusion performance for participation among both journalism and audiences. While news has always been coupled with a social dimension, such as discussing the news in coffee houses, digital media have enabled new forms for such social activity. This chapter has analysed the role of social media, as an enabler of mediated socialness that have come to influence patterns of news accessing. Utilizing three robust datasets generalizable for the U.K, it has scrutinized inclusion performance in the relationships between journalism and audiences, as well as amongst audiences.

When it comes to audience inclusion performance, the analysis showed that while audiences' participation in newspapers is in decline, there is a steady rise in audiences' inclusion in journalism through various digital platforms, including search and social media. As such, both search engine optimisation (SEO) and social media optimisation (SMO) become important practices for contemporary newspapers to consider.

However, closer scrutiny of the data indicated that while search, social media and e-mail forwarding channel significant numbers of users to news and media institutions, far less traffic flows in the opposite direction. This is generally in line with observations that underpin the so-called "90/9/1" principle or 1 % power law (Huba and McConnell 2006) of online content creation communities (e.g. Wikis), which note that a very low percentage of active participants (i.e. 1 %) typically account for a disproportionately large amount of the content; a slighter higher (i.e. 9 %) number make a small or indirect contribution; and, finally, that a vast majority (i.e. 90 %) are passive recipients or consumers of the content. And though the findings in this study question the actual proportions in the "1 % power law", there are indications that the audiences themselves prefer to be included as largely-passive recipients in relationships *with* journalism and that they reserve active participation *about* journalism for third-party social network sites. The fact that journalism institutions are encouraging exactly that may, therefore, not simply be because they are resisting audience participation and are striving to normalise the participatory logic by keeping it peripheral to the core of journalism (e.g. Domingo et al. 2008; Lasorsa et al. 2011). Instead, these approaches may well also be in line with the expectations of audiences who are, in the main, satisfied with receiving the fruits of professional journalistic endeavour rather than needing to actively participate in its co-creation. And that they prefer to engage about journalism with each other on their "own" social media network sites, rather than to engage in journalism with journalists on journalism sites.

This suggests that the enduring levels of journalism control may indeed be slowly dissolving in the wake of a plethora of contesters who recontextualize news articles by employing either machine-led personalisation or user-empowered selection and sharing. But that as these transforming tensions are shaping a hybrid logic that comprises increasing levels of participation *with* journalism as well as *about* journalism on and through various forms of social media. As such, it challenges the normative perspectives of those media scholars and commentators that posit that the extent to which audiences actively contribute to news products is a key indicator of success of journalism 2.0 (e.g. Harrison 2010). This would also offer a cautionary note to news executives who endeavour to host news conversations primarily on their own proprietary platforms.

Finally, the increased use of social media is not only reshaping power relations between journalism and audiences, but also between institutions of journalism and the practitioners of journalism. This is because journalists increasingly rely on their personalised channels, such as Twitter, to engage directly with audiences rather than only with sources, as was traditionally the case. The implications came under the spotlight recently when the BBC's then political correspondent, Laura

Kuenssberg, took around 60,000 followers with her as she moved to be business editor at ITV News. She changed her Twitter name from @BBCLauraK to @ITVLauraK, sparking a fierce debate about whether her rights to her followers were vested in her as an individual or as a BBC reporter (Booth 2011). This is also likely to be tested in the courts, after the US company PhoneDog decided to sue ex-employee Noah Kravitz for U\$340,000 (£217,000), saying his 17,000 followers on Twitter constitutes a customer database (ibid).

In addition, journalism institutions themselves are increasingly working to participate through intermediaries (e.g. Facebook Pages) who not only have their own separate relationships with audiences, but also with the advertisers on whom much of the business of both mainstream media and social media sites depend. As such, while greater reliance on third-party social network sites to facilitate dialogue and conversation with and amongst audiences might enhance inclusion performance overall, there is no evidence that this would ultimately lead directly to enhanced business performance of media companies. Indeed, the possible displacement effect on proprietary journalism sites of increased reliance on third-party social network sites warrants greater scrutiny.

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