RUNNING HEAD: Pinning and promotion

Pinning and promotion: How local television stations are using Pinterest

for branding and audience connectivity

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Abstract

Over the past decade, social media have become an increasingly important component in the ways broadcasters communicate with their audiences. A relative newcomer to that mix is the social network Pinterest, which enables followers to post photos and other types of visuals based on topics of interest A content analysis examined how 85 local television stations are using that social network for promotion and branding. Results showed that, rather than promotion, use of Pinterest primarily revolves around lifestyle content, including postings by stations and interactivity by followers.

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Social networks are not only becoming an essential tool for the television industry, but are dramatically altering the television viewing experience (eMarketer, 2012). For example, rather than approaching content distribution from a linear perspective, social TV enables audience members to share their experiences with other viewers, via a social network, while they are watching a program (Dumenco, 2012). This approach to audience communication may slightly improve ratings based on the "buzz" factor, enhance the viewer's television experience and "entertainment value," provide a connection with shows beyond the viewing, and give additional tools for marketers (Dumenco, 2012). Research by Horowitz Associates (cited in eMarketer, 2012) found that six percent of viewers participated in online discussions while watching a show.

Local television stations are also finding social media to be a means of connecting with viewers. These tools offer another way to enhance brand awareness in an increasingly complex environment that includes competition from other local broadcasters, as well as dozens of cable and satellite channels (Greenberg, 2010). The need to be distinctive and garner a higher audience share than the competition requires that stations provide viewers not only with a positive viewing experience, but one that is interactive and continuous by going beyond their broadcast programs.

Television stations across the country have used Facebook and Twitter for several years. More recently, some stations across the U.S. have begun using Pinterest as part of their promotion and marketing mix. In early 2012, Pinterest had the third highest number of users compared to Facebook, which had 92 percent of social media using adults, and Twitter, with 15

percent of online adults (Brenner, 2012). What might be especially appealing to television stations is the visual nature of Pinterest compared with other social media that rely primarily on verbal communication.

The fact that television stations have jumped on the social media bandwagon is not surprising, given the rapid growth in the use of these communication tools over the past decade. A Pew Research study in early 2012 found that two-thirds of adults who went online had used a social network site, which compares with a mere eight percent in 2005 who said they had ever used a social network (Brenner, 2012). As expected, connecting with friends and family was the top reason for using the networks for two-thirds of online adults.

A handful of studies have addressed the topic of social networks in relation to broadcast media (e.g., Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Ferguson & Greer, 2011; Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Wohn & Na, 2011). However, due to its recent development and growth, scholarly work is scant regarding media use of Pinterest. Information about Pinterest is largely found in trade publications and the popular press, and focuses primarily on anecdotal observations or market research. At present, research by The Poynter Institute (Speier, 2012) appears to be the only study focusing on news media. However, that study deals with a variety of media, including national television and large market newspapers. The present study fills that gap in literature by focusing entirely on the way local television stations are employing this new social media platform. Using a content analysis method, this study draws on prior research in broadcast branding to compare how stations incorporate Pinterest into their promotion mix as a way to enhance connectivity with and between their audiences. Because this exploratory study was conducted early in local television's implementation of Pinterest, the results of this research provide content categories and baseline statistics for future studies.

Pinterest and the Media

Launched in March 2010, Pinterest is a Web-based social network system that enables its users to post (pin) pictures and other images to virtual boards that they create according to their interests (Lee, 2011). While several other social networks allow users to post photos, visuals are the distinguishing characteristic of Pinterest (Moore, 2012). The pin boards offer content that is categorized based on a variety of themes, but tends to primarily feature "home decor, crafts, fashion, and food" (Caine, 2012; Experian, 2012). Users can also include captions to accompany their pins (Moore, 2012). According to Pinterest, the mission of the social network is connecting "everyone in the world through the things they find interesting" (Pinterest, n.d.a). Initially, joining the social network required an invitation from a Pinterest user; however, in August 2012, the company removed the invitation requirement (Tsukayama, 2012b).

The social networking aspect of Pinterest occurs when users share images (Lee, 2011). Not only can users pin their own visuals to online boards, but also "re-pin" visuals from other websites. In fact, re-pinning is the dominant method of posting (Erickson, 2012). In addition, Pinterest connects with Facebook in that followers can "like" a pin, which then appears on a person's Facebook timeline to indicate what their friends have pinned (Lee, 2011; Pragnell, 2012).

The growth in use of this social network has been phenomenal. The number of unique visitors to Pinterest grew from 1.68 million in September 2011 to 16.23 million in February 2012 (Buck, 2012). The biggest one-month increase was 53 percent between December 2011 (7.28 million) and January 2012 when 11.14 million people accessed Pinterest (Buck, 2012). According to research by Experian, Pinterest was third in the number of unique visits in March 2012 behind Facebook, which was in first place, and Twitter (Keneally, 2012). Experian Hitwise

reported that Pinterest had 104 million total visits that month behind Facebook at 7 billion and Twitter at 182 million (Wasserman, 2012). Although Pinterest continues to experience growth, the monthly rate of increase appears to be slowing. A comScore report stated that use of the social network in March 2012 was 18.7 million compared with 17.8 million in February 2012 (Swartz, 2012). However, it should be noted that neither Experian nor comScore include mobile visits in their Pinterest data.

Worldwide and in North America, women are more active users of social media than men (comScore, 2011). When it comes to Pinterest, users of the social network are also predominantly female. A report by Modea indicated that just over 68 percent of users are women (Pragnell 2012). By comparison, females comprise 57 percent of Facebook users and 59 percent of Twitter followers (Skelton, 2012). In addition, Pinterest users are younger (ages 25 to 34) (Pragnell, 2012).

According to one market research study, Pinterest might be affecting social media use. Compete's Online Shopper Intelligence Survey (Caine, 2012) found that three percent of Pinterest users spent less time on Facebook during the month prior to the survey. Also, 15 percent of those polled indicated that Pinterest is the only social network they use. The study also found that Pinterest was "driving purchase behavior," with 25 percent of respondents indicating they had "ever purchased a product or service after discovering it on Pinterest."

In the midst of its rise in popularity, Pinterest faced concerns about copyright, particularly due to users' ability to re-pin content from other websites. However, the company believes its content falls under the "safe harbor" aspect of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (Tsukayama, 2012a). Pinterest's copyright statement on its website cautions users about intellectual property issues, noting that its policy is to "disable and/or terminate" the accounts of

repeat copyright violators "in appropriate circumstances and at its discretion" (Pinterest, n.d.b, para. 2). The company also provides a means for "content owners" to opt out of pinning to prevent posting of their material on users' pin boards (Tsukayama, 2012a).

Corporations are finding social media an important way to reach consumers. Rather than abandoning traditional advertising, companies are adding social media to their marketing plan to provide more interactivity with their publics (Mike, 2012). While Pinterest is able to connect individuals, companies of all sizes are using the social network as a way to increase recognition (Petrecca, 2012). For example, they are able to show pictures of products and services associated with their business (Petrecca, 2012).

Media organizations are also beginning to use Pinterest. For example, television networks, including the Travel Channel, Food Network, The Weather Channel (Bergman, 2012) and HGTV are capitalizing on the visual nature of the social network to promote themselves and their programs (Morabito, 2012). The CW is focusing attention on Pinterest's predominantly female audience by pinning photos of male actors from its shows (Morabito, 2012). Lifetime is pinning visuals that are associated with the emotional aspects of some of its programs (Morabito, 2012).

A few local television stations are also experimenting with Pinterest, but some have expressed concerns about copyright issues (Malone, 2012). Exactly how best to utilize the social network is still being determined. Social media reporter Molly Reynolds of WPTV stated in a *Broadcasting & Cable* article that her station was using Pinterest as a branding tool (Malone, 2012).

Some media are using Pinterest in relation to news. Buttry (2012) observed that news media were using the social network for lifestyle, including food and restaurant information,

contests, information about community events and points of interest, and photography. Similarly, Wilson's (2012) review of local television Pinterest usage indicated that the top content pinned by newsrooms were food-related items, photos of the news team, "pets/animals," weather and news. At the same time, Wilson observed that news boards had fewer followers than did boards with the other themes. However, some television stations have indicated that the social network does not fit news content (Malone, 2012).

Given issues associated with themes, audience interest in pin board content, and user interactivity with the station's pins and the pins of other users, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: Does the amount of pinning and repinning differ according to the type of board?

RQ2: Are there differences in the number of followers based on the type of board?

Television Branding

Just a few decades ago, the public's choice of broadcast media was largely relegated to three national television networks and a handful of local television and radio stations. Over the past 20 years, cable, satellite and other "delivery systems" have provided multiple choices of viewing that have resulted in reduced audience shares for the major broadcast networks (Webster, 2005). Compared with viewership of cable networks, the broadcast networks still maintain a much larger audience share, but only a "sliver" of total time audiences spend viewing television (Webster, 2005). In addition, viewing is also polarized in that television audiences tend to watch the big networks (Webster, 2005).

The emergence of new media and multiple distribution channels have created complexities in how media brand themselves (McDowell, 2006), since an increasing number of media sources are competing for the same audience (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). This has

become an issue for both the content distributor and audience member, given multiple

distribution methods and multiple means of consuming media content, including mobile devices

(McDowell, 2006).

Fragmentation also has been observed when it comes to online news audiences. Web

news users access specialized content based on demographics of users and the content of the

medium (Tewksbury, 2005). News organizations have an opportunity to use new media as a tool

to expand their audiences, but the challenge is providing unique content for their followers

(Tewksbury, 2005). Audience members are looking for specialization, but the question is

whether news organizations will meet those needs and interests via the Web (Tewksbury, 2005).

Given the complexities of expanding content sources for today's media audiences, the

primary challenge for broadcasters is differentiating their station from others in the market. That

translates into numbers of viewers, audience share and ratings. Television stations have three

goals in relation to ratings: (1) acquisitive, or obtaining "new viewers"; (2) recycling viewers

from "one time period to another"; and (3) retentive, which is keeping audiences (Eastman,

Ferguson & Klein, 2006, pp. 22-23). To achieve those goals, Eastman, Ferguson and Klein

(2006) proposed a three-part model that includes establishing strategic goals for ratings by

positioning the station's brand, defining strategic targets by understanding audience

characteristics, and determining internal and external tactics that provide ways to promote the

station.

Differentiation of product has been examined at both national network and local station

levels. At the national level, Bae (2000) found that cable all news networks differentiated

themselves from broadcast network evening newscasts by the topics the were covered, as well as

the types of unique stories. In an examination of CNN, Fox News and MSNBC, Bae (1999)

found that there were differences in programming among the three networks that distinguished each network from the other two.

Having a Web presence is a given for media organizations. As noted earlier, though, the issue is whether broadcasters will use the technology to its fullest extent to reach their audiences (Tewksbury, 2005). That is despite prior research, which shows that online communication has the possibility of enhancing the brand. For example, Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2004) found that the use of enhanced features of cable television websites corresponded to viewer loyalty and increased the viewing of programs on the network. However, they also noted that the network's website was "not seen as an Internet brand of the network" (p. 638). Less that half of viewers visited the networks' sites, which might have been due to lack of site promotion.

At the local level, television stations use a variety of methods to brand and differentiate themselves from their competitors. Because news is the predominant source of local programming, stations seek ways to distinguish the newscast from other stations, including promotions for the newscast and talent, as well as for specific news topics (Ferguson & Adams, 2006). In addition to promotion efforts on the station itself, stations also use other media, such as radio, print and billboards (Ferguson & Adams, 2006).

Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2001) found that television station managers saw branding as an important for station success and for enhanced competitiveness, but associated branding with news network identity and station logos. Daniels and Loggins (2010) focused on ways that television stations use their weather segments to distinguish themselves from other stations. They found that radar was used as a tool to differentiate the station. Top stations in the market were more likely to use weather-oriented branding.

Use of the Web also provides a way to differentiate stations within a given market. However, Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2001) found that managers at the time of their research did not perceive that using the Internet for branding was effective. Chan-Olmsted and Ha (2003) found that local television stations provided few resources for online efforts. While many stations provided financial resources, it tended to be a very small percentage of the budget.

How television stations are using online tools is central to meeting the needs of their audiences. Gregson (2008) studied website content of major network affiliates in the top 100 markets in relation to the stations' newscasts and found that less than half of all the stations displayed the time of the newscast. Few stations "highlighted" upcoming stories or listed their ratings. Instead, stations were likely to promote the station and their newscast. Additionally, stations tended not to use interactive features on their sites.

Based on research findings regarding market characteristics and branding, this study sought to answer the following question:

RQ3: What is the relationship between market size, number of households in a market and the use of Pinterest for station branding?

Social Media and Broadcasters

More recently, media organizations have shifted their attention from essentially linear push communication through traditional Web content to interactivity via social media. From a business perspective, Mangold and Faulds (2009) argued that social media have changed the methods and tools for "communicating with customers" (p. 357). Social media are also challenging our understanding of how to define the concept of "media" (Webster, 2010). Termed "hybrid," social media combines linear communication, which can be controlled, with customer interaction, which cannot be controlled (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In addition to message

control, pertinent issues include determining which platforms to use, how to incorporate them, and how to provide users with a positive experience (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). For example, Lis and Berz (2011) found that learning about a product in a blog or a social media site increased the chance someone would purchase a product. Despite this potential benefit, and the fact that customers are relying more on non-traditional means of obtaining company and product information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), organizations are either not including social networking in their "branding strategies" or they are not using the networks for interaction (Yan, 2011, p. 695).

The emergence of social media is also changing the branding landscape for broadcasters by challenging traditional media to rethink their marketing techniques (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Use of social networks can be both beneficial and problematic for media. On the one hand, it is important for media to allow consumers to "co-create content and form relationships" with other audience members, as well as with the media entity (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, p. 8). On the other hand, consumers' ability to participate in branding makes it crucial for content producers to monitor, manage and control their brand "to ensure consistency with the brand's image and associations" (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, p. 8).

At this point in time, only a handful of studies have examined how television stations are using social networks. Greer and Ferguson (2011) examined the content of television Twitter sites in relation to branding. Results of the study showed that there was a relationship between the number of followers and number of households in the market, but not between number of followers and number of average daily tweets. They also found differences in tweets based on type of station. Commercial stations were more active in tweeting than noncommercial stations. In addition, commercial stations tweeted news, while tweets of noncommercial stations

promoted programming. Thus, branding was more important to noncommercial stations. Overall, results of the researched revealed that local television stations tended to not use Twitter to drive viewers to the station's newscast. Few stations used Twitter to promote the station.

Wohn and Na (2011) examined Twitter postings about television programs while viewers were watching shows. They found that the types of posts corresponded with program content, suggesting reactionary messages. People tweeted immediately versus first giving thought to their statements. An especially important finding of the study was that a third of tweets came from mobile devices.

Research especially pertinent to the present study was conducted by The Poynter Institute (Speier, 2012), which focused on the Pinterest sites of 13 large local and national news media. Results of the study showed that the Wall Street Journal had the most followers and PBS had the highest "repin to pin ratio." The top pinning topics for several media were food and travel, which seemed to be associated with the "brand identity" of those organizations. Speier suggested that this finding might be an indication of the particular organization's brand in relation to the topics that most interest their audiences.

Based on a review of literature associated with branding and social media, the following research questions are posed:

RQ4: Are there differences in station pinning and follower repinning according to station affiliation?

RQ5: What is the relationship between station affiliation and the amount of promotional content on TV station pin boards?

RQ6: What predicts the level of audience interaction with television station Pinterest boards?

Method

This study utilized a content analysis method to examine the Pinterest boards of English-language, local commercial television stations in the U.S. Determining whether stations used Pinterest was the primary challenge, since there is not an online source that lists stations using this social network. An initial set of a few stations was located in an article on LostRemote.com (Wilson, 2012). Other stations with Pinterest accounts were found by using a variety of terms to search the Web. Many stations using Pinterest include the Pinterest logo on the home page of the station's website, along with the logos of other social media they use. To locate that feature, the home pages of local television stations in the U.S. were accessed through website links on newslink.org. Various searches through August 2012 resulted in locating 85 television stations that were using Pinterest.

Stations were first classified according to market size and the number of television households according to Nielsen estimates for 2011-2012 (The Nielsen Company, 2012). To provide flexibility of analysis, rankings were divided into three categories: large (markets 1-50), medium (markets 51-100), and small (markets 101-210). There were 41 large-market stations with 567 boards, 24 medium-sized with 300 boards, and 20 small-market stations with 245 boards. Station coding also included network affiliation (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Five networks were coded: ABC ($N = 26$), CBS ($N = 22$), CW ($N = 4$), FOX ($N = 9$), and NBC ($N = 24$).

The unit of analysis was Pinterest pin boards (range = 1 to 47, $M = 18.82$, $SD = 10.41$). Because pins are typically categorized by themes within boards, it was deemed unnecessary to code individual pins. Given the potentially large number of pins per board (range = 1 to 1138, $M = 26.94$, $SD = 57.83$), focusing on boards simplified the coding process and enhanced coder

reliability. Based on previous observations of media Pinterest sites, boards were first coded

thematically (Buttry, 2012; Wilson, 2012) according to five items: lifestyle, community, pets and

animals, news, and station promotion.

Table 1 about here

After the data were collected and tabulated, the pets and animals category was merged

into the lifestyle category, to form four themes instead of five. Only 46 boards (4.3 percent of the

usable 1062 total) were devoted to pets and animals. The other non-specific categories were

community ($N = 180$ boards, 17 percent), news ($N = 294$ boards, 27.7 percent), and promotion ($N = 213$ boards, 20.1 percent). After the merger, the lifestyle category only grew to 375 boards,

still roughly a third of the total (35.3 percent). Conceptually, the four boards represent a better-

differentiated clustering of pin boards.

Boards with zero pins were not analyzed. Another change was the exclusion of shared

boards, which frequently brought into question whether the board even belonged to the television

station. For example, KPIX (pinterest.com/cbssanfrancisco) has such a board entitled Beautiful

Backyards with 26,313 pins on it, which stood out in a set of boards whose maximum number

per board was 29. Three stations in Texas were similarly excluded for Texans Pinning It Big,

operating as a shared board among stations. Fifty boards had similar issues, many to a far lesser

extent. Thus the original 1,112 boards were reduced to 1,062 boards, less than five percent.

Prior to coding the television Pinterest sites, the coding categories and definitions were

tested on newspaper Pinterest sites. Newspaper sites were chosen because several dozen

newspapers in the U.S. were using Pinterest, which provided for an ample number of boards to

examine. In addition, newspaper Pinterest boards were found to be very similar to the content of local television boards, especially given the categories established for this study. Newspaper sites were tested by the researchers and adjustments made to the categories and definitions until an inter-coder agreement level of .75, based on Cohen's (1960) kappa (see also Bakeman & Gottman, 1997), was achieved.

As a subset of the promotion theme, Pinterest boards were categorized according to promotion and branding (Greer & Ferguson, 2011) as direct, indirect or not promotional in content. Indirect boards were those that were coded thematically as lifestyle, community or pets and animals. Direct boards were those coded thematically as station promotion. All other boards were coded as not promoting the station, although boards not coded as promotion still indirectly promote the station-branded Pinterest site and its overall collection of boards and pins. Station use of Pinterest for promotion was measured by the total number of promotion boards and the number of pins in each of those boards.

Coding also included the number of followers (range = 4 to 985, M = 175.346, SD = 194.89) and pins (range = 1 to 1138, M = 26.94, SD = 57.83) that were listed at the top of each board (N = 1062). Although the first page of the stations' Pinterest site lists the number of followers, that reflects only the number of people who follow the entire site. It is often the case that the number of site followers is different from the number of board followers. Basing the analysis on the number of board followers provides for more accuracy when considering the theme of the board in relation to followers, pins and other elements. The amount of station activity on Pinterest was defined as the total number of boards and the number of pins for each board. Audience interaction (M = 207.89, SD = 251.51) was defined as the number of Pinterest followers, the number of re-pins, likes and comments per board. Only the station pins and

followers are listed automatically by Pinterest for each set of pin-boards. This required that the researchers manually count the repins, likes and comments that appeared throughout each board. Some boards were shared (indicated by a special icon at the top of the board) rather than originating at the station. As noted earlier, those boards were excluded from analysis and not included in the total board count for the station.

Drawing on prior research of social network interactivity (Greer & Ferguson, 2011), an interactivity score was derived by summing the number of re-pins, likes and comments for each board. Coding of the Pinterest sites was conducted from August 2012 through the first week of September 2012. It should be noted that, due to the fluid nature of postings to social network sites, the number of followers, pins, repins, likes and comments on Pinterest are susceptible to constant change. Therefore, quantities of the various elements of the boards reflect a single snapshot of the day and time that the researchers coded the particular sites and boards.

Results

The first research question was answered first by testing for group differences in pinning and repinning among the four themes (lifestyle, community, news, and promotion). Two ANOVA tests revealed statistically significant differences among the themes: pinning ($F(3, 1058) = 4.00, p < .01$) and repinning ($F(3, 1058) = 2.62, p < .05$). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests suggest that boards devoted to lifestyle produce fewer pins than community boards ($p = .039$) and that boards devoted to promotion produce fewer repins than lifestyle boards ($p = .028$).

The first research question also addressed differences in the number of pins that stations devoted to news boards versus non-news boards. News boards ($N = 295$) had 31.2 pins on average ($SD = 53.3$), compared with only 25.3 pins ($SD = 59.47$) on non-news boards ($N = 767$). While not statistically significant ($t = -1.49$, df $= 592$, $p = .12$), the difference represented 24

percent more pinning on news boards. (As our data comprised a snapshot census rather than a sample, the lack of statistical significance is less relevant than percentage difference.) There was no significant difference in repinning on news versus non-news boards ($t = 0.29$, df=1060, $p = .77$).

The second research question asked whether there were differences in the number of followers based on the type of board. An ANOVA test revealed such a difference: $F(3, 1055) = 6.93$, $p <.001$, with Tukey HSD suggesting promotion boards had significant fewer followers than lifestyle and community boards ($p < .01$). A t-test of followers of news ($M = 161.8$, $SD = 184.68$) versus non-news boards ($M = 180.7$, $SD = 198.55$) was not significant ($t = 1.41$, df=568, $p = .15$), but the mean difference represented 12 percent fewer followers of news boards.

Table 2 about here

The third research question explored possible relationships among market rank, number of households and promotion-related pins, repins, likes, and comments. Although the latter four variables were all significantly correlated ($p < .01$), none related to number of households (see Table 2). An ANOVA test, however, revealed a difference in the number of pins among the three market-rank groups ($F(2,1109)= 8.017$, $p < .001$). A post-hoc Tukey HSD test showed that small-market (Nielsen HH rank 101+) stations ($M = 44.27$ pins, $N = 245$ boards) were significantly different ($p < .05$) than either large-market stations ($M = 25.93$ pins, $N = 567$ boards) or medium-market stations ($M = 24.12$ pins, $N = 300$ boards). No difference was found for repins, likes or comments, but large-market stations had more followers ($M = 207.67$) than

either small- ($M = 135.50$) or medium- market ($M = 141.97$) stations ($F(2, 1102) = 17.59$, $p <$ .001).

The fourth research question examined overall differences among the five different network affiliations. Although repins showed no significant differences, the number of pins showed differences ($F(4, 1057) = 3.93$, $p < .01$) as did the number of likes ($F(4, 1056) = 4.88$, $p = .001$). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests showed ABC with fewer pins ($p = .006$) and Fox with more likes ($p = .001$).

Although the fourth question did not examine differences in followers, an ANOVA revealed a large difference among the five network affiliations ($F(4, 1054) = 37.8$, $p < .001$), with CBS ($N = 247$) and CW ($N = 56$) having significantly fewer followers ($p < .05$) than ABC ($N = 378$) and NBC ($N = 301$). Fox stations ($N = 77$) had significantly more followers ($p < .001$) than all other networks except NBC.

The fifth research question looked at specific differences related to promotion among the five affiliations. An ANOVA test showed one difference (the number of likes) among the network affiliations ($F(4, 208) = 2.86$, $p < .05$). Post-hoc Tukey HSD testing suggest that boards of NBC affiliates had a significantly more "likes" than boards of CBS affiliates ($p = .027$). The number of pins ($p = .088$), repins ($p = .106$), and comments ($p = .060$) did not yield statistically significant differences among the boards of the five network affiliations.

Table 3 about here

The final research question was answered with a stepwise regression of audience interaction on possible sources of influence: households, dummy-coded news, number of pins,

and number of boards (see Table 3). The final equation supported only two predictors: number of

pins (beta = .20, adjust $R^2 = 0.04$, $p < .001$) and number of boards (beta= .12, adjust $R^2 = 0.05$, p

$< .001$). Households were excluded, but dummy-coded news was barely excluded. When the

regression was run a second time without households in the equation, the other three predictors

were significant. The direction of news was negative, suggesting that non-news boards generated

more audience interaction ($p < .04$).

Discussion

Social media have become an integral component in the mix of tools that are used by

local television stations for audience connectivity, dissemination of information, and promotion

and branding. New to that mix is Pinterest, a social network that enables users to post photos and

other types of images to virtual pin boards based on interests (Lee, 2012). This study examined

the Pinterest sites of 85 television stations in various markets across the U.S. to determine

generally what stations were posting, and specifically the extent to which they were using this

social network for branding.

The overarching issue in this study was the role of Pinterest in promoting the station.

Results of the analysis showed that stations primarily used the social network for posting content

associated with lifestyle. More than a third of pin boards were dedicated to visuals that included

content such as food, design, clothing, let's and nature photography. This finding is

commensurate with prior observations and studies (Buttry, 2012; Speier, 2012; Wilson, 2012),

which showed that Pinterest sites of media tend to focus on lifestyle-related content. Just under a

quarter of boards in the present study contained news. Only one-fifth of the boards were

dedicated to directly promoting the station. It was interesting that boards associated with the

station's community comprised just 17 percent of the boards, since local interests would seemingly be important to broadcasters.

An examination of Pinterest use based on station characteristics revealed that most stations with Pinterest sites were affiliated with the big three broadcast networks. When considering size of market, large market stations posted the most boards, followed by medium and small markets. This finding was not unexpected, since television stations in large markets likely have more resources, including staff, to handle the station's social media efforts. In addition, large market stations had more followers than the other two market sizes, which again was not unexpected. However, an interesting finding was that small market stations had more pins than stations in the other market sizes. Perhaps stations in small markets are finding that social media provide a means of enhancing connections with their audiences.

When examining promotion elements in particular, this study found that the number of households was not associated with promotion-related pins, repins, likes or comments. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of repins among themes. Boards dedicated to promotion had fewer repins than boards carrying images associated with lifestyle. Also, the number people who followed promotion boards trailed the number of followers of both lifestyle and community boards. This suggests that audiences are primarily interested in sharing content that is largely unrelated to the station rather than conveying station personalities to other Pinterest followers. This finding also might provide an indication about the characteristics of social media that differentiate one from another, including the perceived uses of social networks by their followers.

The type of content that stations are posting on Pinterest is also pertinent. This study found that stations had more pins on news boards than non-news boards, but the analysis was not

statistically significant. Although stations were pinning more content on news boards, they are experiencing more repins on other types of boards. This finding suggests that news might be less engaging than other boards (such as lifestyle) and, therefore, not meaningful enough to be shared. However, assessing motivations for repinning is a topic for future research. In addition, Wilson (2012) observed that news boards had fewer followers than boards with other themes; however, the present study revealed no statistically significant differences between the number of followers of news and non-news boards.

Given the nature of social networking as a means of connecting individuals, this study also sought to determine which elements were associated with interactivity. A regression analysis showed that audience interaction was predicted largely by the number of pins and the number of pin boards. The number of households in a market was not an issue. This suggests that the sheer number of potential audience members (and, by extension potential followers to a station's Pinterest site) is not as important as availability of content that provides more opportunities for interaction. The type of content, however, is important. Although news was the second most frequently occurring board theme, a second regression (which excluded the number of households) showed that audiences interacted more with non-news boards.

How much are television stations using Pinterest for promotion and branding? Based on descriptive statistics, promotion was the third most frequently occurring board theme behind lifestyle and news. Additionally, this study found that there were fewer followers of promotion boards and significantly less repinning of those boards compared with other themes. Eastman, Ferguson and Klein (2006) argued that achieving a station's rating goals was dependent on brand positioning, understanding audiences, and using internal and external tactics that promote the station. Given those factors in promotion, boards and pins that promote a station directly might

not be the most important element in audiences feeling connected to the station. Instead, stations might be subtly branding themselves via association. Lifestyle boards could be serving as a means of attracting a specific type of audience member who develops loyalty to the station based on content related only tangentially to the station. Followers might perceive that the station knows what they like, which contributes to affinity toward the station (or at least the station's Pinterest site). Whether or not those boards translate into increased viewership or station loyalty should be examined as part of future research. That would help to determine how well Pinterest benefits a station.

Some limitations should be addressed regarding this study. One challenge was tracking pins and repins. Some boards were shared, making it difficult to determine which content was posted by the station or by others. Although some pins in shared boards were clearly local, others were so generic in nature that they could have originated from anywhere in the U.S.

Scholars have studied the content and uses of other social media in relation to radio and television (e.g., Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Ferguson & Greer, 2011; Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Wohn & Na, 2011). However, there is a dearth of research that specifically focuses on Pinterest. To date, most information about Pinterest is found in popular press articles. The present study offered an initial look at this social network and offers a basis for future study. One avenue for future research is considering television management perspectives of Pinterest. This includes the extent to which this social network is part of a station's overall promotion and branding strategy. Additionally, research should consider more broadly which social networks stations are using, how they are being used (based on social media characteristics) and the perceived benefits of each to the station.

Future research should also consider Pinterest followers. As previously suggested, this would include motivations for using the social network, follower affinity for Pinterest and the local television sites they follow, and the role that Pinterest plays in creating and enhancing loyalty toward the station. Given the differences in types of social media, researchers need to examine how those differences relate to audiences and their uses of various social networks.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	*M*	*SD*
Households	37,010	7,387,810	1,101,965.11	1,219,142.02
Boards	1	47	18.82	10.41
Followers	4	985	175.46	194.89
Pins	1	1138	26.94	57.83
Repins	0	3004	25.31	112.35
Likes	0	1859	11.32	62.95
Comments	0	26	0.53	1.58
Interaction	4	3386	207.89	251.51

Table 2

Correlations of Market Size with Pinterest measures (Pins, Repins, Likes, Comments)

	Households	Pins	Repins	Likes	Comments
Pins	.07				
Repins	-.04	.25**			
Likes	-.01	.39**	.79**		
Comments	-.04	.24**	.52**	.64**	
Market rank	-.62**	.02	-.01	-.03	-.07

* *p*<.05   ** *p*<.01

Table 3

Regression of Audience Interaction on Households, Pins, Boards, News

	Standardized Beta	*t*	*p*
Pins	0.20	6.69	0.000
Boards	0.12	3.96	0.000
Households		0.48	0.462
News		-0.64	0.056

Dependent variable: Audience Interaction

Final $F(2, 1055) = 29.29$, $p = .000$

Regression of Audience Interaction on Pins, Boards, News

	Standardized Beta	*t*	*p*
Pins	0.20	6.69	0.000
Boards	0.11	3.63	0.000
News	-0.06	-0.64	0.040

Dependent variable: Audience Interaction

Final $F(2, 1053) = 20.86$, $p = .000$