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Following Local Television News Personalities on Twitter:

A Uses and Gratifications Approach to Social Networking

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Abstract

News workers are finding social networking to be a means of maintaining personal contact with their audiences. Followers of local television news personalities were surveyed to assess their motivations for following these individuals, as well as their affinity toward the local station. The findings of this survey of 212 Twitter followers support the notion that social motivations best explain the use of social media. In addition, news workers who have Twitter followers might be enhancing viewers' affinity toward the news person's television station.

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In the past two decades, the roles of television journalists have morphed from providing content for a single medium into stories that are multi-purposed for various forms of traditional and new media platforms, such as content delivered via the Web (Smith, Tanner & Duhé, 2007). The recent development and diffusion of social network systems have further altered the roles of the news workers, as well as the roles of their audiences. On the sender side, journalists are not only writing stories, but they are also involved in the distribution process (Schulte, 2009). On the receiver side, people can carry the news with them via portable devices such as cell phone, personalize the content they want through the Internet, and participate in the creation and distribution of news content (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010).

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter are further transforming news from a simple form of push communication, based largely on media organizations, into a “social experience” (Purcell et al., 2010) or what Doctor (2010) has termed the “socialization of news” (p. 46). As such, Doctor (2010) argued that gatekeeping is now shared by journalists and consumers as both entities have become news editors. Social network systems have not only prompted news organizations to distribute their content through different platforms, but also have challenged them to determine how best to use features inherent in social media, such as retweeting (Doctor, 2010).

Local television stations are taking advantage of these systems to be more competitive with other media (Emmett, 2008/2009) and to enhance delivery of content, while connecting with their audiences. Speed is one reason why journalists are using Twitter (Farhi, 2009), with the social network serving as a breaking news source that provides information about current events

ahead of traditional media (Emmett, 2008/2009), particularly when going live is not possible for a local television station (Malone, 2010). A prominent example is the emergency landing of a US Airways jet on the Hudson River in 2009. Before news of the crash landing was broadcast on the mainstream media, followers of the social network system Twitter had already heard about the event (Beaumont, 2009).

With postings limited to 140 characters, Webster (2010) argued that Twitter seems to be more like a “broadcast medium” when compared with other popular social network systems. Perhaps it is that characteristic that is most appealing to local television news personnel and their followers. Scores of local television news personalities have become active users of Twitter. In a *Broadcasting & Cable* article, Malone (2010) noted that the top local television news personality who used Twitter had more than 13,000 followers and had provided nearly 25,000 tweets over a period of two and a half years.

Scholars are becoming increasingly interested in Twitter. A number of studies have considered the role of Twitter in a news context. Two studies (Greer & Ferguson, 2010; Smith, Miles & Lellis, 2010) have examined the content of local television station Twitter sites. Only one study (Johnson & Yang, 2009) has considered how people are using Twitter. Drawing on prior uses and gratifications research, the present study seeks to determine why people follow the Twitter sites of local television news personalities. Based on that framework, we take a multi-faceted approach to examine the motivations, personal connections, and the role of Twitter in the dissemination of news.

Review of Literature

Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Media Systems

Historically, uses and gratifications focused on motivations for using traditional broadcast and print media. The initial formulation of the theory centered on a number of assumptions regarding the audience, one of which posited that people are active and goal oriented in their selection of media to satisfy various needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Subsequently, it was found that activity also may vary according to factors such as the type of person, the “time of day” that a particular medium is accessed, and the content of the medium (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 239). Thus, using a uses and gratifications approach to examine the activities of media consumers provides an understanding of the extent of activity, as well as the result of that activity (Baran & Davis, 2009).

The advent of new media technologies, particularly Web-based communication, has dramatically changed the dynamics of media use. One aspect of that change involves the roles of media and audiences. Napoli (2010) argued that the emphasis in new media is not the production of content, but the idea that users can also widely distribute content online. Rather than a one to many concept of communication, “masses often seek to reach the masses” (p. 510).

Ruggiero (2000) stated that the implication of new media for communication scholars is to reconsider the notion of the active audience. He further argued that the strength of uses and gratifications is “its capacity to develop over time into a more sophisticated theoretical model” (p. 25). The diffusion of social network systems represents such a step in the development of our understanding of a uses and gratifications framework of audience activity. Indeed, social media have altered the traditional concepts of what comprises the sender and receiver into shared content and an online experience (Doctor, 2010).

A number of recent studies have considered various forms of social media, based on the users. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) examined YouTube viewer motives and sharing in light of

uses and gratifications and found that reasons for using YouTube were entertainment, information-seeking, watching video with others, and social interaction. Additionally, “socially active” males were more likely to be users of the service. While some reasons for accessing the online videos were consistent with prior television usage studies, the differences involved social motivations such as co-viewing and social interaction. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) concluded that users appear to be taking on different roles – individual viewing and sharing videos with others.

Ancu and Cozma (2009) examined the motivations for accessing the MySpace profiles of political candidates. Their analysis revealed that social interaction, information seeking, and guidance and entertainment explained just over 68% of the variance regarding gratifications for accessing the profiles. Social interaction was the most prominent reason to read the MySpace profiles, particularly the desire to communicate with other people who supported the candidate. Furthermore, age was associated with reading the candidate profiles in that younger people used MySpace for informational purposes, while older users access the profiles for entertainment.

Johnson and Yang (2009) studied the uses and gratifications of using Twitter and found that information and social activities were the two factors most associated with usage of the social network system. Social gratifications were associated with social motives, but information gratifications were related to the amount of use. Johnson and Yang (2009) concluded that the strengths of using Twitter are in connecting people and communicating between users. They suggested that Twitter serves as an information filter, since users can select whom they follow. Similarly, Java, Song, Finen and Tseng (2007) found that Twitter was primarily used as an information source, and as a way for people to talk about what they are doing rather than a tool to reply to others’ postings.

Given the research findings discussed above, there are perhaps two levels of audience activity as it relates to uses and gratifications of news media and Twitter following: information acquisition and interpersonal connectivity. The first level, which seems to be the primary motivation, is associated simply with the selection of a particular news source (as noted in the assumptions of the theory). Meanwhile, the second level alludes to the importance of social ties (which represents a convergence of uses and gratifications with the essence of social networking) in that the Twitter follower selects a specific person from among other individuals to follow.

Twitter and the News

The model of journalism is transitioning from the dissemination of news and information from “official sources” to the conveyance of a mixture of official and unofficial content over a variety of media platforms, and to a system in which citizens may participate in the news process (Hermida, 2010). Particularly noteworthy is the present role of social media. According to Hermida (2010), both journalists and news consumers who use social networks like Twitter are engaged in “ambient journalism,” which involves multiple layers of awareness of information. For example, a person who follows news tweets might be aware of “information in the periphery,” which can be moved from simple awareness to the forefront of attention when desired (p. 6). This enables news consumers to have awareness of events, but without becoming immediately involved in the details.

As discussed earlier, research has found that Twitter is most used as an information source. That notion has been supported in a number of recent studies. In a content analysis of local television Twitter sites, Greer and Ferguson (2010) found that news was featured on more than 80% of the sites. Little content was associated with station branding or driving users to the local newscasts.

Kwak, Lee, Park and Moon (2010) studied the typology of Twitter followers and their activities on the system. Their findings supported the notion that the social network serves as a breaking news source. They also found that users were more engaged in and discussed “fresh news” resulting in a rapid diffusion of information due to retweets. Half of retweets following an initial message occurred within the first hour and three-quarters of retweets happened during the first day.

Lerman and Ghosh (2010) examined the spread of news stories on Digg and Twitter by analyzing the flow of information via “active users.” Digg is a social network system that allows users to vote on their favorite news stories (“What is Digg,” n.d.). Stories that receive the most votes are moved to the top page of the site. The comparable action on Twitter is retweeting stories. The researchers found that, while Digg had more density of connections between users, Twitter stories spread farther on the network. As with the findings of Kwak et al. (2010), stories reached a network saturation spreading point within about one day. Lerman and Ghosh (2010) concluded that the importance of connectivity in social networks was in the diffusion of information.

Smith, Miles and Lellis (2010) analyzed the content of news posted to the Twitter sites of television stations affiliated with ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox. The highest percentage of stories (23%) were in the category “crime, law enforcement, legal system,” followed by “miscellaneous” (15.9%) and “government, politics, elections” (9.9%). Nearly 80% of tweets included Web links. Although Twitter users have the capability to use special tags to highlight or redistribute tweets, more than 80% of tweets offered none of those commands.

Given the findings of research dealing with the Twitter and news, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: What types of news stories do followers of local television news personnel most access?

Parasocial Interaction

A primary assumption of uses and gratifications is that the audience is active in its selection and use of media (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Not only are audiences active regarding types of media accessed, but also various motivations associated with seeking certain content to fulfill needs. A natural extension of this proposition involves the characters or personalities who appear on television and the way in which people interact with them, or what Horton and Wohl (1956) termed parasocial interaction.

Parasocial interaction is the idea that television audience members respond to actors, as if the actor were having a personal conversation with viewers (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In essence, the television personality, referred to by Horton and Wohl as “personae,” creates a sense of face-to-face interaction. Viewers feel a connection and personal relationship, albeit a one-sided one, with the on-air personality as if he or she were a friend who is part of a social life that includes relationships with actual friends.

According to Horton and Wohl (1956), the audience member comes to believe over time that he or she knows the television personality better than do other people. One appeal is that the personality is seen as predictable and consistent in a changing world. The production of the program itself also contributes to this perception. This might include actions of the personalities that help them connect with their audience, such as speaking directly to the audience, as well as television production techniques that encourage the audience to “participate.”

Since the time of Horton and Wohl's (1956) initial work, parasocial interaction has been examined in a number of contexts associated with television viewing. In one study, Rubin and McHugh (1987) found that relationships of television viewers with personalities were strongest between parasocial interaction and social attraction, job abilities (tasks) and "relationship development" (p. 288). Social attraction of the personalities was more important than physical attractiveness. In a study of soap opera viewers, Rubin and Perse (1988) found that parasocial interaction was tied to the amount of attention given to the television characters, the "story line," and the "true-to-life" nature of the show (p. 253). It also was associated with motivations of voyeurism, information and escape/relaxation. Perse and Rubin's (1989) study of soap opera viewers revealed that parasocial interaction was not related to the length of time that the individual had been acquainted with the television personality (p. 71).

Eyal and Cohen (2006) examined how individuals deal with the end of parasocial relationships with television characters when a show ceases production. They found that viewers who felt more connected to characters had a more difficult time when the show ended. The level of breakup "distress" was related to affinity, viewing commitment, perceived popularity of a character and the loneliness of the viewer.

Wang, Fink and Cai (2008) studied the extent to which college students used media and parasocial interaction to deal with loneliness. They found that there were differences in parasocial interaction according to gender. Females tended to use parasocial interaction when they experienced family loneliness, while males tended to use parasocial interaction when they experienced chronic loneliness. Overall, Wang, Fink and Cai (2008) concluded that parasocial interaction was not a substitute for "face to face communication." Given the age group of the

respondents, the researchers suggested that new media might be a more effective tool for parasocial interaction.

Of specific importance to the present study is the relationship between parasocial interaction and television news viewing, which Houlberg (1984) noted was complex. In an early study of this relationship, Levy (1979) found an existence of parasocial connections of audiences with television news personalities. News people were perceived as similar to friends, although respondents did not confuse the news person with real friends. Levy (1979) also found that viewers were empathetic when a news person made a mistake on air. In addition, he noted that there were positive relationships between both age and amount of television viewing and parasocial interaction, but a negative relationship between education and interaction. Similarly, Houlberg (1984) found that parasocial interaction did occur, but only for some news viewers. Additionally, the appearance of the personality was important, except regarding age and gender.

Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985) examined the relationship between loneliness, parasocial interaction and local television news viewers. They found that there was no association between loneliness and interaction with news personalities. However, they did find that “news affinity,” “perceived news realism,” and “information viewing motive” were related to parasocial interaction. Similarly, Perse (1990) found that parasocial interaction and viewing local television news was associated with “perceived realism,” as well as the emotional reactions of happiness (p. 30).

Based on prior research regarding parasocial interaction, we seek to answer the following two questions:

RQ2: What is the relationship between parasocial interaction and age and gender?

RQ3: What is the relationship between parasocial interaction and TV station affinity, Twitter affinity and Twitter news usage motivations?

Media Substitution

Coupled with the development of new communication technologies are questions about the extent to which new media might serve as functional alternatives for traditional media. In a study of college students, Ferguson and Perse (2000) found that respondents perceived that the Web was functionally different than television. The Web served as a replacement for entertainment, but not as a way to pass time, relax or as a substitute for interpersonal communication. Kaye and Johnson (2003) found that time with online media for individuals who sought political information was increasing, while traditional media habits remained about the same. Lin (2004) examined factors that influenced audience adoption of webcasting. Respondents perceived that webcasting would serve as a substitute for newspapers and radio. Lin (2004) also noted that those who tended to adopt webcasting spent less time with television and magazines. Additionally, younger people were more likely to adopt the technology. New media might also be affecting radio listenership. One study examined iPod use by college students and found that individuals who used MP3 devices were less likely to listen to traditional radio (Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007).

Of specific interest to the present study is the relationship between acquiring news online versus through traditional media. Early research on this topic by Stempel, Hargrove and Bernt (2000) indicated that the Internet was likely not associated with declines in traditional news media use. Althaus and Tewsbury (2000) asked whether the Web substituted for or served as a supplement for “traditional news media” (p. 21). Their study of college students revealed that the Web competed with entertainment television. Regarding news, respondents relied more on

traditional media, with the Web seen more as a supplement than a replacement. In contrast, Dimmick, Chen and Li (2004) found that the Internet was displacing traditional news media, particularly television, and that there was some displacement of newspapers. Additionally, Internet news was perceived as superior in satisfying needs compared with television, radio and newspapers.

Few studies in recent years have focused on media substitution as it relates to the acquisition of news content. However, some research organizations have tracked the public's use of new media for news. A report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project revealed that nearly 60% of Americans obtained news from both online and traditional broadcast and print media on a daily basis (Purcell et al., 2010). This suggests that obtaining news might not be an either/or situation when it comes to using traditional versus new media. Other factors are involved in media usage. Rather than simply consuming content, new media enables audience members to be both senders and receivers (Napoli, 2010). For example, the Pew Internet study cited above found that 37% of respondents participated in news by creating content, talking about it or posting it on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

There is a dearth in recent research regarding media substitution and news consumption, particularly in relation to social network systems. Therefore, we ask the following questions:

RQ4: What is the relationship between the amount of time daily people use Twitter for news and other media news use (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.)?

RQ5: What is the relationship between Twitter news use motivations, Twitter news use and months with a Twitter account?

Method

Respondents were recruited by broadcast news personnel designated as being among the most active Twitter users among their peers at U.S. television stations. An initial list of television news personnel was derived from an article in *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine that listed the top 10 Twitter users at local television stations (Malone, 2010). Additional contacts were obtained by conducting Web searches for news personnel who used Twitter. Each designated user was asked to send their followers a message (tweet) requesting they fill out a survey regarding the use of Twitter to follow television news personalities. A total of five users (of the 20 solicited) agreed to send the message to their combined approximate 30,000 followers. During August 2010, a total 300 people (followers) responded to part of the survey, of which 212 respondents completed all the items that formed the key variables and indexes.

The age of the sample ranged from 16 to 69 ($M = 40.6$, $SD = 11.24$, $n = 98$). Males accounted for 47.9% of the sample ($n=292$). Nearly 58 percent of the respondents live in Texas, with 7.3 percent in Connecticut, followed by receding percentages of another 19 states (e.g., 7 percent Michigan and 6 percent California). An ANOVA of responses from the top four states revealed no significant regional differences.

News items. Respondents were asked to select, from a list of 12 items, the one type of news story they most liked to read on the Twitter site of the news personality they follow: weather; crime, law enforcement, legal system; entertainment; government, politics, elections; disasters, accidents; health and science; business and economics; sports; military; education news; environmental news; foreign news. Items in the list were adapted from prior research (Smith, Miles, & Lellis, 2010).

Time Spent. Respondents were asked to estimate in hours and minutes their daily “time spent” with Twitter for news, television news, radio news, Internet news, and newspapers. Table 1 summarizes their responses in minutes.

Table 1

	Mean (minutes)	SD	n
Twitter	52.45	92.10	237
TV news	59.04	65.06	249
Radio news	34.72	63.08	241
Internet news	81.46	82.69	241
Newspapers	9.43	18.40	243

Twitter use and affinity. The number of months that respondents had been using Twitter ranged from 1 to 48 ($M = 17.06$, $SD = 9.01$, $n = 244$). Six affinity items were adapted from five statements used in previous research (e.g., Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007) measured on a five-point Likert scale. The sixth item was “I believe Twitter is an important online source for news and information.” Cronbach’s alpha (.86) was measured for Twitter affinity.

Parasocial interaction. To measure parasocial interaction, we adapted six of the 10 Likert items found in previous parasocial research (e.g., Perse, 1990): “The news person makes me feel as if he/she is a friend,” “I feel that the news person is a down-to-earth individual,” “I look forward to watching the news person on the newscast,” “The news person seems to understand

the kinds of things I want to know,” “I miss seeing the news person when he/she is not on the newscast,” and “I would like to meet this individual in person.” Cronbach’s alpha (.89) was used to measure reliability for parasocial interaction.

Television station affinity. Motivation for watching the news personality’s television station because of his or her Twitter site was measured by the following six Likert items: “I watch more local news on the news person’s TV station because of the person’s Twitter site,” “I feel more connected to the news person’s TV station because of the person’s Twitter site,” “I feel that the news person’s TV station is more interested in its viewers because the person has a Twitter site,” “I have told my friends about the news person’s Twitter site,” “I have retweeted the news person’s messages on Twitter,” and “I read more news on the website of the news person’s TV station.” Cronbach’s alpha (.85) was used to measure reliability for local television station affinity.

Twitter following motivations. Based on nearly three decade’s of uses and gratifications research, we adapted motivation items from several studies that derive from Rubin’s television viewing motives scale (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994). Respondents were asked why they follow their local television news person's Twitter postings. The survey included 33 items that measured social affiliation (11 items, alpha = .93), arousal (3 items, alpha = .83), companionship (3 items, alpha = .81), escape (2 items, alpha = .79), and information-seeking (5 items, alpha = .78). Relaxation (.68), habit (.59), and entertainment (.50) did not fare well as reliable measures. Passtime was measured as a single item.

Results

The first research question was answered by generating a frequency distribution for the types of news stories most followed. Table 2 shows the results. Weather accounted for over half

(52.25 percent) of what people followed the most. Political news (10.6), sports (9.6), business news (8.3), and disasters/accidents (7.8) accounted most of the remaining half. Very few respondents were primarily interested in entertainment news (4.1), crime news (3.2), education (1.8), health news (0.9), or foreign news (0.9).

Table 2

News Topic	Frequency	Percentage (n=218)
Weather	114	52.3
Government/Politics	23	10.6
Sports	21	9.6
Business/Economics	18	8.3
Disasters/Accidents	17	7.8
Entertainment	9	4.1
Crime/Law	7	3.2
Education	4	1.8
Health/Science	2	0.9
Foreign	2	0.9
Military	1	0.5

Statistical tests were run to answer the second research question regarding demographic predictors of parasocial interaction. Age was not significantly correlated with parasocial interaction ($r=-.07$, n.s.) and no gender difference was found ($t=0.53$, $df=204$, n.s.). Age was, however, inversely related to the following variables: TV news affinity ($r=-.24$, $p<.01$), escape ($r=-.21$, $p<.01$), and arousal ($r=-.20$, $p<.01$). None of the motivations differed on gender.

Regarding RQ3, parasocial interaction was related to affinity for the local television station where the news person works ($r=.50$, $p<.001$) and daily Twitter use for news ($r=.17$, $p<.05$). Parasocial interaction was also related to four motivations for following the news personality's Twitter site: arousal ($r=.29$, $p<.001$), information ($r=.29$, $p<.001$), social ($r=.27$, $p<.001$), and companionship ($r=.16$, $p<.05$).

RQ4 examined time spent acquiring news each day on Twitter and via traditional media. Time spent getting news on Twitter was directly related to time spent with TV news ($r=.14$, $p<.05$) and web news ($r=.19$, $p<.01$), but was unrelated to time spent with radio news ($r=.07$, n.s.) and newspapers ($r=.03$, n.s.). When answering survey items comparing news on Twitter to news on other media, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred Twitter over radio (45.2 percent) and over newspaper (54.0 percent).

The final research question looked at the length of time respondents had a Twitter account (i.e., experience), measured in months. Experience was directly related to affinity for the local television station ($r=.15$, $p<.05$), but unrelated to time spent watching local television news ($r=.05$, n.s.). None of the motivations (other than affinity) were related to length of experience. Experience was, however, related to telling friends about news items on Twitter ($r=.19$, $p<.01$) and retweeting news items ($r=.19$, $p<.01$).

Discussion

Media organizations and television news personalities are increasingly using social network systems to enhance communication with their audiences. This study reports on a survey of people who follow the Twitter postings of local television news workers. Specifically, this research focused on variables such as motivations for following the sites of the personalities, affinity for the local television station, and affinity for Twitter.

Recent studies have considered the types of news stories that people tend to read when using online media resources. Purcell et al. (2010) found that the most popular subject people read when accessing news content in general on the Internet was weather. That finding is consistent with our study of followers of local television news personalities. It makes good sense that Twitter followers, who often get their tweets via their mobile device/phone, would prefer breaking weather. The high demand for weather information in the present study also might be due to the desire for weather updates depending upon the region of the country.

The concept of “following” is the central purpose of Twitter users. When it comes to following local news personalities, the question this study sought to answer was the extent to which connectivity might be associated with interpersonal motivations or parasocial interaction. With parasocial interaction, television viewers perceive the personality as a friend (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The present study found that neither age nor gender was significantly related to parasocial interaction. However, age was related inversely to television station affinity, as well as to the motivations of escape and arousal for following the Twitter sites of news personalities. Perhaps news becomes more intentional for older viewers, compared with excitement and diversion for younger followers.

Parasocial interaction was also examined in light of variables associated with Twitter and local television station affinity. There was a significant relationship between interaction and television affinity, a finding similar to that of Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985). This suggests that the Twitter sites of local television news personalities may serve to enhance the connection and loyalty of audiences to the news person's television station.

There was also a positive relationship between parasocial interaction and four motivations for following the local television news personalities on Twitter: arousal, information, social, and companionship. Since the arousal motivation is associated with concepts such as excitement and being thrilled, it is possible that followers find frequent updates something to which they look forward as if receiving communication from someone whom they trust as a friend. The second motivation, information, makes sense, given the use of Twitter for news updates and breaking news (e.g., Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). The social motivation might be related to the retweet function of Twitter in that users find postings as a point of connection with the news personality, as well as friends with whom they share information. As Johnson and Yang (2010) noted, one of Twitter's strengths is connecting people. Finally, the motivation of companionship might be associated with constant communication due to the frequency of postings by the news person.

Research has examined whether or not the emergence of new media are substituting for traditional media. The present study found that time spent using Twitter was positively related to time spent with television news and Web news. Commensurate with Althaus and Tewsbury (2000), accessing news via Twitter appeared to be a supplement rather than a replacement for those two types of media. This finding also might be an indication that people are using multiple platforms to obtain news (Purcell et al., 2010). There were no significant relationships between

time spent on Twitter and the amount of time that respondents daily spent reading newspapers and listening to the radio. This might be due to the differences in the types of media. However, when looking at descriptive statistics, just over 42 percent of respondents indicated that they preferred Twitter over radio and 54 percent preferred Twitter over newspapers. Future research should examine whether these perspectives are related to perceptions of radio and newspapers when compared to Twitter.

Finally, this study considered whether there was a relationship between the amount of time daily that respondents used Twitter for news, Twitter affinity and motivations for using Twitter. We found that time using Twitter was related to television news viewing motivations. The more that respondents used Twitter each day for news, the more affinity they felt toward the news personality's station. This suggests that the Twitter efforts of local television news personalities might be reaping benefits for the station in that followers are feeling more connected. Additionally, this study also revealed that the more time that people spent on Twitter each day the more likely they were to tell their friends about news items they saw posted on Twitter and to retweet postings.

The findings of this study support the notion that social motivations best explain the use of social media. While hardly surprising, the measurement against other motivations provides a baseline for future research on why people use Twitter to follow news and how that use relates to older media like television. In a content analysis of local television station Twitter sites, Greer and Ferguson (2010) found that stations were doing little to drive followers to their on-air newscasts. However, as indicated in the present study, the Twitter sites of individual news personalities might be doing that job. Rather than seeing the tweets of news workers as simply information, followers appear to perceive content from a more personal level. The implication

for television news departments is the benefit of becoming more involved in social media to enhance connections with audiences. For journalists, however, the creation and distribution of content through multiple platforms means increased responsibilities (Smith, Tanner & Duhé, 2007).

The longer a person uses Twitter, the greater their affinity for following TV news personalities. The tentative conclusion is that Twitter use for following TV news will grow in the future. Information-seeking provides a definite motivation, but personal and arousal-related motivations are also factors in building relationships between TV news personalities and their followers. Self-identifying as a follower has a fair amount of face validity as an unmeasured indicator of parasocial interaction.

The self-selected sample used in this study is a limitation. Future studies should attempt to locate a random sample to support claims of representativeness upon which this study did not focus. Additionally, a number of respondents completed only a portion of the questionnaire. This issue is difficult to resolve, especially when it comes to somewhat lengthy lists of questions coupled with the motivation level of respondents. There is a growing body of research related to the use of social networks, including a number of studies that have focused on Twitter. A decade ago, Ruggiero (2000) challenged scholars to think differently about uses and gratifications. Systems, such as Twitter, provide fertile ground for further examination of the active audience in relation to creating and distributing news content on social networks.

This study examined the underlying process and found that motivations can predict Twitter use. Web-based technology is changing the way people consume news. Older media must adapt to these changes to stay relevant among news competitors.

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