

Chapter 43

Citizen Engagement and News Selection for Facebook Pages

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ABSTRACT

As news flows in the social media environment, communication processes are facilitated by connecting processes between different categories of people. Thus, multimedia stories in social media journalism link not only pieces of information, but also people. Social media platforms are not only to communicate with audiences, but also to make connections between different stakeholders in the online production of news. This chapter investigates if this process of the selection of news for social media platforms is based on algorithmic criteria, or is only based on a human judgment? Methodologically, this chapter will analyse data from the Facebook pages of Romanian news sites in order to generate data which will be developed for a comparative analysis with online media in Poland. The questions raised by this study concern how media companies promote information on social media sites today.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter demonstrates that the users' engagement with a Facebook for Business page is according to what news and articles are selected by the media company.

The emphasis of this chapter shows that the selection process of news done by the media companies must depend on Facebook algorithm and also by the users' needs for specific types of information. In the same time, the Facebook algorithm favors users, and not the business pages, so media companies must faces with an important challenge to reach the users. Also, the selection process of news and articles for Facebook pages influences the users' engagement causing a large number of likes, shares and comments.

As traffic analysis of web sites shown, the Facebook pages of media products are the second place where the audience comes from. So, media companies are very interested to use Facebook pages to make known their products and to bring the audience on news sites.

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This chapter provides together both the users perspective, who find news sites starting from Facebook pages, and also the perspective of media companies, and the use of the selection process of the news that causing the reaching of news sites by the users through Facebook pages.

In the same time users have their own criteria to select news in their Facebook feed.

Considering this context of finding news on the Facebook platform, it must be found the strategies and principles in benefit of both of the users, and the media companies.

Thus, media companies attract users to news sites with information that generate more engagement, that means content which makes the user to react giving evaluations through buttons of like, share and comment. Thus, a business objective of media companies is to provide content that increase user engagement. In this direction, media companies can use the viral content, for instance.

Users of Facebook receive a plethora of information within the 'News Feed' section of the site, both from profiles of their friends and from Facebook 'Pages' (representing organisations or groups) that they 'Like'. Media companies have an important strategic fight for their news to be found by users in their News Feed. Moreover, this news content must engender user engagement too. This objective is central to the news selection processes by media organisations. Therefore, prioritising news on the Facebook News Feed is crucial.

According to a Digital News Report done by the Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism (2014), users of social media (primarily YouTube and Facebook) employ different methods to find news. In this context, social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, have become vehicles to deliver news and an important entry to find news. The study suggested that younger users access social media as a solution for finding news, that women use Facebook more to discover news than men, and that Facebook users prefer to comment on a news story and watch video content. The report concludes that users that search specifically for news are more attached to Twitter, whilst casual users with relatively low levels of interest tend to use Facebook. So, it proposed that Twitter is used more for searching for news than Facebook, which is used more for discovering news when users browse their personalised News Feed.

In this context, news providers are looking increasingly to maximise user engagement and participation on social media platforms as a central business objective. Creating viral content is a good solution for driving the editorial content on social media platforms and to catch users' attention. Due to intense competition between news agencies on social media platforms, indicators such as reach, or frequency of posting, are employed as additional indicators for a more nuanced interpretation of meaningful engagement. Facebook is central. Newman (2014), in research on the importance of social media platforms for sharing and discovering breaking news, shows that Facebook is the biggest social media platform used for any purpose, including news. Video news stories on social media platforms are preferred more for some topics such as celebrities, fun, and sports, getting an important number of views. Finally, the study revealed that consumers/users of social media, strongly favour traditional journalistic criteria, such as objectivity and impartiality, in their digital news.

Social media's relationship with news has multiple uses: news media use, journalistic practices, audience research, as a source of news, a way to finding news or a way to engage with news (Nielsen & Schröder, 2014). This relationship is complex, with social media also being involved in the news information cycle, the processes of production and dissemination of content, and also for creating the cross-media content. Many studies therefore address social media as a distinct form of media use, not least given the creative potential and participatory features within the medium. In this environment, users are actors in the news information cycle in a participatory sense in that they are creators, but also disseminate and discuss news. Social media is an aggregator and a cross-media repertoire to access,

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