

Journalists' social media efforts not saving industry, according to study

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With the rise of speed-driven journalism, reporters face an industrywide expectation to use social media to engage readers. But new research from UT Dallas finds actual practices are falling short of that goal.

In her most recent study, Dr. Angela Lee, assistant professor of Emerging Media and Communication, examined how [journalists](#) use [social media](#) in their pursuit for speedy news, and how they perceive their audiences are affected by tweets and posts.

Using in-depth interviews with 11 journalists from different national, metropolitan and local newspapers, Lee's findings offer several reasons why social media may be unable to save [news organizations](#) from financial woes.

Published by The International Journal on Media Management, the study finds that despite an organizational expectation to use social media to engage audiences, journalists primarily use Twitter to communicate with other journalists.

"This study contributes to a larger body of work looking at the disconnect between journalists and news consumers," Lee said. "Despite prevalent organizational expectations that journalists engage with audiences on social media, most interviewees have very little experience with, or knowledge of, their audiences."

Although Lee did not conduct a content analysis of social media

accounts, she said that interviewees use it to share their work and interests, as well as a form of keeping in touch.

The Pew Research Center's State of the News Media report suggests that, even as print news remains the core product for most news organizations, the medium is in decline, with both revenue and circulation falling annually.

According to the report, online operations are growing but at a snail's pace. Digital advertising only accounts for a sliver of total ad revenue—17 percent in 2014.

Despite these observations, journalists are not receiving institutional support or resources for audience engagement on social media, which could explain a lack of implementation, she said.

Platforms like Twitter do offer more opportunities for transparency in the newsgathering and delivery processes, but Lee argued that the economic value of such platforms is also crucial to most commercial news organizations in the U.S.

She suggested that the prospect of social media saving the newspaper industry from its [financial woes](#) is grim.

"When asked to assess the economic viability of Twitter as a news platform, most interviewees believed that while Twitter may encourage news use by serving as teasers, it is unlikely to encourage audiences' willingness to pay," she said. "So the question is, how do you save the [news](#) industry with a product that is unlikely to generate profit?"

More information: Angela M. Lee. Social Media and Speed-Driven Journalism: Expectations and Practices, *International Journal on Media Management* (2015). [DOI: 10.1080/14241277.2015.1107566](https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2015.1107566)

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