

Top news outlets see more risks than benefits in employees' use of social media

July 12 2016



Lehigh University assistant professor of journalism Jayeon "Janey Lee" finds in a new study that top news organizations focused more on risks than benefits of employees' use of social media. Credit: Lehigh University.

Realizing the risks of social media, major news organizations have created guidelines for employees regarding how to use these outlets,

separate from the companies' existing codes of conduct. Little scholarly attention has been paid to the guidelines so far.

Now, Jayeon Lee, assistant professor of journalism at Lehigh University, has analyzed the [guidelines](#) and finds that [news organizations](#) are more concerned about the current social media environment than excited about it at least when it comes to their employees.

She details her findings in a study called "Opportunity or risk? How news organizations frame social media in their guidelines for journalists," set to be published in the print edition of *The Communication Review* in the fall.

The study, a content analysis of the social media guidelines of nine American news organizations—*The New York Times*, *The Associated Press*, *Bloomberg*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, and NPR—and three British news organizations—BBC, *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph*—investigates how these employers frame messages about employee social media usage.

"I was wondering what approaches news organizations take when it comes to their own employees' social media uses," Lee said. "In particular, knowing both positive and negative implications of journalists' social media uses, I wanted to see if their guidelines were dominantly positive, negative, or neutral in their framing of the implications."

Overall, Lee found that the guidelines focus primarily on the risks and challenges presented by the use of social media rather than the opportunities and advantages for media.

"As some media critics point out, overreaching rules can stifle creativity

and morale and even discourage overall social media use itself," she explained.

According to the study, news organizations are most concerned about: accuracy, breaking objectivity, inappropriate online behaviors, and harming news organizations' principles and credibility.

Accuracy—sourcing or redistributing false information from social media without sufficient fact verification—was the most frequently raised topic and accounted for 17.8 percent of the total sentences studied.

"The results show that the prevention-focused approach is more common than I would have predicted," she said. "Although I expected that the guidelines would include various warnings related to risky social media activities, I was surprised to find little comment about how to use social media wisely or effectively to derive full benefit from it."

Lee recognized that news organizations are actively utilizing various social media to reach a wider audience and build brand loyalty.

"However, it seems they are keen on keeping their own employees from actively engaging in [social media](#)."

More information: Jayeon Lee, Opportunity or risk? How news organizations frame social media in their guidelines for journalists, *The Communication Review* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/10714421.2016.1161328](https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2016.1161328)

Provided by Lehigh University

Citation: Top news outlets see more risks than benefits in employees' use of social media (2016, July 12) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-07-news-outlets-benefits-employees-social.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.