



HABITS OF SHARING AND FOLLOWING CURRENT NEWS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

GÜNCEL HABERLERİN SOSYAL MEDYA ORTAMLARINDA PAYLAŞILMA VE TAKİP ALIŞKANLIKLARI

Erdem KOÇ¹

Abstract

People have always eager to learn what is going on around them, share, and follow information they obtain with others. Considering historical process, communication, started with primitive techniques such as figures drawn on cave walls, tablets, papyrus have left their place to devices, allowing internet-based instant communication provided by digital technologies. Devices, used with internet have made interactive audio, motion picture, text, picture, video mobile instead of conventional communication. Becoming popular as of 1995, internet has taken its place in social life as important and complementary element in media. Thus, communication has become simultaneously realizable with video and audio records. Popularization of internet-based communication methods causes changes in structures of media agencies. Social media platforms have become important tools in terms of sharing and following current news. In this study, role of social media sharing about news and developments in society will be studied. In this context, behaviors of people, regularly using Facebook and Twitter are to examine. Interviews will be conducted with 17 people, 8 women and 9 men. In the study, in which semi-structured interviews were used, frequency, reasons and importance of follow-up and use of social media in receiving news were investigated on voluntary basis.

Keywords: Society, Daily Life, Sharing and following of News, Community Communication, Social Media.

Öz

İnsanlar sosyal varlıklar olarak çevrelerinde olup bitenleri öğrenmeye ve edindikleri bilgileri başkalarıyla paylaşmaya hep ihtiyaç duymuşlardır. Tarihsel süreç göz önüne alındığında mağara duvarlarına çizilen figürler, tabletler, ahşap baskılar gibi ilkel tekniklerle başlayan iletişim yöntemleri, yerini dijital teknolojilerin internet tabanlı anlık iletişimine olanak sağlayan cihazlara bırakmıştır. İnternet teknolojileri ile birlikte kullanılmaya başlanan cihazlar, alışlagelmiş tek yönlü iletişim yerine interaktif ses, sinema, metin, resim ve videoyu mobil hale getirmiştir. 1995 yılı itibari ile popüler hale gelen internet teknolojisi, medyada önemli ve tamamlayıcı bir unsur olarak toplumsal hayatta yerini almıştır. Böylece iletişim yöntemi video ve ses kayıtları ile eş zamanlı olarak gerçekleştirilebilmiştir. İnternet tabanlı iletişim yöntemlerinin yaygınlaşması, medya kuruluşlarının yapılarında da değişikliklere neden olmuştur. Sosyal medya platformları güncel haberlerin paylaşılmasında ve takibinde önemli araçlar haline gelmişlerdir. Çalışmada, insanların haberler ve toplumdaki gelişmeler hakkında sosyal medya paylaşımlarının iletişimde nasıl bir rol oynadığı incelenmeye çalışılacaktır. Bu bağlamda, sosyal medya araçlarından düzenli olarak Facebook ve Twitter'ı kullanan kişilerin davranış biçimleri incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Çalışmada 8'i kadın, 9'u erkek olmak üzere 17 kişi ile görüşmeler yapılacaktır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme kullanılan araştırmada gönüllülük esasına dayanılarak haber alımında sosyal medyanın takibinin ve kullanımının sıklığı, sebepleri ve önemi araştırılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplum, Günlük yaşam, Haber paylaşımı ve takibi, Toplumsal İletişim, Sosyal Medya.

¹ PhD, Maltepe University, Communication Department, erdemkoch@hotmail.com, Orcid: 0000 – 0003- 3164 - 9796

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, people communicate via social networks and these social networks enable individuals to mutually interact and meet with different people around common subjects on the same platform. Social media platforms like; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, blogs, podcasts, message boards, and content sharing websites draw the attention of people and are widely used across the World.

Social media applications like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter platforms have become more popular among people every day. (Baym, 2012). One of the purposes of using social media mediums can be listed as receiving, producing, and spreading the news. While social media are rarely people's only gateway to news (Nielsen and Schröder 2014), for many, they have become a fixed component of their Daily media repertoires. For example, in Reuters' latest Digital News Report, which surveyed news users across 36 countries, over half of the respondents said they had used social media for news in the past week (Newman et al. 2017).

The growing popularity of social media as avenues for news has fostered a range of mostly quantitative studies examining such patterns of behaviour, analyzing for instance which combinations of platforms are employed by different generations, genders and socio-economic segments, the motives and gratifications behind different forms of social media news use and the topics of the news stories that social media users distribute (Bright 2016). Considering the settings in which news use takes place is important, because it is exactly these taken-for-granted contexts of everyday life where news obtains its societal meaning and significance. As Dahlgren (2009) argues, without any link to people's Daily experiences, it does not make sense for citizens to engage in regular patterns of news use to bridge their private and public worlds. An important consequence of the widespread use of social networks among individuals is the way news is produced, used, and disseminated. This has led to the emergence of masses involved in the news both with their comments and with their distributive characteristics instead of people who only receive news.

When considering scholarship that focuses specifically on how news becomes embedded in everyday life, one dominant line of work centres around the temporal aspects of media use and how news becomes part of people's daily rhythms (e.g. Dimmick, Feaster, and Hoplamazian 2011; Picone 2016; Wennekers, van Troost, and Wiegman 2016). Another increasingly popular field of inquiry has explored the spatial dimensions of news, looking at how the dynamics of different places and spaces structure people's news habits (e.g. Goggin, Martin, and Dwyer 2015; Peters 2012, 2015). This paper builds on these research strands to focus on a third interrelated aspect of everyday life, namely the relational structures in which people's news habits are embedded. Even before the invention of the press, people felt a need to exchange information about what was happening around them. Centuries later, "the news", now neatly packaged into professional journalism products, maintains this character. Although often consumed in isolation, studies have repeatedly found that the news still has an inherently social dimension, both directly as a shared activity or indirectly, as a frame of reference or an easy topic for conversation (Boczkowski 2010; Hermida 2014; Larsen 2000; McCollough, Crowell, and Napoli 2017).

With the development and spread of digital technologies, people's habits of information have changed. When effective news is examined, it is observed that news is included in people's daily lives as an integral part (Dimmick, Feaster, and Hoplamazian, 2011). It is important that the content of the news is up to date and refers to the agenda. As noted by Dahlgren (2009), the contents of news should act as a bridge between individuals' private and social lives. This paper therefore investigates what social role the news to have,

the collective practices of interacting around news, the associated use of social media platforms, and the content that people tend to share and why. To this end, following Williams (1977) description of the governing ways “community” is conceptualized and practised as a social form, it employs focus groups consisting of people who interact primarily based on their membership in three principal types of (social network) communities: location-based, work-related and leisure - oriented.

The participants comprising these groups frequently communicate both within these social media communities as well as in offline settings. More broadly, the findings of this paper relate to the changing role of news and journalism in people’s daily communications, updating earlier insights in how news facilitates “public connection” within digital societies. Studies show that there is a social dimension inherent in the news even directly or indirectly. Even before the emergence of the press, people needed to exchange information and today's modern understanding of journalism still retains this characteristic and fulfills the needs of people to receive news.

In the study, semi-structured interview method is used with 17 people, 8 women, 9 men; so as to understand people’s exchange of news through social media platforms and reliability of the news through social media platforms.

SOCIAL ASPECT OF USE OF NEWS

As noted by Berelson (1949), the concept of news possesses the informational function as well as some aspects like socialization of individuals and enabling them to belong to the society. Newspapers can connect with their readers and create a sense of conversation and interaction about the agenda beyond their content (Bentley, 2001; Bogart, 1989).

Studies have found that newspapers can provide a sense of connection and support everyday conversation and interaction. The television's characteristic, on the other hand, inspired the way social media is used, and when both tools are used, there is an indoor interaction with others (Jensen, 1990; Lull, 1980; Silverstone, 1994). Studies have shown how news can play an integrative role in the face of social situations and how it can become an integral part of people's lives (Bogart, 1989). Recent studies show that this is no different in the digital age, and only the methods of receiving and delivering news have become more tailor-made it is thanks to personalized technological tools (Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham 2007:221).

Heikkila and Ahva (2015) draw attention to the connecting potential of news in social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp and the interpersonal communication dimension of news users with the following statement; “firstly, social media platforms allow users to create their own online communities and to exchange information at the touch of a button. Thus, technology facilitates the spread of news and allows individuals to make comments about the news.” In addition to sharing and commenting on the news, users can indicate whether they like the news, share the news on different social media platforms, or even send it to specific people using the tagging method (Picone, De Wolf, and Robijt, 2016).

Unlike most mass media technologies, digital and social media can be used by individuals to exchange news regardless of time or place (Dimmick, Feaster, and Hoplamazian, 2011). Social media users have difficulty balancing family and friends while directing their social content. (Ekstro, 2016; Thorson, 2014). Relevant studies have shown that users share more private posts on more social media platforms that are for people and certain groups such as WhatsApp rather than in open mediums such as Facebook and Twitter (Newman et al., 2017). The study by Goh (2017) revealed that news shared by people with a

limited number of people on WhatsApp carries deliberate and strategic purposes. For instance, some users try to spread the news with a high degree of importance requiring action while some users engage in the news with symbolic comments to maintain their social relationships. The way people engage in the news on social media varies based on their expectations.

Social media is a set of social rules consisting of users' efforts to identify themselves. Crawford (2009) states that users may choose to remain just audience rather than commenting or sharing the news in some cases, and they can turn to behaviors such as checking messages at different frequencies and choosing who to follow. Another factor directing individuals' use of social media is the *bond strength*. According to Granovetter (1973), strong and weak bonds can be classified based on criteria such as emotional intensity, intimacy, reciprocity, and time allocated.

The common view is that the reasons people are affected by the news can vary depending on the family environment in which they grow up. Adults family members act as a filter for children directing them to know which news is important and should be known, and children engage in the agenda by sharing this news with their peers (Gauntlett and Hill, 1999).

The internet (journalism) is becoming increasingly popular among media types due to its increasing number of users, dynamic structure, and user-friendliness. Relevant studies show that conventional media has a decreased number of followers, and internet news/information content has an increasing number of followers (Mindich, 2005; Newman et al., 2017). People are now turning to social media sources such as Facebook and Twitter as the primary source of news instead of radio, television, and newspapers (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018).

Twitter's Page Architecture

Twitter is an extremely simple platform to use and provides its users with the ability to receive/transmit messages up to 140 characters, participate in blogs, share images, comment, and like (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015). Studies show that micro-blogs such as Twitter are more common in terms of information exchange. (Lee & Oh, 2013). Text messaging facilitates learning and understanding of social issues (Gleason, 2013).

Twitter has a feature such as prominently displaying the "Trending Topics" section immediately when users log on to the website (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). The "Trend Topic" (TT) is a list created as a result of the most commonly used keywords and hashtags on Twitter, a popular micro-blogging site. A user looking at the TT list can easily understand what users are focusing on and which topics are more popular on Twitter at the moment.

Although it is not always users' primary priority to reach "trend topics", it allows users to directly access important news on the agenda. An important feature of Twitter is that it lists the "trend topics" related to the country where the user is connected to the internet.

Platform Use

Unlike Twitter, Facebook is a broader social media platform that allows users an unlimited number of characters, allows them to receive/transmit messages, join in blogs, share images, comment, and like.

Facebook is often used for social motivation and entertainment (Ju et al., 2014). This social network is preferred to reduce loneliness, relax, establish and develop social relationships, communicate with friends, acquaintances, and relatives (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015). According to a study conducted in the Netherlands, 49% of

Facebook users do not prefer to see news posts, and if they have to see and share news, they want light news (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015). On the other hand, 83% of Twitter users regard sharing news via Twitter; thus, they prefer Twitter to share current news rather than socializing (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015). This also supports the fact that the rate of following the news on Twitter is four times higher than on Facebook (Ju et al., 2014).

Although today news contents are shared on various social media platforms, the number of followers of leading news agencies such as CNN and the Newyork Times and politicians is the highest on Twitter (Ju et al., 2014). According to many users, Facebook is not the right place to share news (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink,2015; Vitak et al., 2011). Considering people's Facebook posts, it is observed that if there is a post on news, it usually includes news content about their current life concerning themselves, their family, and close friends (Wang, 2017).

Another reason why Twitter is seen as a news medium is that it is open to passive users. In other words, users can also track the posts of publications, persons, or groups they want to receive news/information from without any membership (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018).

Online Learning

According to a study conducted by Kenski and Stroud (2006) on internet journalism, users can better learn about political developments since they can reach a synthesis by reading the content of the news as well as user comments.

Social networking platforms have great advantages both for news publishers and users. Most importantly, these platforms are generally free for users and allow unlimited information sharing (Yoo & Gil deZúñiga, 2014). Users can not only receive the news but also be the producer, interpreter, and publisher of the news by engaging in the news as in conventional media. Many people use social networks to capture the agenda, maintain their social relationships, and actually get involved in life.

Social networks create a learning environment even for passive users. Posts shared by a person they follow, retweets (sharing another person's tweet on their own page), some ads and promotions help passive users to have information albeit in an involuntary form. (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). Thus, media news is becoming more common on social media mediums, and users can learn more whether they want to or not (Elenbaas, de Vreese, Schuck & Boomgaarden, 2014). The fact that users can access information and news without any effort increases the interest in social networks every day (Bode, 2016).

According to popular opinion, Twitter is mostly used to share political and current news (Kwak et al., 2010). Facebook, on the other hand, is mainly used to communicate, socialize and share a limited number of news with their close circle (Wang, 2017). Thus, the way people get news via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter differs from person to person in terms of "what kind of news they want to get news and how often they want to get news".

Subjectivity as an Element of Social Media Logic

Klinger (2013) states that the logic of social media is based on the logic of "going viral." As a medical term "viral" means rapid spread through a virus. Social media is also used in the sense that a post shared without any commercial purpose quickly spreads and becomes popular among users.

If political news on Twitter is posted with an emotional meaning, it is observed that it is retweeted and shared faster than plain news messages (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013, 2017). But it should be noted that readers make sure that the news is not detached from reality while emotional elements are included in the news. Al-Rawi (2017) notes that online news readers prefer to read and share positive and impressive news as opposed to negative, anger, and anxiety-inducing news.

Harcup and O'Neill (2017) mention the fact that news on social media is “shareable” is the most important feature that distinguishes the concept of “news” from conventional media. The feature of news on social media being “worth sharing” has become an important element for journalists (Trilling, Tolochko, and Burscher, 2016).

Subjective expressions have become an integral part of communication on social media. The feature on Facebook to report status and respond to notifications with emojis can be considered an example of this.

News reviews and storytelling techniques in the field of journalism have begun to be reshaped with the spread of digital media. For example, journalists who manage newspapers' Facebook pages are expected to adapt to the subjective elements that determine communication on social networks to increase and improve the accessibility and vitality of news content.

Emphasis on subjectivity and sensuality in social media news is more important than in conventional media. Social media news producers, who are aware of this situation, are almost at war with each other to get the views, clicks, comments, and posts of digital news consumers (Koç, 2020, 906). The success of social media news producers is measured by digital news consumers reading the news and sharing it on Facebook or Twitter via their laptop or smartphone. In this regard, digital media news content should meet the needs of news consumers who scan, select and share this news on their networks in an abundance of information.

Like headlines of news in conventional newspapers, status messages are placed at the top of the news and refer to the article below. The message can be a word, sentence, short paragraph, or quote. Facebook news, on the other hand, is published in accordance with the logic of social media. The news that "10 people died in a train accident" does not contain any subjectivity. The news is negative, objective, and does not reflect any opinion of the author. If the same news is presented as “10 people lost their lives in the tragic train accident”, the phrase “tragic”, which includes the author's personal perspective, gives a subjective view of the news (Wiebe, Wilson, Bruce, Bell, and Martin, 2004, 279).

A common form of expression on social media is by using emojis and emoticons. Emoticons are a typographic depiction of human emotions. The use of emoticons has increased with the spread of digital communication tools as symbolic expressions are considered the most effective form of expression in nonverbal communication. Although emojis are often used to express a special situation, emojis including symbols that can be used with an objective sentence such as a bicycle emoji can be used for almost anything.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

This section of the study consists of the study group, data collection tools used, and data collection and analysis.

Study Group

This study was conducted with 17 people including 8 women and 9 men. The study was conducted on a voluntary basis. The participants were chosen from active social media users. The age group was determined as 30-41 based on active social media usage, Generation X, and voluntarism. How often they used social media and whether they used social media to follow news were effective in this selection. The participants (17) resided in İstanbul, Turkey.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The age group of 30-41	Female	Male
17 participants	8	9

There are seventeen participants aged between 30 and 41. Eight of them are women, nine of them are man.

Table 2. Place of Resident

17 Participants	17
17	İstanbul

There are seventeen participants, all from İstanbul

Table 3. Professions of 17 Participants

17 Participants	Graphic Designer	Housewife	Academician	Computer Engineer	Public Relation Specialist	Architect
	2	4	4	2	3	2

Table 4. The Participants Code Name

Code name	Age	Sex	Profession
K 1	32	Female	Housewife
K 2	30	Female	Graphic Designer
K 3	40	Female	Academician
K 4	35	Male	Graphic Designer
K 5	41	Male	Academician
K 6	34	Female	Academician
K 7	33	Female	Public Relations Specialist
K 8	31	Female	Housewife
K 9	39	Male	Academician
K 10	37	Female	Housewife
K 11	37	Male	Computer Engineer
K 12	39	Male	Computer Engineer
K 13	32	Male	Public Relations Specialist
K 14	31	Female	Housewife
K 15	38	Male	Public Relations Specialist
K 16	38	Male	Architect
K 17	31	Male	Architect

The code names of the participants are added. Of the participants, there are four housewives, four academicians, three public relations specialists, two architects, two graphic designers and two computer engineer.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using the semi-structured interview technique. The reason why the semi-structured interview technique was chosen was to enable participants to explain their reasons for using social media and following the news on social media in more detail. Social media experts' assistance was received during the preparation of questions and the said experts shaped and approved the questions. The questions were prepared to avoid any possible directing. The interviews were made face-to-face and participants were informed that their characteristics like name and surname will not be used in the study data. The participants were also informed that data obtained will only be used for this study before the interviews were conducted. Participants' consent was obtained before the interviews and the interviews were organized based on participants' available time. The interviews took approximately 25 minutes. The questions were given to participants in writing and were also read to them two times. The interviews began when the participants verbally stated that they accepted to conduct the interviews.

The questions asked in the interviews are as follows:

1. How often do you use social media platforms?
2. Which social media platform do you use the most?
3. For which purposes do you use social media platforms?
4. Do you prefer mainstream media platforms or social media platforms to get the news?
5. How much do you believe in the news on social media platforms that you use to get the news?
6. Which platform do you think is the most popular and fastest way to share current news?

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study included İstanbul, Turkey as a general randomized sample was chosen and only the frequency of social media usage was requested for this sample group. The sample group included voluntary male and female participants who were aged between 30 and 41, and resided in İstanbul were selected among those who resided in İstanbul as the interviews were going to be conducted face to face. Although sex was for sampling, the almost equal distribution of male and female participants is important for the accuracy of the data. Therefore, 17 participants including 8 women and 9 men were included in this study using the semi-structured interview technique.

This qualitative study was conducted face to face as data collection was based on verbal statements. The questions were asked without any intervention and the participants were warned about the single-word answers and were asked to respond with longer sentences to reveal the depth of the answers. However, the participants were not directed to an answer while doing so. The reason why the semi-structured interview technique was chosen was to enable participants to give answers based on their interpretation instead of choosing among close-ended questions. According to the semi-structured interview technique, participants can explain their answers in detail (Türnüklü, 2000:546).

The interviews were conducted on different days during July, August, and September 2019. The participants were informed that their names will not be used in any way before conducting the interviews. The participants were coded as K1, K2, etc. based on the order interviews were made.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were voice recorded after receiving their consent and were transferred to computer media after being decrypted.

The basis of the study questions is the prevalence and usage habits of the phenomenon of getting news from social media platforms among users.

The first question asked to the participants was “How often do you use social media platforms?” The data were examined and tabulated.

Table 5. Frequency of usage of social media platform

Frequency of Usage of Social Media Platforms	Participants	Percentage	Frequency
Everyday (8 hours and above)	K1,K2,K3K6,K8,K17,K13 K15,K11	52.94	9
Everyday (4 hours and above)	K4,K5,K7,K14	23.52	4
Everyday (2 hours and above)	K16,K10	11.76	2
Once in 2 days	K12	5.88	1
2-3 times a week	K9	5.88	1

Of the participants, 52.94% stated that they used social media platforms for 8 hours and more every day. Of them, 23.52% used these platforms for 4 hours and more every day while 11.76% used social media platforms for 2 hours and more every day. The remaining 5.88% used social media platforms once in two days and 5.88% opened these platforms 2 or 3 times a week.

The second question was “Which social media platform do you use the most?”

Table 6. Most Used Social Platforms

	Mainstream Media Platforms	Social Media Platforms	Both
17 Participants	7	8	2
Percentage	41.17%	47.05%	11.76%
Frequency	7	8	2

The study found that participants used the three biggest social media platforms. Of the participants, 76.47% preferred Twitter, 64.70% preferred Facebook, and 58.82% preferred YouTube. According to K1 and K12, these three social media platforms are the most commonly used social media platforms in Turkey. K10 stated that she/he preferred Twitter for news but she/he definitely used YouTube to listen to music and watch some content. K11 and K17 stated that they got instant and popular news from Twitter. K13, on the other hand, stated that she/he effectively used Facebook to communicate with his/her friends since before. K3

reported that she/he felt like she/he belonged to these three social media platforms and could not have a day without visiting these platforms every day.

The third question was “For which purposes do you use social media platforms?”

Table 7. Usage Purpose of the Social Platforms

	Entertainment	Business	Chatting with Friends	Leisure time activity
17 Participants	15	10	16	17
Percentage	88.23	58.82	94.11	100
Frequency	15	10	16	17

All participants used social media platforms to spend leisure time. Of them, 94.11% benefited from these platforms to communicate with their friends. The answer of using social media to communicate with friends came right after the answer of spending leisure time with a quite high percentage. Of the participants, 58.82% also used these platforms for business purposes. The fact that all participants used social media to spend leisure time and to communicate with their friends shows the importance attached to such platforms.

The fourth question was “Do you prefer mainstream media platforms or social media platforms to get the news?”

Table 8. Preference of the Media Platforms

	Social Media Platforms	Main Stream Media Platforms
17 Participants	11	6
Percentage	64.70	35.29
Frequency	11	6

Of the participants, 47.05% got the news from social media platforms, 41.17% got the news from mainstream media platforms, and 11.76% got the news both from mainstream media and social media platforms. This result shows that the habits of Generations X and Y for getting the news are using both platforms equally.

The fifth question was “How much do you believe in the news on social media platforms that you use to get the news?”

Table 9. Belief in News on Social Platforms

	I totally believe	I believe	I believe some news but I don't believe some news	I don't believe	I don't believe at all
17 Participants	3	7	5	1	1
Percentage	17.64	41.17	29.41	5.88	5.88
Frequency	3	7	5	1	1

Of the participants, 41.17% stated that they believed the news on social media platforms. Of them, 29.41% stated that they did not believe every news, and questioned and searched such news. On the other hand, 17.64% stated that they believed the news completely and formed an opinion or judgment the moment they see such news. among the participants, 5.88% did believe the news on social media while 5.88% did not believe such news at all.

The sixth question was “Which platform do you think is the most popular and fastest way to share current news?”

Table 10. Most Popular and Fastest Platforms to share Current News

	Which social media platforms do you use the most?	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
Number	17 Participants	K17,K15,K12,K1,K4,K8,K9,K13 K7,K11,K3	K2,K3,K5,K16,K6,K1,K17,K1 K5K1,K11,K10,K4	K2,K3,K14,K13,K9,K7,K12,K11,K10,K15
	Percentage	11	12	10
	Frequency	64.70	76.47	58.82

Of the participants, 64.70% stated that they learn about current news on social media platforms. K17 and K13 reported that they got accurate news instantly from social media. Although 35.29% of the participants advocated that they still got the current news on mainstream media platforms, they stated that social media platforms are much faster in this regard.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These focus group discussions help us to understand today’s connective role of news and current affairs in people’s everyday communications within location-based, work-oriented and leisure-focused social media communities. Regarding the context of location, the results add to a long history of work that stresses how the place where one lives, works and spends time represents not just a spatial context where practices of news use take place, but also a relational structure. While there have been concerns that the adoption of digital technologies is reducing contemporary community life as they make individuals engage in less face-to-face interpersonal contact, that people’s local networks continue to serve as connecting hubs of information. McCollough, Crowell, and Napoli note that especially local social networks depend on such interpersonal exchanges of news, as journalism coverage in many areas is limited and sporadic due to the economic challenges that many local journalism companies currently face (2017).

Everyday relational structure discussed in this paper is the context of work. The increased importance of work as an everyday context for news consumption cannot just be observed through shifting spatial and temporal markers, but also in the importance of colleagues as a relational structure which news use helps facilitate and maintain. News was perceived as an easy topic for conversation, despite the fact that the ties within these work groups were described as weak, and personal interests relatively diverse. This supports earlier findings that news users are more inclined to discuss current affairs with looser acquaintances.

Considering the majority of participants, the power to believe in social media platforms is more effective than not believing in such platforms. Even participants, who stated to not get affected from social media platforms, declared that they used social media platforms to get the news. It was found that social media platforms were preferred at a higher level to get the news among participants, who also used mainstream media platforms to get the news, as they are easy to use, accessible, and provide instant news. Additionally, they stated that the current news is shared faster on social platforms and these platforms are used more frequently to obtain information. Getting the popular and current news from social media platforms rapidly and instantly emphasizes the importance of sharing and obtaining content and information regardless of time and place limitations. User-centered news production has become integral for participants.

The internet (journalism) is becoming increasingly popular among media types due to its increasing number of users, dynamic structure, and user-friendliness. Relevant studies show that conventional media has a decreased number of followers, and internet news/information content has an increasing number of followers (Mindich, 2005; Newman et al., 2017). People are now turning to social media sources such as Facebook and Twitter as the primary source of news instead of radio, television, and newspapers (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018).

As digital media become more involved in people's lives, the understanding of conventional journalism and reporting began to be replaced by social media journalism. The most important feature of social media journalism is that it allows individuals to share news, express ideas, opinions and score the news subjectively. The growing popularity of social media as a distribution channel for news presents both an opportunity and a challenge for professional journalism. While this requires the media to offer alternative ways to news followers, this also forces journalism to balance the logic of social media with conventional journalism logic.

This paper tries to explore the various social for social media use in order to examine how everyday relational structures affect people's practices among public connection through social media communities. It shows that the communicative aims and characteristics of the relational structures that news use gets embedded in are crucial to understand the different ways in which social media users are engaging with current affairs. This study largely focuses on WhatsApp and Facebook applications in terms of how these platforms were appropriated varied considerably, depending on the purpose of the groups. Findings show that users choose the aim of the designated purposes of the social media community rather than the community type.

Besides, it is clear that users are likely follow different modes of engagement within the various WhatsApp group chats and private Facebook communities that social media users are typically part of it. In the focus groups where news was of minor importance, participants for example referred to their friends WhatsApp groups as relational structures where news was discussed or noted their social media practices were more public affairs oriented with specific peer groups or individual friends. More large-scale research could identify to what extent the aims of and patterns found in these location-based, work-oriented and leisure-related communities are representative for users' behaviour in closed-off social media communities overall.

In conclusion, the results stress the significance of users' ability to control the visibility of the content they share on bounded social media platforms. Previous studies have found that users are more likely to talk about news and public affairs with their strong ties, such as family and close friends, as they feel more secure to express disagreement with people

they know well. However, this study suggests that such considerations might be different on bounded social media platforms. Even in our focus groups where participants perceived their ties as weak, they felt sufficiently secure to discuss news and public affairs. Participants described themselves as only loosely connected, yet did not refrain from talking about controversial political topics, such discussions fitting the group's aim of playful debate and opinion formation. Thus, the mere ability to set clear community boundaries may already be sufficient for users to decide to engage in more vulnerable forms of news engagement.

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