

Students (Ages 18-28) Use Twitter for News

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Abstract

We started this project based on the facts that "a majority of U.S adults-62% get their news through social media..."(Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), and most of them only use one news site (ibid). In addition, Facebook and Twitter are the most popular social media platforms for news, as a total of 66%of Facebook users and 59% of Twitter users receive news from these platforms (ibid). Throughout our research we have tried to get a better understanding of why students (ages 18-28)use Twitter for news. By conducting a field study, we discovered that young adults seem to use their phones in all kinds of situations, which again can be linked to the results from our online survey were 58.26% of our respondents claimed to use a mobile device for news more than two hours a day (Figure 1). In this paper we are going to present the results from our interviews, as we have tried to go further into depth and better understand why students (ages 18-28) use Twitter for news.We will start off the paper by explaining our methodology, thereafter we will present our data, followed by a discussion. At the end of the paper we will summarize and come with a conclusion.

Keywords

Social Media; News; Twitter; students.

1. Introduction & Methodology

The main purpose for our interviews were to better understand why students(ages 18-28)use Twitter for news. We arranged for semi-structured interviews with four random students, and set one touring question and three follow questions for everybody to ask. The reason for this was to ensure that we would at least collect four similar sets of data. The questions were open-ended, and we went with the "what, how, why?" method to inquire information. We tried to link our interview questions up to our research question: "Why (B) do students (C) (ages 18-28) (D)use Twitter (A) for news. " Our questions were therefore as follows: "How often do you use Twitter?"(D), "When did you first started using Twitter? (C),Of all social media platforms, why do you use Twitter?" (B), "What is Twitter to you?".

Through our interviews, we found that the answer to the four students have a lot of similarities. In order to analyze and summarize our interview results, we created a coding scheme. For the convenience of statistics, we marked the desired information with numbers. First, we looked through our interviews to find common responses that we could use in our data. Thereafter we created a sequence list of the information we wished to look at, 1. How often? 2.2. Where do you use it most? (mobile/stationary)3.3. Participation level (Active or passive?), 4.4. When did you first start using Twitter? 5. 5. Other social media choices 6.6. Favorite topic (6.6. Entertainment, 6.7. News/politics, 6.8. Socializing, 6.9 Business/Technology), 7.7. Credibility (7.7. Yes, 7.8. No)8.8. Reason for use? (8.8 Communication, 8.9. Information, 8.10. Socialization.) Thereafter, we went through the interviews again and marked the places in the interview were topics in from the sequence list occurred. We counted all the coding, and in order to explain these numbers, we created a matrix code.

2. Data

Table 1. Interview results coding scheme

Sequence list	Code Sequence (Amount of times mentioned)	Matrix code
1	8	Use Twitter every day
2.2	8	Use it everywhere (mobile & stationary)
3.3	9	Participation level: Active User
4.4	7	Started using Twitter before college
5.5	8	Using other social media
6.6	13	Favorite topic: Entertainment
6.7	7	Favorite topic: News/politics
6.8	4	Favorite topic: Socializing
6.9	2	Favorite topic: Business/technology
7.7	3	Credible: Yes
7.8	6	Credible: No
8.8	10	Reason for use: Communicate
8.9	7	Reason for use: Information/knowledge
8.10	11	Reason for use: Socialization

All our interviewees used Twitter daily, and considered themselves to be active users. The fact that their usage was unconsciously mentioned eight times during the interviews shows that they use it frequently (I). In addition, they don't seem to have a set schedule for when and where they use it, as most of them replied that they use it when they have spare time or when they receive a notification from the application (2.2). The interviewees mentioned their participation level (3.3) nine times during their interviews, considering themselves to be active users. They talked about how, depending on the day and content on Twitter, either retweeted, published posts and participated in discussions. Entertainment seems to be the most popular topic to follow, as it was mentioned the most times during the conversations. Although all the interviewees were active Twitter users, they did not necessarily find Twitter to be credible when coming to news.

3. Discussion

Given the data collected, based on our interviews, we have concluded that Twitter is a preferred tool when it comes to social media. Although, using other social media platforms, most of our interviewees preferred Twitter. While researching, why do students (ages 18-28) use Twitter for news, based on our interviewee's we have learned that there many different reasons. By preference we also mean that some people like to use Twitter constantly, multiple times a day, while others tend to check in on their Twitter accounts just once or twice a day. 42% of Twitter users indicate that they are daily visitors, with 23% saying they visit more than once a day (Pew Research, 2016).

The reason for using their Twitter account has a major influence on the amount of times that they check Twitter. For instance, some people like to search trending hashtags and join a nationwide conversation based on the new episode of Scandal that is on television. This leads them to constantly check Twitter, especially while the episode is still on. While others check in once or twice a day to see what their friends are tweeting or what their favorite news outlet or celebrities are tweeting.

Based on the information collected from our four subjects, we can determine that Twitter is used mostly during their spare time. While a person has nothing happening at the moment, for example while they're bored at home, traveling on the train, or waiting in between classes or at appointments; Twitter is mostly used spontaneously. Our subjects helped conclude that Twitter is mostly used on their mobile/smart phones; in most cases, for heavy users, Twitter almost becomes a habit, especially for those who use it more than 10+ times a day. Without noticing, people take out their mobile devices, and if Twitter is their favorite app at the moment, the chances of Twitter being the first app they open is very high.

In relation to our research question, specifically on the ages 18-28 part, we find that the younger a Twitter user is, the more they use Twitter. Younger Americans are more likely than older Americans to be on Twitter. Some 36% of online adults ages 18-29 are on the social network, more than triple the share among online adults ages 65 and older (Just 10% of whom are Twitter users) (Pew Research, 2016). Many people begin to use Twitter while they are in high school or when they become college students, and most of our interviewees started prior to college. As socialization on Twitter were mentioned multiple times during the interviews, we can assume that being in a school environment where many people are doing the same things and sharing the same interests is influential. The majority of people, including our interviewee's, began using Twitter because the people surrounding them were using it.

The reasoning for using Twitter leads directly to our conclusion that Twitter-use is all about the user's preferences. Based on our interviews' data, Twitter is used mainly to keep up with peers, for communication, to stay up to date with their surroundings, for general news or breaking news, it is fast, easy, and accessible; overall Twitter-users feel they can use the site to express their thoughts, ideas, and dive into any topic of discussion joining the 500 million Tweets per day (Internet Live Stats, 2017).

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explained our methodology, presented our data from the interviews and discussed the results in regards of Twitter usage. The data from our interviews has provided us with better information, and a much greater understanding of why students use Twitter. This knowledge will be a great help for further studies on the subject in the future.

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