2012
SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS SURVEY REPORT
Building Your Social Media News Distribution Network

PRESENTED BY
TEKGROUP
The Third Annual Social Media News Survey conducted by TEK-GROUP International continues to underscore the growing importance of consuming and sharing news. The impact that social media is having on the news industry is beyond significant. Organizations big and small have begun utilizing social media outlets and social networks to not only engage with their varied audiences, but also to provide an outlet for their corporate news.

“Social media has become a powerful, effective, and cost-efficient news distribution network for organizations of all sizes.”

Steve Momorella
– Owner/Founder, TEKGROUP International
Five Statistics to Think About

1. The majority of the survey sample indicated they have been using social media tools for more than five years (34.5%) with more than 63% indicating upwards of three years of social media tool experience. Nearly 33% of respondents use social media tools more than two hours per day.

2. More than 66% of the survey sample reported sometimes (34.3%), very often (22.4%), or all the time (9.7%) use a corporate news website when following or sharing news.

3. Almost 75% of survey respondents indicate they sometimes or frequently visit a corporate website after learning of a news story through social media channels.

4. Timeliness of social media tools is an undeniable advantage over traditional media, according to our survey respondents, with 75% indicating that news gathered through social media channels was either slightly (36.1%) or much more (38.3%) timely than traditional news outlets.

5. Almost 90% cite the use of Facebook and 70% the use of Twitter as a primary source of news and information when following, sharing or posting – more than twice that of the Wall Street Journal and significantly more than CNN.
The Habits of the Social Media News Consumer

Survey respondents were asked questions about their social media use habits and, not surprisingly, this group is tuned in and very savvy. The majority of the survey sample indicated they have been using social media tools for more than five years (34.5%) with more than 65% indicating upwards of three years of social media experience. Nearly 25% say they make use of social media tools between two and four hours per day, with 60% answering that they “frequently” access social media from a mobile device.

While support for social media favorites such as Facebook and Twitter remain strong – 84% of respondents indicating 50+ Facebook friends and 55% of respondents indicating 50+ Twitter followers – a trend towards an increase in the use of YouTube and Flickr as a news and information sharing tool emerged seemingly as more and more visual platforms begin to take hold. The majority of respondents (77%) indicate they follow at least one blog with roughly 23% saying they follow no blogs at all.

Perhaps of greatest importance to corporate communicators was the high degree of reliance among this group on corporate web sites and press releases for monitoring, sharing, and posting news and information. Nearly 70% of the survey sample reported sometimes (34%), very often (22.4%), or all the time (10%) use of the corporate website or online newsroom when engaged in these tasks. Responses for use of press releases for the same tasks were nearly identical.

How often do you make use of corporate websites or online newsrooms when following news and information?
Using Social Media Tools for News

Moreover, nearly 75% of survey respondents indicate they sometimes or frequently visit a corporate website after learning of a news story through social media channels. Nearly 95% of survey respondents indicate they begin their search for news and information on a search engine such as Google – no surprise there. However, 25% said they use Google “every time” searching for news stories, underscoring the importance of the integration of social and search.

We asked our respondents to quantify their use of social media tools for these specific tasks during the past 6 months. Trending with earlier findings, 67% of our respondents indicated they frequently use social media tools for follow or monitor news and information, with another 28% indicating they use social media tools exclusively for this task; roughly the same number indicate they use social media tools to share or recommend news and information; 58% say they frequently use social media tools to write or post news and information.

What was not anticipated was the widespread use of these tools for following a breaking news story with more than 68% citing the use of social media tools for this purpose. Equally interesting was the use of social media tools for fact-checking information with well more than half of our respondents indicating a preference for social media tools for this task. And for those in the business of engineering consent, it appears our survey respondents sometimes (34%), frequently (35%), or always (6%) monitor public opinion using social media tools - a finding supported by the overwhelming use of social media tactics in election campaigns.

Finally, Twitter and Facebook seem to be the weapon of choice for survey respondents with 78% indicating frequent or all-the-time use of the Internet upstarts for news and information related tasks.

When following/monitoring news and information, on what type of website do you start?

Search Engine: 52.2%
Web Portal: 6%
News Aggregator: 3.7%
Traditional News Site: 18.7%
Social Media: 19.4%
Social Media Attitudes

We focused on measures of respondent’s attitudes toward the reliability, accuracy, and timeliness of news and information gathered through social media sources as opposed to traditional sources.

Timeliness
Predictably, timeliness of social media tools was a distinct advantage, with 76% indicating that news gathered through social media channels was either slightly (31%) or much more (45%) timely than traditional news outlets.

Accuracy
Respondent’s attitudes toward accuracy of news gathered using social media tools were interesting. Almost half (49.6%) rate news gathered via social media sources as “roughly the same” or “more accurate” than traditional news sources in terms of accuracy.

Reliability
More than 50% say news and information gathered this way is just as reliable as news obtained from the Fourth Estate. In fact, a relatively small percentage rates the same variables as much less reliable (18.6%).

Importance
Finally, the importance of social media as a news gathering and distribution platform is not lost on our respondents with roughly 92% attributing a somewhat high, or high level of importance to social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs for following, sharing, and posting news and information.

Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less reliable than news gathered via traditional news sources?

- Much more reliable: 2.3%
- Slightly more reliable: 8.3%
- About the same: 37.6%
- Slightly less reliable: 32.3%
- Much less reliable: 19.5%

Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less accurate than news gathered via traditional news sources?

- Much more accurate: 0.8%
- Slightly more accurate: 6.8%
- About the same: 40.6%
- Slightly less accurate: 37.6%
- Much less accurate: 14.3%

Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less timely than news gathered via traditional news sources?

- Much more timely: 38.1%
- Slightly more timely: 35.8%
- About the same: 19.4%
- Slightly less timely: 6%
- Much less timely: 0.7%

How important have social media tools (Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) become for following/monitoring news and information?

- Important: 43.3%
- Somewhat important: 39.6%
- Neither: 9%
- Somewhat unimportant: 3%
- Unimportant: 5.2%
Using Social as a News Source

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their primary sources of news and information while following, sharing, and posting. Not surprisingly, CNN.com (57%), NYT.com (49%), MSNBC (35%) and ESPN.com (39%) were the traditional sources most cited by the social media sample.

What might surprise some observers, however, is the reliance amongst survey respondents on social media sources for the tasks in question. More than 70% cite the use of Twitter and 89% the use of Facebook as a primary source of news and information when following, sharing or posting. In fact, it appears among avid social media users Wikipedia is used the same as CNN.com as a source for news and information. LinkedIn has also become more popular since our last survey, with 67% of respondents saying they use the social networking service to follow news.

Which of these traditional news sources do you use most to follow news and information?

Which of these social media sources do you use most to follow news and information?
Social Media and Breaking News

This survey, as the last two, sought to identify the channels of communication most relevant for frequent users of social media tools. Respondents were asked to identify the source of initial awareness to a significant international news story of the past year. Further, respondents were asked to identify their method of distribution of the same news and information.

Death of Osama bin Laden
This question challenged respondents to identify their source of awareness of a breaking international news item – the recent death of Osama bin Laden. Here, results were striking with Twitter (12.3%) and Facebook (8.5%) leading the way but television (46.9%) led the way as the primary source of news awareness. However, in a stunning result 0% of respondents reported that they learned of bin Laden’s death via the newspaper.

Lending support to earlier findings, Facebook (30%), Twitter (20%) and word-of-mouth (60%) remain strong methods of choice for spreading breaking news after initial awareness. 30% of respondents also noted that they used their mobile device or smartphone to share the news. This finding provides communicators’ strong support for using social media tools to increase the reach of awareness campaigns.
News Interests

For these questions, we focused on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as a gauge for what types of news consumers are interested in and compared the three separately.

Facebook clearly is the leader in news distribution at the local level, with more than 30% of respondents saying they use the social network to follow local news. National news (15.5%) and Entertainment news (14%) came next with International news, Sports, and Business and Financial news rounding out the crowd.

In line with Twitter’s reputation for breaking big news, it is no surprise that 25% of respondents said they use Twitter to follow national news. An interesting note in that more than double the respondents said they use Twitter to follow Business and Financial news rather than Facebook. Finally, more than 73% said that they use Twitter to follow some sort of news.

For some reason, blogs did not fair as well in our Social Media News Survey this year with more than 34% saying that they do not ever use blogs to follow and monitor news. Predictably, however, 10% of respondents answered that they do use blogs to follow Entertainment news.

Overall, there are clear indications that social media is penetrating the news distribution environment, with Facebook being particularly useful in linking news consumers together with local content and Twitter leading in delivering breaking news, worldwide.
Methodology

This survey report was compiled from data collected from active social media users during the period April 1 – May 15, 2012. The online survey - which specifically measured acceptance, use, and attitudes of social media tools to follow, share, and post news and information – garnered 579 responses (completion rate of 84%). Invitations to participate in the 2012 Social Media News Survey were randomly posted on Twitter accounts, Facebook accounts, and through opt-in emails from our previous research studies.

About TEKGROUP

TEKGROUP International, Inc. is an award-winning Internet software and services company that develops online newsrooms with social media integration, and e-business software solutions. TEKGROUP clients include AAA, Accenture, Carlson Hotels Worldwide, CIGNA, Detroit Lions, Ford Motor Company, PRSA, Prudential Financial, Starbucks, VMS, and Walgreens.