

Public Abstract

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Title:Betting on Technology The Diffusion of Mobile Live-Streaming Apps Within News Startup Actor-Networks

This research combines the diffusion of innovations and actor-network theoretical models to present a detailed explanation of how the live-streaming mobile apps Meerkat and Periscope were adopted at two digital news startups, Mashable and The Huffington Post; and it identifies the complex confluence of factors that influenced that process. The findings from a series of in-depth interviews with staff members in both newsrooms offer support and clarification of the diffusion of innovations theoretical model. Adoption of the apps spread through the organizations mostly as theorized but through a less rational progression than the theory suggests. Actor-network analysis further suggests the organizations had less autonomy than might be expected when it came to how and whether they decided to adopt and implement this new technological innovation. Consistent with actor-network theory, the adoption decision was shaped by a network of actants that in this case included newsroom personnel; the technology companies that created the apps; the South by Southwest Interactive conference; publicists; competing news organizations; the apps themselves; and, above all else, the audience. Along with benefiting our scholarly understanding, this research has the potential to help news professionals in legacy operations and within news startups as they continue to navigate today's constant stream of new ideas and technologies.