

A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD ME:  
DIFFUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION OF TWITTER IN  
AMERICAN METROPOLITAN NEWSROOMS

Alecia Swasy

Dr. Yong Volz, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Twitter has become a global, social media platform that is reshaping the way journalists communicate, gather information and disseminate news. This study builds on the relatively new field of research on Twitter by using both diffusion of innovation and social capital theories to gauge the impact this new platform is having on individual journalists and U.S. newspapers. Case- study and in-depth interview methods were used in collecting data from 50 journalists at four metropolitan newspapers. Results show that journalists view Twitter as a new channel for finding sources, story ideas and, then using the platform to share their work with broader audiences that extend far beyond traditional geographic circulation boundaries. Twitter has reshaped the traditional reporting routines because it is the place to break news, even pre-empting filing stories to the paper's website. In addition, Twitter is building journalists' social and economic capital by enhancing their "brands" as digital journalists. Twitter has enhanced the newspapers' social capital, but has yet to show any economic benefits to the papers.