

TWEETING THE HEADLINES: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENDORSEMENT ON YOUNG ADULT NEWS READERS

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ABSTRACT

Since the Internet became a mainstream form of communications in 1999, journalism has become a multi-platform discipline. Twitter is a social media site that is emerging as an avenue for getting news online. Previous research about Twitter, a social networking site that limits messages to 140 characters, has also shown Twitter's promise as a channel for news because of the speed at which information can travel and its ability to connect people. By Twitter users following people and companies, the senders have become endorsers of information. This study looked at how Twitter endorsement effects young adult news readers' perceptions of credibility, bias, interest, arousal, importance and knowledge. The 172 participants were placed into one of three conditions. The conditions were stories endorsed by a professional news media outlet tweets, stories endorsed by a peer tweets and stories not endorsed by social media at all. The study found that participants found stories endorsed by Twitter tweets more credible than the non-endorsed stories. Different media platforms also effected knowledge acquisition. Unlike previous research, which found that newer platforms decreased retention rates, this study found that knowledge acquisition was higher among participants in the professional news outlet social media endorsed news condition. However, participants' social media reading frequency did not correlate with their interest in news. Participants rated print and online news more interesting and read them more frequently.