

The Social Media Question:
Understanding the Content People Read and Share on Twitter

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Abstract

People use online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to find and share news that matters to them. This quantitative study explores how tweets posted to two newspaper's accounts — The Kansas City Star and the Columbia Missourian — resonated with their audience.

Using a content analysis, the researcher sought to understand how the subject and frame of tweets affected stories' online readership and the number of times a tweet was reposted. This study used conceptual episodic and thematic frames as a way to explore whether news outlets' tweets were retweeted and how many people on Twitter clicked on links to the stories. This study found that tweets posted were disproportionately episodic, but that frame did not have a statistically significant effect on online readership or retweets. The topic of a tweet significantly affected how many times it was retweeted, and for one of the newspapers in the sample, significantly affected how many page views a story received from Twitter.

