

Public Abstract

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Title:ONLINE NEWS USE OF PHABLETS, SMARTPHONES,
TABLETS AND PERSONAL COMPUTERS:
THE INFLUENCE OF OPINION LEADERSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

With the continual evolution of technology, media habits towards the news have also altered based on technological and social reasons. This study seeks to evaluate how the introduction of large screen cell phones have impacted other digital media and legacy media. In addition, social influences would be explored in the adoption of phablets for news use. Modeled after the premise of the Mobile Contingency Theory (Thorson, Shoenberger, Karaliova, Kim & Fidler, 2015), this study seeks to better understand the role of social influence on online news functions as well as the impact of online news sharing. The theoretical underpinnings of social influence will be based on the Two Step Flow of Communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) while the impact of phablet adoption and online news sharing can be explained by the Diffusion of Information (Rogers, 1995). A representative national sample based on demographics including gender, age and income, participants (n=1,001) was used for this online survey. Based on the research questions and hypothesis, the findings revealed there was an inherent strength of opinion leadership and early adoption as strong predictors in spite of demographics. While they seem like similar variables, and may measure the same thing, results show that they were uniquely separate variables in spite of the strong convergent validity.