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How do journalists leverage Twitter? Expressive and consumptive use of Twitter

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ABSTRACT

This study examined factors that affect journalists' Twitter use behaviors based on the framework of the theory of planned behavior (TPB). A survey of Korean journalists supported that TPB is a useful for understanding journalists' Twitter use behaviors. This study found that three TPB variables – attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control – are positively associated with journalists' general Twitter use (i.e., time spent using Twitter). More importantly, beyond looking at journalists' general Twitter use, this study expands the literature by distinguishing between expressive Twitter use (e.g., tweeting messages) and consumptive Twitter use (e.g., reading others' tweets). Results showed that journalists' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls were associated differently depending on patterns of expressive and consumptive Twitter usage. Given the role of professional journalists in society, their ways of using Twitter may have a profound impact on the ecology of journalism. Contributing to the literature of the theory of planned behavior by extending its explanatory power to professional journalists' Twitter usage, the results of this study suggest that future research on journalists' Twitter use should pay more attention to how Twitter is employed within the journalistic context.

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1. Introduction

The rapidly changing digital landscape surrounding journalism is prompting new research investigations of various aspects of journalism. Recent studies address areas such as the ever-fluid boundaries of journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015), big data practices in journalism (Lewis, 2015; Lewis & Westlund, 2015), collaboration between journalists and programmers and its implications for jour-

nalism (Lewis & Usher, 2016), journalists' incorporation of Twitter into their daily routines (Bruns, 2012; Hermida, 2010, 2012; Holton & Lewis, 2011; Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, & Holton, 2014; Moon & Hadley, 2014), and reciprocal network building between journalists and audiences (Holton, Coddington, Lewis, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2015; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012).

Especially Twitter, a micro-blogging platform that allows people to share posts that are a maximum of 140 characters in length (Choi, Sang, & Park, 2014; Takhteyev, Gruz, & Wellman, 2011), has changed journalistic practice in many ways. Professional journalists utilize Twitter to promote their own websites, to offer real-time coverage, to interact with their audience, to monitor audience reac-

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tion, and to pursue journalistic investigation (Molyneux, 2015; Neuberger, vom Hofe, & Nuernbergk, 2014). Simultaneously, Twitter is becoming a source to which audiences are turning to for information on current issues (Arceneaux & Weiss, 2010; Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010). Research indicates that journalists and news-reading audiences collectively are reshaping the ecology of journalism through their use of networked media such as Twitter, blurring the traditional dichotomy between news production and consumption (Ahmad, 2010; Bruns & Highfield, 2012; Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014; Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Papacharissi, 2015).

Reflecting recent trends, academia has started to direct attention to Twitter. Researchers have examined whether Twitter is changing journalistic routines as well as the media industry in terms of journalists' information gathering (Deprez, Mechant, & Hoebeke, 2013; Hill, 2010), journalists' relationship with audiences on Twitter (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Lee & Kim, 2014; Molyneux, 2015), and the effects of Twitter on the media industry as a whole (Ahmad, 2010; Bruns, 2012; Newman, 2009). However, few studies have considered what drives journalists to use Twitter (Blasiola, 2011; Holton & Molyneux, 2015; Molyneux & Holton, 2015). That is, yet to be answered is why some journalists are likely to use Twitter while others refrain from or are less likely to do so. In other words, still to be addressed are what factors influence how professional journalists leverage Twitter on a daily basis.

This study aims to answer those questions by expanding the literature that deals with the effects of new technologies on journalistic routines and on the media industry as a whole. Specifically, this study concentrates on factors that influence journalists' Twitter use behaviors, including their general Twitter use as well as expressive and consumptive uses of Twitter. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) that is used to explain and predict individuals' behavioral intention and actual behavior from a socio-psychological perspective (Ajzen, 1991) provides the theoretical framework for this study. TPB has proven useful in explaining and predicting people's behaviors with regard to a wide range of subjects. Yet, relatively little is known about the relationship between TPB and journalistic practices, including the issue of journalists' use of Twitter. The present study seeks to contribute to the literature by extending the application of TPB to the context of journalists' actual use of Twitter.

Importantly, previous studies on technology adoption have focused mainly on the binary distinction between initial adopters and non-adopters, with scant attention paid to post-adoption behaviors, which is another aspect of this study that examines both general Twitter use among professional journalists as well as their expressive and consumptive uses of Twitter. Recent studies indicate that particular patterns of media use lead to distinctive consequences, such as individuals' participatory behaviors and their obtained satisfaction (Chen, 2011; Chen & Kim, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga, Bachman, Hsu, & Brundidge, 2013). Given the role of professional journalists in society, their ways of using Twitter may have a profound impact on the ecology of journalism. In contributing to the literature of the theory of planned behavior by extending its explanatory power to include professional journalists' Twitter use behaviors,

this study also identifies the need to better understand how professional journalists leverage Twitter within the journalistic context.

2. Literature review

2.1. Journalists' Twitter use: theory of planned behavior (TPB) as a theoretical framework

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) is built on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As an extension of TRA, researchers have employed TPB to predict and explain people's behaviors related to the adoption of new technology, such as blogs (Kim, 2011a), instant messaging services (Lu, Zhou, & Wang, 2009), and Internet banking (Yousafzai, Foxall, & Pallister, 2010). TPB posits that people's behaviors are determined by their intentions to perform the behavior and that intention is influenced by three factors: (1) attitude toward that behavior in question, (2) subjective norm, and (3) perceived behavioral control that refers to "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 183). Drawing on TRA, Davis and colleagues (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) proposed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain and predict individuals' technology adoption behaviors. TAM posits that individuals' intention to adopt a particular technology is mediated by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. As Mathieson (1991) points out, TAM does not explicitly consider social variables and the dimension of external perceived behavioral control whereas TPB in explaining individuals' adoption behaviors employs social variables, such as the subjective norm and external perceived behavioral control.

Previous studies have supported the robust role that attitudes play in explaining individuals' adoption intentions and predicting adoption behaviors (Davis et al., 1989; Park, 2010; Peng, Zhu, Tong, & Jiang, 2012; Rhee & Kim, 2004; Zhu & He, 2002). For the adoption behaviors related to Internet-based technologies, researchers have found positive predictors that include attitudes toward various technologies, such as mobile Internet services (Pedersen, 2005), smartphones (Joo & Sang, 2013), and e-learning (Shih, 2008).

Among individual journalists, subjective norms among peers are known to affect their adoption intention to manage their blogs (Kim, 2011a). Subjective norms, especially for Korean journalists, may play a critical role in their adoption behavior because of the labor market's limited flexibility that constrains the ability of journalists to change media companies. As a result, journalists in South Korea may be particularly sensitive to their organizations' and peer journalists' evaluation regarding the adoption of any new technology, for example, in setting up journalists' blogs (Kim, 2011a). That possibility led the authors of this study to select the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) rather than the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), also widely used to explain and predict people's acceptance of information technology. In the current study, it is assumed that the subjective norm, which refers to "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen,

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