



EMG White Paper: Social Media use by Trade Media Editors

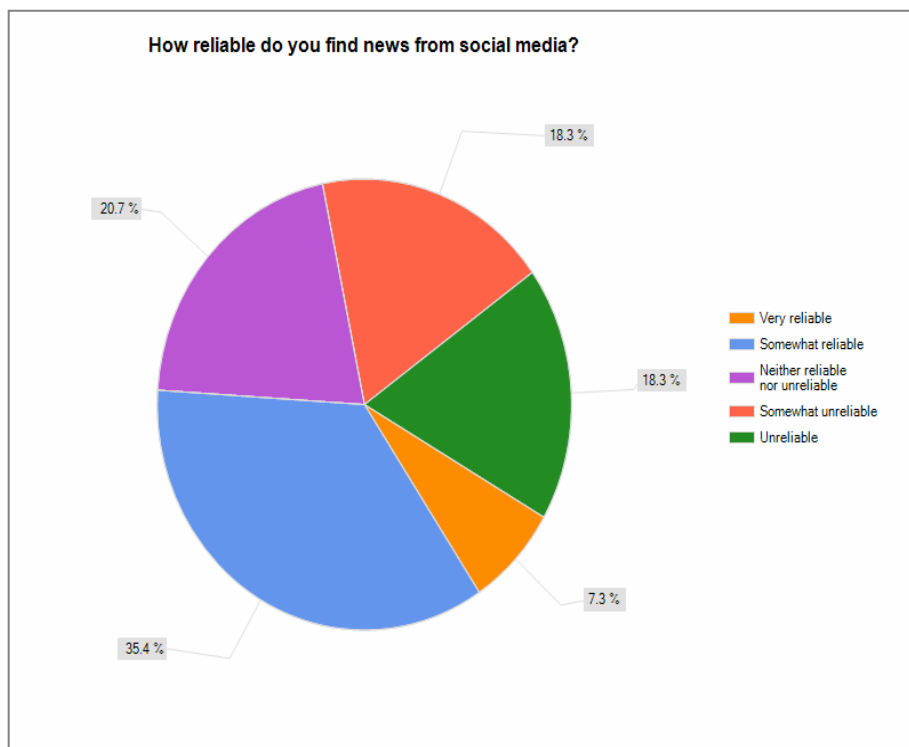
Executive Summary

Social Media are dominating the internet - or at least the discussions about internet developments. Social Media started as bulletin boards and people creating their own personal websites, and now Facebook has overtaken Google as the #1 site in America. Meanwhile, print media suffer from the increased time spent online. The combination of the global economic crisis and changes in readers' habits is forcing publishers to rethink their business model.

EMG recently conducted a Social Media survey among trade media editors which provides some interesting insights about the importance of Social Media for editors and journalists, especially in the B2B sector. Indeed, it shows that Social Media are a valuable tool allowing journalists and editors to network, gather news and distribute stories more rapidly around the world.

Editors and journalists surveyed agreed that news from Social Media can be reliable but - as with any other type of news source - it still needs to be checked in order to be considered seriously for inclusion in their (online) publications. This filtering and verification step is the key to trade media publishing.

Social Media cannot yet be fully considered part of traditional media, but they have become an important tool – also for professionals – in a changing media landscape and use will grow further in the years to come.



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Introduction

Since the early days of the internet in the late seventies to the early eighties, efforts have been made to find ways to communicate and exchange ideas across an online network. The advancement of consumer internet in the mid nineties, fuelled by search engines such as AltaVista, Yahoo and Google, facilitated the spread of dating and meeting sites, together with forums which emerged as the tools for communicating, exchanging information and networking with new people. These are considered the precursors of what we now know as Social Media, but it would not be until the early 2000s that the modern form of Social Media would emerge.

Now, in 2010, Social Media are everywhere with sharing platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook taking over from the search driven sites. Technical innovations and an increased presence in the consciousness of people have contributed to Social Media today being an integral part of the internet user experience.

The explosion of Social Media use has resulted in a flip side consequence for traditional media - as an alternative way of obtaining news that rivals the established business models of newspaper, radio and television. Social Media offer users an exciting new way of accessing up-to-the minute information at low or even no cost.

Print media, such as newspapers and magazines, are being forced to respond to maintain their competitiveness. According to recent figures from the USA ¹, nearly 90,000 jobs were lost last year in the print industry alone. And this most likely reflects the situation on a more global scale. Publishing houses are reducing their editorial capacities or cutting print costs by going online. Attracting online visitors becomes key, and that is why many are integrating Social Media into their communication channels to compensate for printed readership losses. Media institutions like the BBC in the UK or CNN in the US have encouraged their staff to use Social Media tools such as Twitter and RSS, demonstrating that changes underway are impacting all types of media.

According to Social Media research conducted by Cision and Don Bates of George Washington University, Social Media is rated as important by 56% of editors and journalists. According to the same survey, the most used social media tools are blogs, social networking sites and microblogging sites with respectively 64%, 60% and 57% of answers.

Another survey from Oriallia² found that Social Media is increasingly becoming common place in journalists work. Some of them mentioning the advantages of using them such as interactivity but also take much more responsibility in their daily work.

Traditional media recognise the need to adapt to new consumer habits. And what is currently happening in consumer oriented media will also have an impact on trade media and business professionals. How are trade media editors using these new tools? What is their experience? And are their readers participating?

Social Media Survey

EMG surveyed editors from a wide range of industries to gauge their use of Social Media (see Appendix for details).

The results show that the most popular Social Media amongst the sample are social networks, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, with smaller proportions (less than 30%

¹ Bureau of Labour statistics, US department of Labor "the employment situation June 2010"

² European Digital journalism study "how the digital age has affected journalism – and the impact for PR – Oriella Network

each) using blogs, micro-blogs and multimedia sites such as YouTube. Corporate websites continue to be the online resource of choice trade editors.

The most important advantages of Social Media for trade editors and journalists are the ability to obtain instant and breaking news, and the capability to network with relevant partners. Other reasons include reaching a wider audience and raising awareness of their own publications.

Asked why Social Media tools were useful, editors answered that it was because they have access to a large network of professionals in the case of LinkedIn - providing access to professionals they otherwise would not be able to contact and insight into new developments by following discussions in LinkedIn Groups. Another reason is to promote their publication and drive traffic to their website. In the case of Twitter, the reasons most frequently encountered are that it is viewed as a means of obtaining and generating news, and also an efficient way of generating traffic.

When it comes to researching news stories for publication views are polarised, with 39% of respondents rating Social Media as important or somewhat important and a similar proportion rating it as unimportant or somewhat unimportant.

Editors working who (also) work for online publications rate Social Media higher than those working only for print editions. Another point worth noting is that editors and journalists with more experience tend to see Social Media as less important.

And when it comes to publishing news stories, just over 50% of the sample use Social Media, with LinkedIn and blogs/micro-blogs being the most popular.

Reliability

Only a small minority of the sample (7%) rated news sourced from Social Media as very reliable, with a further 36% of the editors rating it somewhat reliable. The consensus among the surveyed editors is that – like other sources – news from Social Media needs to be checked before it can be used with confidence. The underlying reasons cited for this perceived lack of reliability are that information can be misleading, false or lack objectivity and integrity.

The education and experience of a trade media editor helps to assess what is a good source and what is not. Information found on Social Media is often followed up with direct contact with the originator. This is also a reason why Social Media can be considered to be complementary to the traditional editorial process - some editors prefer to only follow or subscribe to known sources (the Social Media account of a company for example) which can be checked on a website or directly through the person concerned.

Social Media compared with Traditional Media

Whilst almost 80% of respondents expect their use of Social Media to grow, just over half of respondents (52%) still do not consider Social Media as part of traditional media yet. The reason cited is that Social Media by its nature is collaborative and free, therefore people posting news and articles do not necessarily have a background in journalism, which may imply that they do not have the necessary skills to report news or to write articles in a professional manner.

Some respondents agree that – as a news gathering tool – it can more or less be perceived as integrated into traditional media, but it is also worth noting that the effect is less noticeable in a business-to-business context because the content tends to be much more specialized.

Slightly more than half the sample indicated that they do not experience demand for Social Media from their stakeholders – especially in more conservative industries. Publishers and advertisers are usually searching for ways to extend readership and develop new business, however according to the respondents they appear to be slow in catching up with Social Media developments.

Conclusions

The ever changing nature of Social Media is a challenge for both traditional media and companies communicating with their markets. One thing is certain: Social Media will continue to evolve. As we have seen in the last few years, popular Social Media tools can and do falter, others will replace them driven by innovation and the ability to anticipate or create needs amongst internet users.

The results of the EMG Social Media Survey are broadly consistent with other surveys amongst editors and journalists working in the B2C marketplace, although B2B media do seem somewhat slower in catching up with these new technologies. Social Media are becoming more important – even for publications that are highly specialized as is the case in the B2B sector.

Trade publications aimed at industrial sectors depend on accurate and detailed news sources. The reputation of their sources is critical, as their readers are experts in their fields. Checking and double checking news has always been a prerequisite for trade editors and this is even more crucial when it comes to news from Social Media sources, for which the risk of false, inaccurate or subjective information is perhaps higher.

This may explain the popularity of platforms such as LinkedIn with trade media editors. LinkedIn allows editors to build a large network of professionals and makes it easier to find or check a news story. A further advantage of LinkedIn is that it provides the opportunity to discuss specific issues with professionals and experts in specialist groups.

Twitter is also seen as a useful communications channel. It allows editors to monitor directly what is going on within a specific organization. As one of the respondents put it, Twitter allows professionals to be updated about the whereabouts of any organization they choose to follow at any point in time.

Is Social Media geared more towards the younger generation? There might be some truth to this as editors with more experience appear to rely less on these new tools. Newer professionals may be more open to Social Media as they have been exposed to it for longer in their private lives and since the beginning of their career.

Although Social Media cannot yet be considered part of traditional media, there continues to be lively discussion as to the extent to which Social Media will replace traditional media or whether the media landscape in general will simply change. With almost 80% of respondents expecting their use of Social Media to grow, the indications are that B2B media will probably follow the overall trend, although the filtering and validating function of trade media will continue to be a crucial advantage.

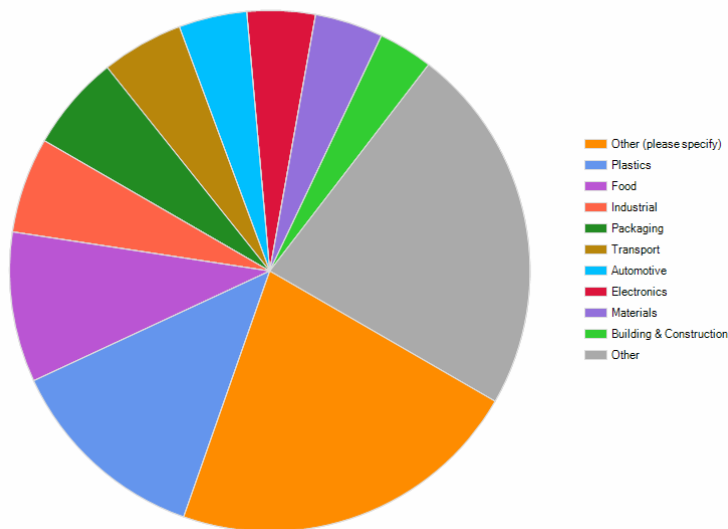
Appendix: Survey Methodology and Results

Methodology

EMG invited a selection of trade media editors and journalists from its trade media database to participate in an online survey in June 2010. In total 118 respondents participated in the online survey.

The respondents represent a wide cross section of the B2B media, with no single industry sector representing more than 8% of the total sample.

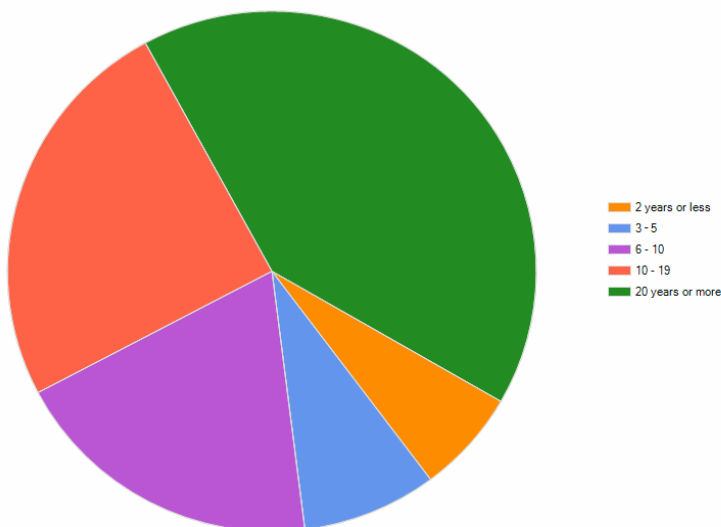
Which industry does your magazine predominantly cover?

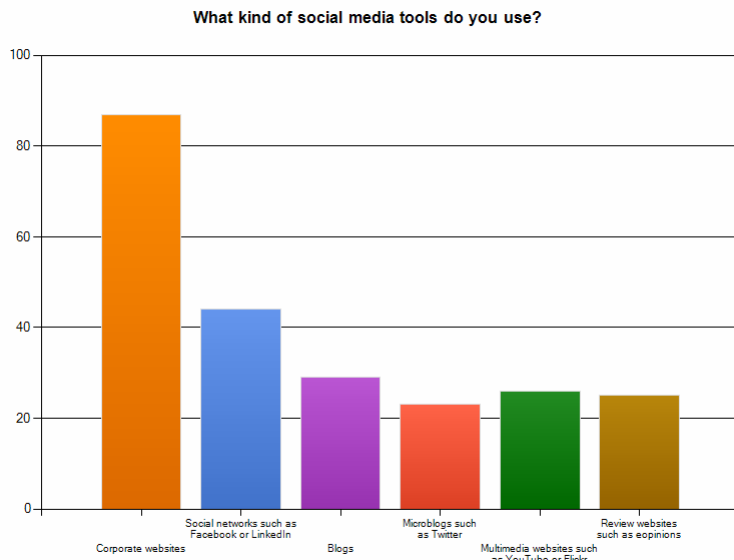


The respondents are mainly based in Europe and the USA with some from Asia.

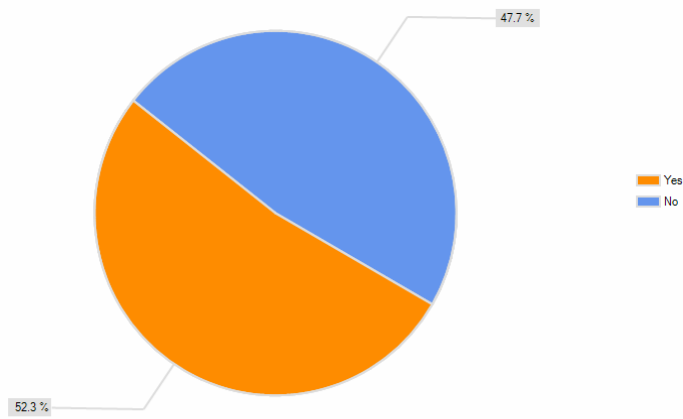
Results

How long have you been working as a journalist or editor?

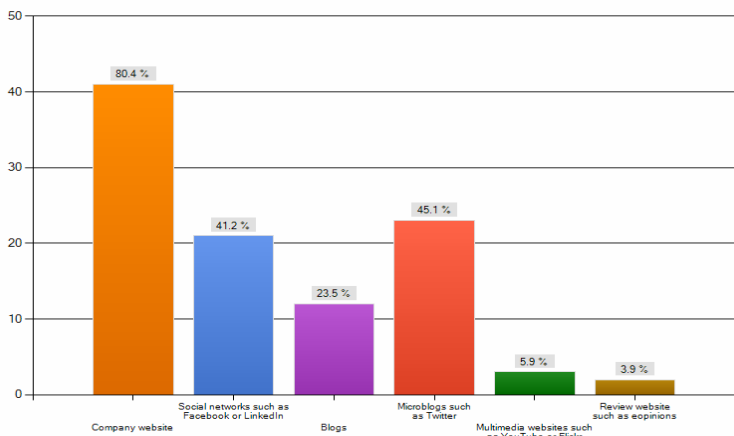




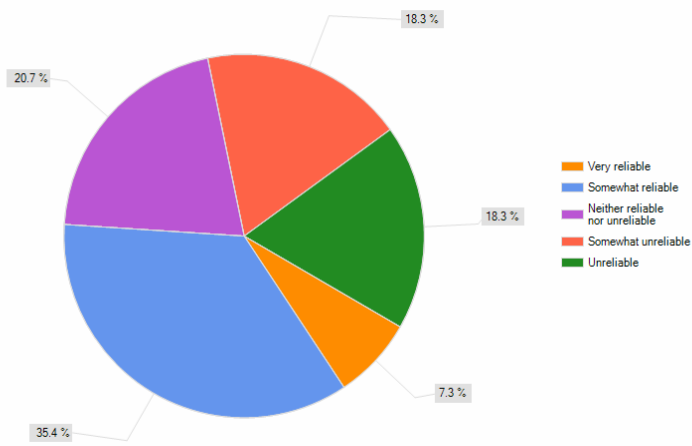
Do you use social media tools to publish your stories?



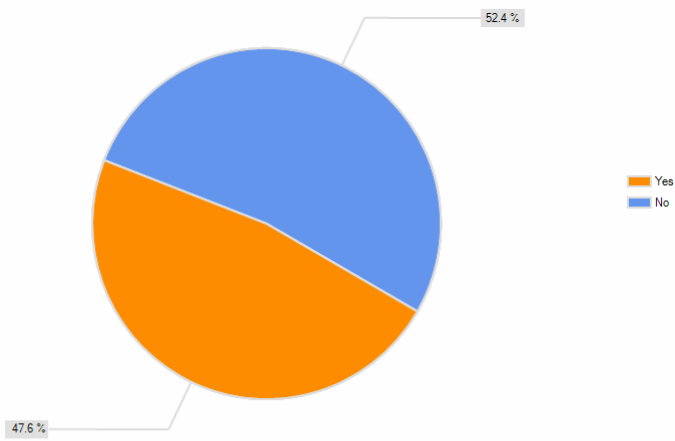
If yes, what type of social media do you use to publish them?



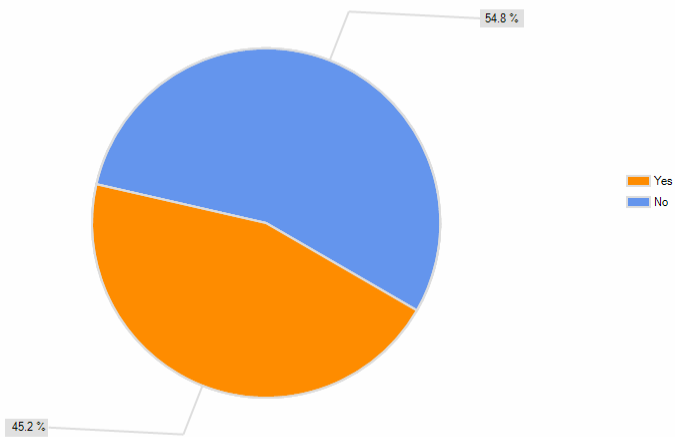
How reliable do you find news from social media?



Would you say that social media by now can be treated as a part of traditional media?



Is there a demand for using social media from your partners (readers, publisher, advertisers, other stakeholders)?



In the Future do you expect your social media use to:

