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What Alabama Newspapers Offer: A Content Analysis of Use of Alternative Delivery Methods by

Alabama Newspapers

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Research Methods

Final Paper

What Alabama Newspapers Offer: A Content Analysis of Use of Alternative Delivery

Methods by Alabama Newspapers

The future of communication is rapidly speeding toward digital formats, which leads many to believe that the future of newspapers also lies in digital or alternative delivery instead of a print. Newspapers in Alabama face the same challenges as their counterparts nationwide. According to Pew's Center's state of the media, (2009) the number of newspapers with websites and alternate content, like email alerts, phone applications and interactive components to their websites are increasing each year (2009).

This study, through content analysis, attempts to discover what alternative delivery options Alabama newspapers have adopted, and how Alabama newspapers are using and advertising these new tools. These alternative delivery options could give them an opportunity to connect with their readers in different ways.

By focusing on the alternate delivery tools that Alabama newspapers were offering in January 2010, the researcher will answer the following questions: What are Alabama newspapers advertising in terms of alternate/mobile delivery of content? What tools are present on the newspaper Web sites to give readers alternate ways of connecting with the newspaper? How prominently were these tools placed on the newspaper Web sites? How many followers are the social media sites of newspapers attracting? And, how often do newspapers use alternative delivery options to connect with their readers?

In recent years, there has been much study and debate over the future of journalism, including the best approach to alternate forms of delivery of content. Most of this material has been focused on a national level and not Alabama newspapers. Content analysis will be used to

examine the use of these new media tools, including text, email alerts, Twitter feeds, Facebook groups and RSS feeds by the convenience sample consisting of the member organizations of the Alabama Press Association as of January 2010. The sample varied in circulation size and frequency of publication.

Literature Review

This literature review builds a foundation for research questions in this study. The research questions are built by exploring historical, theoretical, technological and economic studies of current media trends related to the online and mobile presence. This literature review explores how traditionally print news publications are adapting with new technology by examining information from industry and trade publications, scholarly articles, and books.

Websites

Many studies have compared a print news model, an online news model and hybrid models that include both print and online aspects in varying combinations. This is a prominent topic of discussion among many in newspaper management trying to find a balance between traditional journalism and the rapidly approaching digital future.

Chyi, Yang, Lewis and Zheng (2009) explored differences between users who use the newspaper from only the online platform and those who use the print newspaper in conjunction with the various online offerings. Those who used the newspapers in hybrid format used the online version to seek specific information and were satisfied overall with their paper's website. This study highlighted the difference between the two types of readers and their varied wants and needs (Chyi, et al. 2009).

According to the Pew Center, (2009) only 43% of Americans say that losing their local newspaper would hurt civic life in their community a lot, and only 33% would personally miss reading their local newspaper if it were no longer available either in print or online format.

Chyi and Lewis (2009) studied 68 metro dailies and found that the print editions were still reaching more local readers than the online editions of the same newspaper. This could be in part because the online platform attracts readers outside of the daily print circulation area. This could also be attributed to traditionally print readers also reading their newspapers online.

Lowery (2003) found that the majority of online editions were not from large metro dailies, but from small newspapers, which dominate the industry. But innovation on news sites for smaller newspapers lagged behind their larger counterparts, pointing to staffing shortages and less experienced online staffs at those papers. Larger newspapers and those with a separate online staff were more likely to have web-exclusive content. Lowery concludes that the most prominent factors that push smaller newspapers to go online were competition in their market and the size, the less competition the more they are willing to chance an online endeavor. He found that the community itself has little effect on its newspaper going online.

Going online

Online presence of newspapers began more than 25 years ago with *Viewtron* offered by Knight-Ridder newspapers (Harper, 1997, 2). By 1996, one survey of newspaper and magazine editors that found 77% planned to have an online edition soon. A report from the Newspaper Association of America said: "Whether these new channels include interactive TV, online computer services, CD-ROM technology or other emerging technologies, newspapers must ensure their place as the primary information provider regardless of the pipeline" (Consoli, 1994, 19).

Harper (1997) examined every newspaper online in 1996 (including the three largest papers in Alabama) their budgets (when shared), their subscription rate, the services provided, and the size of staff. Harper found that online newspapers have no systematic scheme for making money, but most are seeking ways to produce revenue. The newspapers, at this point, had not figured out how to profit from online endeavors. This would explain why so many newspapers held back before creating websites, and why some still hold back before embracing new technologies.

Eckelbecker (2002) also found that most newspapers were not making enough money from their online endeavors to justify keeping them. This further explains why so many newspapers are still not to the level that many critics think they should be in the field of digital adoption..

One 1999 study of 100 U.S. online newspapers found that even though the Internet platforms offered many opportunities for interactivity and interaction with readers, that most newspapers either did not use interactivity or use it to its full potential, only offering "token" interactive option (Schultz, 1999).

Dimitrova and Nezanski (2006) compared how 26 international newspaper sites covered the Iraq war, paying particular attention to their use of hyperlinks, animations, multimedia content, and interactive elements. The authors concluded that online journalism still has not reached the state of convergence, but that U.S. newspapers were more likely than international newspapers to include photos, graphics, interactive elements, and audio content.

Diebean and Garrison (2001) examined how all of the evolving technologies are changing news, including discussions about the technologies being used for online news, the interactivity offered to user, and the content and design being used for alternative delivery. The main question the researchers attempted to answer was if daily newspapers were using the technologies that were

available to them. The study broke the information down into the percentage that had forums, chat rooms, email, polls, and instantaneous updates. This study was on a small scale, and only used six large metro dailies including *The New York Times.*

As defined by D. P. Noth (1996), the meaning of interactivity is elevated beyond a click. Katz (1994) argued that most of the online newspapers did not even provide the e-mail addresses of their reporters and editors. A study by Newhagen, Cordes, and Levy (1995) revealed that editors did not even look at e-mails from their readers, although they had encouraged people to send in comments. Content analyses of online media have shown that journalistic web sites do not fully exploit the opportunities offered by the new medium (Kamerer & Bressers, 1998; Niekamp, 1996; Neuberger et al., 1997; Tremayne, 1997). Gubman and Greer's (1997) content analysis of 83 online newspapers found that online newspapers are often consistently sophisticated or unsophisticated depending mainly on the size of the organization. Beamish (1997) found that in 1995, newspapers were settling on the web as their electronic publishing environment of choice.

Rosenberry (2005) found through a content analysis of 47 online newspaper sites that few newspapers are using the Internet's interactive technologies to improve coverage.

Schultz (1999) in a content analysis of 100 U. S. newspapers, found that while the internet has the potential to increase interactive attempts in journalism, but media organizations are not utilizing it to its full potential. Media organizations are only providing "token" interactive options. This study also points out tools that online media can use to encourage interactive communication. The availability of these interactive technologies were found by using a content analysis. Shultz found that most newspapers gave at least one e-mail address to contact the newsroom.

Dibean (1999) studied how extensively U. S. daily newspapers were using available web technologies. The study found through content analysis, that most online newspapers have adopted

some innovations, but are lacking in their use of Java and plug in based technologies. She also found that regional online newspapers were more likely to be innovative than local and national online newspapers.

Social media

In addition to going online, newspapers in recent years have embraced new features reliant on social media to encourage more interactivity with their readers. These include networks like Twitter and Facebook and other social media environments created by newspapers.

Greenhow (2009) suggests that journalism should jump on the Facebook bandwagon because it is a way to reach the lucrative market of tweens, teens and young adults. He argues out that this medium is the main way in which these age groups are interacting with the world, and news organizations have the opportunity to get on their level and interact with them as well. "Faceworking" is what happens when people intentionally put their social networking site to work, seeking or promoting information, sharing and creative inspiration (2009). Newspapers should "Facework," according to Greenhow, who discusses two experiments of niche applications for Facebook that targeted and attracted young audiences to news. One such example of getting on the level of tweens, teens and young adults is interacting with them on stories that directly influence them.

Thompson (2009) came to a similar conclusion as Greenhow and suggests that newspapers should use social media, especially in cases where the news that is being reported relates directly to a group (such as tweens, teens and young adults) who are ingrained within the world of social media already. Thompson describes how the *Tallahassee Democrat* used Youtube, Facebook and Twitter to actively seek out a young audience for a news story that they could directly relate to. A 23-year-old college graduate was killed while working for police in a drug sting gone bad, and the

Tallahassee Democrat knew that in order to reach the demographic that was closest to the victim's

age, they would have to get creative (2009). Most individuals in this age group very seldom come

in contact with an actual newspaper. Thompson touts the successful experience of the *Tallahassee*

Democrat as an example of how all newspapers could use social media to reach a niche audience

successfully. Thompson also points out that the *Tallahassee Democrat* found many of their

"readers" in this age group through alternative means, and not the print newspaper.

Mashable also has a "Social Media Guide for Journalists." which includes detailed

explanations of social media tools and how journalists and news organizations can use them to

dispense and share their content. Betancourt (2009a) provides a journalist's guide to Facebook. In

her guide, she stresses that Facebook is a way to connect to communities involved in stories, find

sources and generate leads. She also says for media companies, Facebook is a way to build

community and reach a larger audience. A good journalist who is well connected on Facebook can

actually get story ideas from their friends. "Journalists should be using Facebook as a tool to

unearth timely conversations around their topic or local community," said J. D. Lasica, former

editor of the Sacramento Bee (quoted in Betancourt, 2009, "Finding Leads on Facebook"). The

Facebook guide also points out that journalists and news organizations have to be a friend in

return to their readers who connect with Facebook.

Betancourt (2009b) also provides a journalist's guide to Twitter. In her guide she stresses

that Twitter is a way to engage an audience, connect with sources and continue building personal

brands. This format also forces writers to get to the point quickly and focus their attention. She

points out some media professionals who use Twitter to crowdsource, or follow readers who have

certain interests and could be used as potential sources, and to promote stories. Betancourt also

references a website that is branched off of Twitter called Muck Rack which is the compiled real

time Twitter activity of journalists. She also gives an overview of "tweet deck" which allows users to track tweets on certain topics or follow groups. Betancourt also points out a forum for finding sources which has more than 100,000 who are willing to be used as sources in news stories. All a journalists has to do is send their question to "Help a Reporter Out" on Twitter. Betancourt's suggestions: Get engaged, read replies, respond, start as a listener, post a profile picture, talk to your boss about their philosophy on Twitter, treat your tweets like a microblog, but don't turn Twitter into a non-stop back and forth exchange. This series includes articles on Google Wave, Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter.

Palser (2009) discusses how news outlets should use Twitter to reach audiences that their print editions will never be able to reach. Palser says that what most news organizations that are using Twitter are doing is simply sending their headlines directly to Twitter isn't the best practice, but an acceptable start. The article also points out that if the Dalai Lama can amass thousands of Twitter followers for a fake account in mere days, news organizations, with their advertising capabilities, can certainly find a way to utilize Twitter that is financially successful (2009).

Research Questions

The presence of web sites, the alternative delivery methods available on them, and the varying levels of connectivity with newspapers has become a topic of much interest to newspaper readers and newspaper professionals. This study seeks to find how newspapers in Alabama connect with their readers in ways other than print, and how successful the newspapers attempts have been based upon the number of followers the papers have amassed. This study also seeks to determine if there are factors that dictate the likelihood that a newspaper will have a presence alternative to print.

To determine the level to which newspapers in Alabama are utilizing various alternative delivery tools to connect to their readers, the following research questions are posed:

RQ 1: How many of Alabama's newspapers are connected with their readers in ways

beyond print?

RQ 2: Of those papers with Web sites, what alternative delivery methods are being

promoted to readers? How prominently are those tools being placed?

RQ 3: How big of a following have Alabama newspapers attracted through their social

media pages? How active are they in promoting news on these pages?

RQ 4: Do daily or weekly newspapers vary in use of any of these tools?

For each of these questions, researchers examined the Web sites of newspapers in Alabama.

Method

These questions will be answered using content analysis. Content analysis is, according to Kerlinger, "a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 150). In this study, content analysis will be used to code the content of Alabama newspaper websites along with their profiles on social networking sites.

Defense of Method

Content analysis has several benefits over other methods, which make it the best way to observe the data. Content analysis is popular with media researchers, "because it is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media…" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 150).

First, content analysis does not require human subjects to produce the data like surveys and experiments. Second, content analysis is unobtrusive because the data is collected from texts, and in the case of this study from the websites of newspapers. This method is unlike an experiment or a survey that are creating data; a content analysis merely counts and analyzes data that already exists. A content analysis is quantitative in nature, and as such allows researchers to summarize results and present them succinctly (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 151). Another important benefit of using a content analysis for a study such as this one is that the content is analyzed within original contexts. Third, content analysis allows the researcher to collect a vast amount of data relatively cheaply and without a large time commitment. This way, every newspaper in the state could be examined. Also, content analysis is systematic, which means that the content is analyzed and selected based upon consistently applied rules, and all content under examination is examined with the same set of rules (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 151). Because of the rules put into place before initiating a content analysis, there is also no way that a researcher's own feelings or biases can confound the results. Content analyses, by design, are objective (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 151).

Content analysis also has limitations. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) state that "content analysis cannot serve as the sole basis for claims about media effects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 154). Focus groups or interviews are useful for obtaining the attitudes and opinions of editors, publishers or readers about the varying delivery methods available to newspapers. Content analysis cannot achieve the same depth of qualitative data as focus groups, interviews or in-depth experiments. Content analysis can only gather actual content and not the motivations behind the content or the effects of the content.

Population and sample

The theoretical sample in this study is all English language Alabama newspapers. The actual population included all member newspapers of the Alabama Press Association. Because the number of newspapers in that group is relatively small, no sample is necessary. Therefore, this study is based on a census that included all member newspapers of the APA as of January 2010 and thus can be generalized to the entire group of newspapers. A census tests every element in the population, where a sample can only test a segment of the population. When a population is studied, such as this study, only "measurement error- inconsistencies produced by testing or evaluation- are present" and has no instance of sampling error (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 89). A census also has high external validity, which means that the results can be generalized to other situations (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 23). The APA newspapers were used because this organization represents the vast majority of the state's newspapers and this organization, founded in XXX, is widely recognized as the voice of Alabama's papers. Further, the organization provides a comprehensive listing of members, complete with circulation size, web addresses, etc., adding to the convenience factor. As of January 2010, the list included 123 newspaper:. 24 newspapers are dailies and 99 are classified as weeklies (publishing once or twice a week). This population does not include all newspapers in Alabama as there are some newspapers who are not affiliated with the APA. Because after the first research question, all the research questions are based on an analysis of websites, any newspapers on the APA list without active websites will have limited data collected.

Unit of analysis

After the papers are checked for the presence of a Web site, there will be two units of analysis for this study. The first unit of analysis is the entire website of a newspaper. The entire

website of a newspaper consists of not just the front page, or what first appears on a computer screen logging into the main page of a newspaper website. The entire website includes the content that requires scrolling, or clicking to any other page attached to the newspaper's site. As long as the links take you to pages still hosted on the paper's site and not external sites, the pages will be considered as part of the website. Theoretically, the entire site of each newspaper will be analyzed, meaning every page could be clicked into and scrolled all the way down. However, once the tools were found to be present, the coders could stop searching and go on to the next tool. While some links to tools could be hidden on story pages, we found this not to be the case in all sites analyzed. The links to tools, when present, were found on the front page, the main section pages, or in drop down menus. If they weren't on those pages, we checked a few of the individual story pages and then determined that the tool was not present on the site.

For the purpose of this study, a newspaper website will include all websites hosted by newspapers on which they post information, news or any other original content. This includes websites, such as AL.com, that host the content of three newspapers, but is "fed" content by the newspapers and maintained in part by the newspapers. Al.com hosts three newspapers (*The Birmingham News, The Mobile Press-Register,* and *The Huntsville Times*). Each of the three newspapers has their own version of the site hosted by Al.com. Other state newspapers, including those who belong to the Boone Group of newspapers, have shared websites fed by local print editions. Again, shared sites will represent the papers as long as distinct newspaper content can be found on the state from the print newspaper under study.

The second unit of analysis will be the newspaper pages (when available) on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, which are not on the newspaper's website, but are linked

from the website of the newspaper. The main Facebook and Twitter accounts of newspapers will be considered for this study not those associated with one specific person on the staff. For example, the Anniston Star's has a main Twitter account and others associated with the editors and some reporters. The main account will be defined as the one found through the most prominent link to the social media site on the newspaper's website. The researchers did not seek out each newspaper on Twitter and Facebook, these sites had to be advertised in some way on the newspaper's website.

Operationalization of Variables

The first variable was to determine if a newspaper had an active Web site with any news content available. These were tracked through links from the APA and through Web searches. After a website was found, there were four main constructs involved in this study, presence, prominence, activity on social media and demographics of the paper.

Presence. The first construct is the presence of an array of tools available on a newspapers website. A code sheet and accompanying code book was created for coders to record the presence of the following tools: Twitter account, Facebook account, text/mobile alerts, e-mail alerts, and RSS feeds. Each tool was coded as 0 = not present anywhere on the site and 1 = present on the site.

A RSS feed, or "Really Simple Syndication" is a method of delivery in which recent postings to websites that users frequent or subscribe to are delivered to a central location. Google reader can be used to collect RSS feeds in one location for simpler reading. If the newspaper displayed an option for visitors to subscribe to any of their content through an RSS feed the coder gave the newspaper a 1 for that category. Sometimes newspapers indicated RSS feeds with a logo, while sometimes, there was a text-based link or page devoted to setting up RSS. If that was not

available, the researchers looked for the automatic detector for RSS available on most browsers to see if RSS was functioning on the page.

Email alerts are another method of delivery in which recent postings or content of the newspaper can be shared with readers. A user has the option of subscribing to an email list from which the newspaper on occasion will send news or other content to the users email address. If the newspaper displayed an option for visitors to subscribe to any of their content through an email alert (either with a mail icon, a text-based notation, or a drop down menu) the coder gave the newspaper a 1 for that category.

Text/mobile alerts were coded in the same way. Newspapers either used a mobile phone icon, text indicating that people could subscribe to mobile text alerts, or had a drop down menu related to connecting with the paper that gave text as an option. If any of these were found, the coders marked a 1 for that tool.

Facebook and Twitter are social networking sites through which users can share content and make connections. If the newspaper displayed a Facebook badge or Twitter logo (a little bird), text or any other image indicating that the newspaper had a Facebook or Twitter presence, the coder gave the newspaper a 1 for each respective category.

Prominence. Once the tools were found to be present on a newspaper website, these tools were given a score for their prominence, or placement within the site. This score was an indicator of how much emphasis newspapers were placing on each method of delivery. If a tool is found on the front page of the website without scrolling or clicking, the researcher coded that tool as a 5, the highest possible prominence. If the tool is found on the front page, but the researcher had to scroll down to find it, the researcher coded that tool as a 4. If the tool is found on the front page in a drop down menu, the researcher coded that tool as a 3. If the tool is found

on a secondary page, the researcher coded that tool as a 2. If the tool was found through an automatic feed (RSS) or through a rotating ad, researcher coded that tool as a 1.

Activity on social media. If a newspaper was found to have a Facebook or a Twitter account, coders clicked into those pages and recorded information about the activity on those pages. Only the link provided by the newspaper website to those pages was used. Coders first looked to determine how many followers (on Twitter) or fans (now called people who "like" the page) the newspaper had. This data was coded as the exact number of followers or fans as indicated either to the left (Facebook) or the right (Twitter) of the news feed on the main page.

Coders then looked at the content on the Facebook wall or recent Tweets and coded the content for the number of recent posts. The frequency of updates was coded on Wednesday and Thursday for daily newspapers and within 48 hours of the main publication day for the weekly newspapers. If the newspaper had no updates on Facebook and Twitter in the past week, the researcher coded it as a 0. If the newspaper had Facebook or Twitter posts updated in the past week, but not within the past 24 hours, the researcher coded it as a 1. If the newspaper had one Facebook or Twitter post in the past 24 hours, the researcher coded it as a 2. If a newspaper had multiple Facebook or Twitter posts in the past 24 hours, the researcher coded it as a 3. Therefore, higher numbers represented more frequent updates on the social media pages.

Demographics of paper. The demographics of each newspaper were gathered through materials provided by the Alabama Press Association, either in the printed directory or the APA web site (APA, 2009). The circulation of the paper was reported in exact numbers as listed on the January 2010 advertising rate sheet. Daily and weekly status was taken from an APA list of daily and weekly papers. Publication date and web address were accessed through the 2009 APA

member directory and then checked again with the updated APA 2010 directory, which was published in February 2010.

Procedure

A codebook and codesheet (See Appendix A) were developed after examining the sites and determining the best way to operationalize each variable. Nine coders were then trained to code sites by the primary researcher. After training, eight coders were assigned 15 or 16 newspapers each to code, and one coder was assigned to code one or two papers assigned to each of the other coder to check for reliability. Intercoder reliability was based on 16 papers with Web sites (13% of all member papers and 16.5% of the 97 papers with Web sites). The instrument was found to be highly reliable, with coders achieving 100% agreement on 8 of the 15 variables across the 16 sample papers. For two variables, agreement was 93.8%; for three variables it was 87.5%; and for the final two variables, agreement was 81.25%. Therefore, agreement on all variables was acceptable to good. After all of the data was collected it was checked over to ensure that all newspapers on the list had been coded.

Results

Demographics of the sample

There were 123 full APA member papers at the time of the study (Feb. 1, 2010). Of those, 97 had operating Web sites, and those were used for analysis on all research questions after the first question. Of the 97 newspapers that were found to have websites, 24 (24.7%) were dailies and 73 (75.3%) were weeklies. The average circulation of the newspapers was 10,583.09 (median= 3,837, SD= 22253.15, Minimum= 100, maximum= 166,337). The majority of these newspapers

had circulations under 4,000 (51, 52.6%), 22 (22.7%) had circulations that fell between 4,000 and 10,000, and 24 (24.7%) had circulations greater than 10,000.

RQ1: How many of Alabama's newspapers are connected with their readers in ways beyond print?

Of the 123 newspapers studied, 97 or 24.7% had an active, working website, meaning some sort of digital delivery. All 24 dailies that were members had an active website, while 73 of 99 weeklies, or 73.7% had websites at the time of the study.

RQ 2: Of those papers with Web sites, what alternative delivery methods are being promoted to readers? How prominently are these tools being displayed?

To answer this question, descriptive statistics were run to determine which tools were being featured on APA member sites most often. As Table 1 shows, RSS was the most commonly used tool, present on almost half of the sites analyzed. Mobile/text delivery was used only on 15 sites. Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter were present on just over a quarter of the sites.

Next, means were run on the prominence score given to each tool. For this score, higher numbers meant that the tools was featured more prominently on the site, with a five representing present on the front page and visible as soon as you open the site. As Table 1 shows, Facebook was the most visible when it was present on sites, followed by e-mail alert options and Twitter. RSS was given the least prominence. In fact, 21 of the 47 sites with RSS available had it featured on the front page but near the bottom of the page. In contrast 16 of the 26 sites with Facebook put that link right at the top of their page.

Table 1

Percent of APA member papers with active Web sites featuring each tool; prominence given to each tool

Tool	Papers with tool present	Ave. prominence score when tool was present
RSS	47 (48.5%)	3.70
E-mail	29 (29.9%)	3.90
Twitter	28 (28.9%)	3.79
Facebook	26 (26.8%)	4.15
Text/Mobile	15 (15.5%)	3.33

RQ3: How big of a following have Alabama newspapers attracted through their social media pages? How active are they in promoting news on these pages?

As RQ 2 showed, just under a third of the papers in the sample had Facebook and Twitter links on their sites. While some other newspapers in the sample might have active Facebook and Twitter accounts, these were not promoted on the papers' main Web sites, therefore, they were excluded from this analysis. The reasoning is that the page is the "digital face" of the paper at this time and the main way people look to connect with the paper in a digital environment. To examine activity on the social media sites, descriptive statistics were run on the average number of followers/fans and on the update score. As Table 2 shows, the newspapers had more Facebook followers on average than Twitter followers; however, both numbers seem very low considering the average print circulation of the papers in the sample was greater than 10,000. Updating fared a bit better. On the 0-3 update score, with *three indicating the most active updating, Alabama's*

papers seemed pretty active in updating Facebook with news, and slightly less so in updating

Twitter.

Table 2

Activity on Alabama newspaper's main social media pages

Social media page	Ave. number of followers/fans	Ave. update score
Twitter	537.43	1.61
Facebook	1,102.04	2.27

RQ4: Do daily or weekly newspapers vary in use of any of these tools?

To test whether daily and weekly newspapers differed on all of the above, the 73 weekly papers were compared with the 24 dailies on all of the variables. For presence or absence of tools, Chi-Square tests were run to compare the percentage of papers with the tools present on their websites. These are shown in the top half of Table 3. As the table shows, Alabama's daily newspapers were significantly more likely to have each of the five alternate delivery tools present on their sites than were the weekly newspapers. In fact, each tool was present on a minimum of half of the daily sites, and some tools (RSS, for example) were present on 75% of the daily newspaper sites. The majority of the weeklies, in contrast, did not have the tools present. Text/mobile alerts, for example, were present on half of the daily newspaper sites, but only on 4.1% of the weekly newspaper sites.

This tendency likely is related to the average circulation size of the dailies (30,968.25) compared to the weeklies (3,881.12, $t = 6.06$, $df = 95$, $p < .001$). Because the weeklies were significantly smaller than the dailies, the tendency to have fewer tools likely is a function of the

size of the papers rather than the publication frequency. As Gubman and Greer (1997) found, larger papers tend to have more rich and advanced websites, and that appears to be the case in Alabama with alternative delivery tools present on sites.

Next, the dailies and weeklies were compared on total number of tools, number of followers/fans (Twitter/Facebook), update frequency (Twitter/Facebook) and prominence of placement of the tools on the sites. These tests were conducted with independent sample t-tests. The lower half of Table 3 lists the tests in which dailies differed significantly from weeklies. First, the total number of tools on each site was compared. Not surprisingly, given that dailies were more likely to have each tool present, the average number of tools on the site was found to be significantly higher for daily newspaper sites than for weekly sites. On average, dailies had 2.88 tools per site, compared with 1.04 for weekly sites. Twitter activity also differed, with dailies having significantly more followers and more frequent updates than weeklies. Again, this is likely due to the larger circulation size of the dailies (they typically were in larger areas) and the more frequent publication cycle – they have a more constant news production schedule. It is interesting, however, that for Facebook significant differences emerged in the total number of followers but not in the update, meaning while the dailies had more followers on Facebook, they did not update their Facebook pages more frequently than the weeklies. Finally, the dailies and weeklies were compared on prominence of tools on the site. The only difference was found for Facebook prominence, with the dailies placing the Facebook link in slightly less prominent locations on their sites. The placement of the other tools, for papers with those tools, did not differ for dailies and weeklies.

Table 3:

Significant differences in presence of tools and scores by daily and weekly newspapers

Alternate tools	Dailies (% with tool)	Weeklies	Chi-Square value
Twitter present	58.3%	19.2%	13.47***
Facebook	50.0%	19.2%	8.75**
RSS	75.0%	39.7%	8.99***
E-mail	54.2%	21.9%	8.96**
Text/Mobile	50.0%	4.1%	20.10***

Numbers/scores	Dailies (ave. score)	Weeklies (ave. score);	t value
Total tools present	2.88	1.04	5.20***
Twitter followers	1020.64	114.21	2.55*
Twitter update score	2.14	1.07	2.70*
Facebook fans	1516.42	746.88	1.90+
Location of Facebook	3.75	4.50	1.77+

+p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Overall, these findings indicate that dailies and weeklies did differ, with Alabama's daily newspapers being much more likely to have alternate delivery tools present, attract more followers, and update their Twitter posts more,

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Appendix 1

Code Sheet: Alabama Newspapers and Alternative delivery

Coder Number:

Site Demographics:
Name of Newspaper
Circulation of Print Product
Website URL
Frequency of Publication   1   2
Date Accessed: 01/___/2010

Frequency of Tools
For each tool: 0   1   2   3   4   5
- Twitter
- Facebook
- E-mail/Mobile News delivery
- Text Alerts
- RSS Feed

Number of Followers/Fans
For each tool: exact number
- Twitter
- Facebook

Frequency of Updates
For each tool: 0   1   2   3
- Twitter
- Facebook

The Code Book

Coder number: Enter your number1 Alford
2 Bennett
3 Bonner
4 Bralley
5 Gaddy
6 Jackson
7 Walton
8 Zirlott
9 Troutman

Name of newspaper: Enter official name

Circulation of print product: Found in Ulrich's Directory. Record the exact number for the right category, depending on day of publication.

Web site URL: Follow this format: http://www.[sitename].[domain type]/[suffix]

Frequency of publication: Based on your list and on Ulrich's
        If a product is printed daily, circle 1.
        If a product is printed weekly, circle 2. (Use APA classification for weeklies – some are twice a week, for example)

Date accessed: Enter in this format 125 for 01/25/10; 127 for 01/27/10, etc.

Frequency of Tools: Try to locate each of the seven tools on the list. Code as follows, according to its location on site:
        0   If tool not found anywhere on the site
        5   If found on the front page with no scrolling required to find it.
        4   If found on the front page in a drop-down menu.
        3   If found on the front page, but scrolling is required.
        2   If found on a second level/non-front page.
        1   If found through an automatic technology or in a rotating display

Number of Followers/Friends: Record the exact number for each of the social network tools. Follow the site link to the tool to view followers on Twitter /friends on Facebook. If tool is not advertised on the site, enter zero.

Frequency of Updates: Assign values for each tool as follows once you follow the link into their Twitter/Facebook. Code Wed. & Thurs. for dailies and w/in 48 hours of publication of a weekly paper (check publication date for weeklies):
        0 – No updates in the past week
        1 – Posts in the past week, but not in the past 24 hours
        2 –Single post in the past 24 hours
        3 –Multiple posts in the past 24 hours