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Hybridity and social media adoption by journalists: An international comparison

Keywords

Social media, journalism, comparative study, Canada, Finland, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK and US

Abstract

This article applies the notion of hybridity to compare social media adoption by journalists in seven countries. Hybridity is operationalised through three constructs: complexity, interdependence and transformative potential. These three constructs frame the international comparison, which is based on empirical data from a survey of journalists (N=2763) carried out in Canada, Finland, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK and US. The analysis found broad similarities between the countries, particularly in relation to widespread use of social media in journalistic practices, the importance of general public as a source of information online, high proportion of journalists interacting and responding to comments on social media, and declining importance of PR sources for a section of the respondents. However, there were differences too between the countries, especially regarding popularity of particular types of social media, specific combination of professional tasks social media was used for, and perceptions about the impacts of social media. Overall, the findings illustrate that although country specific characteristics do produce some differences, key features of social media adoption are broadly similar in the surveyed countries and in this sense the process is both about integration and fragmentation.

Introduction

Social media have been widely adopted by journalists in recent years. The tools are used in everyday practices of journalists (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre 2013; Gulyas 2014; Rottwilm 2014; Vis 2013) and are seen as part of the profession's 'technological infrastructure' (Paulussen and Harder 2014). Academic research on social media and journalism has also increased as the adoption of the tools are seen to contribute to significant changes in the profession. There is, however, an ongoing debate about the underlying features of journalism in a digital environment and about the implications of the changes caused by social media.

This debate has been difficult to resolve due to three main reasons. Firstly, there is limited comprehensive empirical data, especially those that compare different countries, cultures and contexts of social media adoption. Secondly, social media research has a number of methodological challenges that have resulted in the empirical data, as well as the study of the subject area in general, being patchy and fragmented. The challenges include frequent changes in the social media industries (with new platforms emerging and existing platforms amended), lack of agreement about categorisation of social media and measurement of social media use, difficulties with accessing data and researching platforms that are semi-private and semi-public, and the question whether researchers need new tools and methods to study social media. Thirdly, studies have tended to focus on specific aspects of social media adoption and holistic examinations have been limited. For example, empirical research often concentrates on specific platforms rather than general social media use. There has been a focus on Twitter in particular as the main platform to analyse (Hermida 2013; Zimmer and Proferes 2014) partly because of its assumed importance and partly because comparatively it is easier to study than other platforms.

This article aims to address some of these issues by providing an exploratory international comparative analysis that examines social media adoption in seven countries based on an empirical survey. The study addresses a gap in the relevant literature where most empirical research tends to have a one country focus and there is limited international comparative examination (e.g. Singer 2014; Paulussen and Harder 2014; Messner et al. 2012). The study also applies a generic approach, rather than focus on a specific aspect, to explore social media adoption in the different countries. As part of this more holistic approach hybridity, as a fundamental overarching concept, is operationalised to provide framework for the analysis. The notion of hybridity encapsulates key changes and trends in digital transformations, and it is seen as a defining feature of journalism in the digital media environment (Chadwich 2013; Hermida 2013; Papacharissi 2015).

Social media, journalism and hybridity

One of the challenges of studying social media and journalism is that both are shifting concepts. Social media are seen as a collection of Internet-based applications based on the foundations of Web 2.0 technologies (Kaplan and Heinlein 2010), but boundaries between these and other similar internet platforms (such as interactive websites) are not clearly delineated and conceptualised. However, scholars tend to agree about key characteristics of social media, notably their affordances for interactive dialogue, social interaction and the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Because of the potential impacts of these features social media are not merely seen as a technological phenomenon, but also a cultural one (Jenkins, 2006), where the "end-users feel enabled and encouraged to participate in the creation and circulation of media" (Lewis 2012: 853; see also Singer 2014; Singer et al. 2011) and previous rationales for control over media creation are challenged.

The concept of journalism is also shifting due to technological and societal changes and as a result definition of a journalist is fluid and contested (Fulton 2015; Deuze 2010). There seem to be an agreement, however, that journalism in the digital age is different, more complex than in the past, and that social media and other digital technologies have had significant impact on journalistic practices and on the profession. For some these changes are fundamental heralding a new era in the profession (Deuze 2007) and a paradigm shift in news media (Papacharissi 2015; Singer et al. 2011; Sheffer and Shultz 2010).

Hybridity as a theoretical construct has been applied across a variety of disciplines to study and interpret cultural and social changes. Historically, media studies "typically analysed hybridity within a traditional communication framework of production, text/message, and reception. The lion's share of this research has focused on media texts and the dynamics of media reception, and seldom on media production" (Kraidy 2005: 5). However, more recently it has been applied as a theoretical concept to explain the complex ways digital technologies, including social media, have impacted on media production and practices of media producers, including those of journalists.

Definitions of hybridity vary depending on particular disciplinary areas but it has been commonly used to refer to processes, and their outcomes, of mixing and blending of hitherto distinctive elements. Chadwick (2011: 3) argues that hybridity "captures heterogeneity and things that are irreducible to simple, unified essences". He also identifies two basic modes of hybridisation: hybrids that are 'diluted' versions of their antecedents; and 'particulate' hybrids, where "'antecedents' characteristics are always in the process of being selectively recombined in new ways. Thus, particulate hybrids are recognizable from their lineages but they are also genuinely novel. Hybridization is therefore a process of both integration and fragmentation" (Chadwick 2011: 10).

Chadwick (2011 and 2013) identifies complexity, interdependence, and transition as three key notions of hybridity. These three notions repeatedly emerge as distinctive features of the changes that are taking place in journalism. For example, the environment of contemporary journalism is often described as complex (e.g. Deuze 2007; Klinger and Svensson 2015; Philips et al. 2009; Papacharissi 2015). Anderson (2013: 98) sees 'institutional hybridity' and porousness of professional boundaries as key characteristics of this new complex environment. For Chadwick and Collister the incursion of digital media logics provides journalists 'boundary-drawing powers', where they reconfigure the context of their actions by using intrinsic resources and strategies as well as "interfacing with other actors in a hypernetworked environment" (Chadwick and Collister 2014: 2423). In other parts of the literature hybridity is applied to explore the transformative potential of social media adoption. Work routines and professional values are often seen to have changed significantly (Deuze 2010; Hedmana and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Gulyas 2013). For some the changes are fundamental leading to the emergence of new forms of journalism. For example, Vis (2013: 44) discusses the rise of a new hybrid journalistic norm on Twitter distinctive from traditional norms. While Hermida (2010) proposes ambient journalism as a new form of journalism, which he defines as an "awareness system that offers diverse means to collect, communicate, share and display news and information, serving diverse purposes... The value does not lie in each individual fragment of news and information, but rather in the mental portrait created by a number of messages over a period of time" (Hermida 2010: 301).

Chadwick (2011 and 2013) and other authors, however, emphasise that although these new forms and practices are genuinely novel they are also recognizable from their roots, and that a key feature of the new environment is the interdependence of new and old media logics. Hermida (2013: 295), for example, describes Twitter "as a networked communication space that results in a hybridity of old and new frames, values and approaches". While Papacharissi (2015: 30) argues that "online networked platforms render ambient, always-on spaces where

hybrid forms of news production take place". Similarly, Anderson (2013: 172) emphasise the interdependencies of the new journalistic ecosystem where journalistic work is becoming an "assemblage ... a continuous process of networking the news" characterised by hybridisation of journalistic venues, practices and changes in understandings of journalism's publics.

This study takes an international comparative approach in order to render the invisible visible (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). By examining the extent and nature of similarities and differences between countries a comparative study helps us to identify general trends and underlying features of the changes that are taking place. Thus, by comparing journalists' practices and views on social media in the seven surveyed countries we could have a greater understanding of social media adoption in the profession. To frame the comparison hybridity, as a key concept of digital transformations and of journalism in the digital age, is applied. Hybridity has mainly been applied conceptually in the relevant literature rather than as a guiding framework for empirical investigations. This is because the concept poses a challenge to empirical research as it eludes easy classification (Kraidy 2005). However, hybridity can be operationalised by turning the theoretical concept into constructs that can be explored empirically. In this study hybridity is operationalised through the three key notions discussed above (complexity, interdependence and transformative potential) which provide a framework to analyse the empirical data.

The three notions provide the focus for the six research questions, which are used to compare social media adoption by journalists in the surveyed countries. Complexity, which is a key feature of journalists' work in the digital ecology (e.g. Chadwick and Collister 2014; Deuze 2007; Philips et al. 2009; Papacharissi 2015), is explored empirically in terms of how diverse journalists' use of social media are:

RQ1: To what extent is journalists' use of social media dominated by a particular type of social media?

RQ2: To what extent is journalists' use of social media dominated by a particular professional purpose?

Interdependence is examined empirically by exploring to what extent journalists' work are influenced by both new and old media logics. Sourcing a story and relationship with the audience, as two key areas of journalists' work, were chosen to focus the research questions on. New media logic refers to interactive, participatory, networked media affordances that entail a more decentralised way of communication. These include crowdsourcing and user-generated content in relation to sourcing (e.g. Singer 2014; Singer et al. 2011), and more interactive, less hierarchical relationship with the audience (Lewis 2012; Rottwilm 2014). Whereas old media logic involves traditional, one to many, hierarchical media production system (Chadwick 2013; Klinger and Svensson 2015; Van Dijck and Poell 2013), where sources with authority and commercial imperatives are drivers in the news ecology and the audience is largely passive.

RQ3: Which sources do journalists perceive as most important?

RQ4: How do journalists perceive the changes regarding the relationship with their audience?

Transformative potential, which notion investigates the nature of changes and extent of the transition from the old to the new media environment, is examined empirically in relation to perceived impacts of social media on journalists' work and professional values.

RQ5: How do journalists view the impact of social media on their work?

RQ6: How do journalists view the impact of social media on the values of their profession?

Methodology

Data for this exploratory study were collected through a survey which examined different aspects of social media use and collected data from seven countries between July and

September 2013: Canada (N=213), Finland (N=294), Germany (N=454), Netherlands (N=220), Sweden (N=263), UK (N=589) and the US (N=730). The questionnaire addressed the three constructs of hybridity discussed above by exploring patterns of social media use and journalists' perceptions about the impacts of these tools. Questions about patterns of uses included frequency of use, diversity of tools used, preferences for particular social media platforms, purposes of use and specific social media activities. Questions about journalists' perceptions asked for their views about the impacts of social media on the relationship with their audience, on professional practices and on professional values.

The survey employed structured international sampling thus allowing for comparisons between the countries. Two key factors influenced the choice of countries. First, countries with broadly similar political system, infrastructure, economic and social development were selected for the comparison to control variations in too many variables. Second, those countries were included that had a large number of journalistic contacts in CisionPoint Media Database and the research team had access to these. Using CisionPoint Media Database, which is an international commercial communications database, had three main advantages. First, the database contained large number of contacts that were similar in size as estimates for the countries' journalistic communities. Second, the method for creating the contact lists was similar to that used in academic studies (e.g. Weaver, 2008). The technique involved using a complete listings of media outlets in a country and including all journalistic contacts for them. Journalists were defined as those who were editorially relevant and regularly provided editorial content. Those who were perceived to assist with the creation and dissemination of content, such as sales or communication officers, technicians, were not included in the database. Bloggers and vloggers were also included in the database if they met a list of criteria of being editorially relevant, posting at least once a month and the last post had not been older than a month, were pitchable, had a contact method, and agreed to a listing. Third, the database had the same method for creating contact list in the surveyed countries thus allowing for comparison between them. However, a key disadvantage of using CisionPoint Media Database was that accuracy for contact lists could not be confirmed unequivocally, which has to be bear in mind when considering the research findings.

From the available datasets, which contained nearly 180,000 unique contacts in total, a random sample was selected for each country. Invitation to the online survey was sent out in an email to 66,000 journalists (20,000 in the US, 12,000 in Germany and the UK, 9,000 in Canada and 6,000 in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden – different sample sizes reflect different sizes of the countries and the available datasets). Results, with an overall 4.2% response rate, are based on 2763 completed replies. Given that the research team could not confirm how accurate the contact lists in CisionPoint Media Database were in the surveyed countries, full representativeness is not claimed in the article. However, collected data were checked for general representativeness for the population by measuring sizes of subgroups for five key demographic and professional variables. This showed that each subgroups for age, gender, media sector, type of journalists, and type of organisational affiliations were represented in adequate numbers for statistical analysis to be carried out. Table 1 shows distribution for two key professional variables: by media sector and by type of journalists. Despite its limitations given its international comparative approach as well as the fact that relevant subgroups are well represented and that sample sizes meet statistical guidelines (Alreck and Settle 2003) the study arguably provides useful insights.

Table 1 – Distribution of respondents by media sector and type of journalists (% of respondents)

	Canada	Finland	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden	UK	US
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Media sector							
Newspaper	20	24	21	14	29	13	17
Magazine	16	33	47	41	23	36	19
Broadcasting	16	14	8	5	16	8	18
Online	48	30	25	40	32	43	47
Type of journalist							
News	39	62	48	32	47	34	37
Feature Writing	19	4	15	33	27	34	28
Reviews and Editorial	31	13	25	27	13	23	22
Other	11	22	13	8	13	9	12

Studies about social media adoption by journalists often focus on a specific platform, however the term social media refers to different platforms with various purposes, functions, content and services. One of the methodological challenges of social media research is the lack of agreement about categorisation and typologies. Although various frameworks have emerged (e.g. Kaplan and Heinlein 2010) these often get outdated as the sector evolves, new platforms emerge and practices change. This study identified seven categories of social media tools according to types of activities, functions and content involved as well as relevance to specific journalistic tasks. The seven categories are: blogs, content communities and crowdsourcing sites, microblogs, professional social networking sites, generic social networking sites, audio-visual sharing sites and social readers.

Results

RQ1: To what extent is journalists' use of social media dominated by a particular type of social media?

The survey asked respondents about their professional use of the seven categories of social media identified above. What emerged from the results is that journalists' use of social media is inherently diverse. The majority of respondents used at least four or more of the seven categories of social media regularly for their work (Table 2). There were some differences between the countries in terms of the means number for categories used ranging from the lowest figure in Germany to the highest in Canada indicating that country specific characteristics have some influence on social media use. Additionally, the analysis of variance (Anova) reveals that the more respondents used social media, the more social media types they used (Table 2) and this was the case in all of the surveyed countries. Thus there is a significant statistical relationship between frequency and diversity of social media tools used. This is important because it shows that with increase in social media use there is also increase in the range and mixture of social media types used allowing for a greater degree of differentiated adoption.

Table 2 - Social media types used for work by respondents in a typical week (Means figures: Min = 0, Max = 7)

	Mean	Analysis of variance of variety of social media types used by frequency of social media use
Canada	5.69	F(7, 212) = 4.819, p = .000

Finland	5.00	F(6, 87) = 7.907, p = .000
Germany	4.96	F(7, 453) = 25.452, p = .000
Netherlands	5.25	F(6, 219) = 5.835, p = .000
Sweden	5.31	F(7, 293) = 12.352, p = .000
UK	5.53	F(7, 588) = 11.752, p = .000
US	5.31	F(7, 729) = 26.298, p = .000

Note: Means are calculated using participants' responses to questions on whether they used the seven categories of social media identified: blogs, content communities and crowdsourcing sites, microblogs, professional social networking sites, generic social networking sites, audio-visual sharing sites and social readers. Statistical analysis was based on a 95% confidence interval. Post hoc test on the significant relationships using the Bonferroni correction indicated that in each country respondents who used social media more frequently were more likely to use more social media types.

The diversity of social media types used in journalists' work is also evident in Table 3, which shows the use of the seven categories by survey respondents. Although certain forms are more popular than others and there are some differences between the countries in terms of levels of use and preferred type, the general trend is that journalists use a variety of social media and not one specific form dominates. For example, 92% of UK respondents reported that they used microblogs for work in a typical week and most of them (74%-83%) also used blogs, content communities, social networking, audio-visual as well as professional social networking sites. The category that was not used widely was social reader sites. In terms of specific platforms Twitter and Facebook were the most popular apps in most surveyed countries, and their use were generally higher in English speaking countries. Only Germany had a widely used platform that did not originate in an English speaking country. Xing, which is a home-grown professional social network, was used by almost half of the respondents. These differences between the countries are due to language differences and their implications for social media platforms, dissimilar journalistic traditions and media systems.

Table 3 - Percentage of respondents who said they used specific social media type for work in a typical week (%)

	Blogs	Content communities /crowdsourcing sites	Micro blogs	Professional social networking sites	Social networking sites	Audio visual sharing sites	Social readers
Canada	84	82	89	78	88	80	56
Finland	79	83	61	56	80	68	30
Germany	65	75	59	62	71	63	31
Netherlands	81	78	88	75	82	75	39
Sweden	81	85	77	65	87	71	40
UK	82	81	92	83	82	74	39
US	79	72	79	77	84	70	46

RQ2: To what extent is journalists' use of social media dominated by a particular professional purpose?

Social media affordances allow for a great variety of activities and indeed this flexibility is seen as a key feature of the tools and reasons for their popularity (Kaplan and Heinlein 2010). Studies on purposes of social media use found different reasons why journalists use social media. For example, Messner et al (2011) argue that journalists primarily use social media for publishing and promoting their content, while others emphasise the information sharing, sourcing, networking and conversational uses of social media (e.g. Papacharissi 2015; Hermida 2010). To explore whether there is any particular professional task that dominate journalists' use of social media, this study asked respondents about their social media use for five purposes that emerged as key in the relevant literature. The five areas were: sourcing information/story, verifying information, publishing and promoting content, networking and monitoring.

Results showed that respondents used social media for a variety of reasons in all of the surveyed countries. Means figures in Table 4 illustrate that most participants reported to use social media regularly in at least three out of the five key areas indicating that journalists use the tools for a variety of professional purposes. There are some differences between the countries, notably the figure in Germany is lower than elsewhere which is likely to be the result of dissimilarities in journalistic traditions and social media environment. The analysis of variance (Anova) reveals that journalists who used social media more also used it for more varied reasons in all of the surveyed countries (Table 4), thus there is a significant statistical relationship between frequency and variety of purposes of use in professional practices. This suggests that with increased use of social media there is greater diversity in reasons for using the tools and thus greater potential for differentiation.

Table 4 - Survey respondents' social media use in five key areas of journalists' work in a typical week (Means figures: min = 0, max = 5)

	Mean	Analysis of variance of diversity of purposes of social media use by frequency of social media use
Canada	3.73	F(5, 212) = 12.422, p = .000
Finland	3.10	F(5, 293) = 23.829, p = .000
Germany	2.62	F(5, 453) = 29.128, p = .000
Netherlands	3.42	F(5, 219) = 16.486, p = .000
Sweden	3.65	F(5, 262) = 15.702, p = .000
UK	3.72	F(5, 588) = 31.619, p = .000
US	3.45	F(5, 729) = 75.703, p = .000

Note: Means are calculated using participants' responses whether they used social media in five key areas of their work in a typical week: sourcing information, verifying information, publishing and promoting content, networking and monitoring. Statistical analysis was based on a 95% confidence interval. Post hoc test on the significant relationships using the Bonferroni correction indicated that in each country respondents who used social media more frequently used the tools for more varied reasons.

Table 5 provides a more detailed overview of the survey findings in relation to purposes of social media use. Publishing content and sourcing information emerged as most often chosen reasons, however the tools were utilised in other areas too. There were some differences between the countries. For example, respondents in the UK, Canada and the US used social media more for publishing and networking compared to those from Finland and Germany. However, social media use was not dominated by one particular professional purpose as the relatively high figures for each area illustrate in Table 5.

Table 5 - Percentage of respondents who said they used social media in key areas of their work in a typical week (%)

	Publishing	Sourcing	Networking	Verifying	Monitoring	SD
Canada	89	89	86	71	77	8.05
Finland	72	85	60	68	74	9.12
Germany	72	79	67	60	66	7.12
Netherlands	89	87	82	64	69	11.12
Sweden	82	88	79	76	80	4.47
UK	91	89	87	70	76	9.13
US	84	81	80	64	73	8.02

RQ3: Which sources do journalists perceive as most important?

There is a debate in the literature to what extent new media logic has replaced the old one in journalists' sourcing. Different views have emerged in relation to whether key sources journalists rely on have changed in the internet era or not. Some argue that thanks to digital tools, such as social media, there is now a broader range of sources journalists use and that the role of the public as a source is more enhanced in the forms of crowdsourcing and user generated content (e.g. Deuze 2010; Singer 2014). However, others contend that journalists continue to rely on the same type of sources and old power relationships are maintained (e.g. Philips, 2009; Fenton, 2009).

Findings of this research indicate that sourcing is still often driven by old media logic, although some of the results show increasing importance of a new media logic. The results also revealed differences between the countries in relation to sourcing indicating that country specific features, such as media system and environment, journalistic traditions and cultures, have an important influence on how journalists source their stories. A similarity between the surveyed countries that emerged was the importance of sources with authority, which signals the endurance of old media type sourcing. Industry contacts/experts were among the two most important sources in all of the surveyed countries except Finland (Table 6). PR sources, that are also seen as an example for old media logic (Philips 2009), were perceived as one of the two most important sources in four countries, and in the three countries where this was not the case, respondents chose other media outlets as one of their top two sources (Table 6).

Table 6 – Perceived importance of sources (% of respondents who chose source type as one of their two most important sources)

	PR sources	Other media outlets	General public/ crowdsourcing	Industry contacts/experts	Government/ officials
Canada	39	49	28	47	26
Finland	17	53	41	31	19
Germany	41	13	18	55	17
Netherlands	55	41	22	44	21
Sweden	12	53	36	47	15
UK	57	39	27	42	19
US	44	39	23	46	28

Note: The two most often chosen source types in each country are highlighted in the table.

General public/crowdsourcing, a source type exemplifying new media logic, was among the two top sources only in one country, Finland. However, in all of the surveyed countries the public was a more important source than government/officials (Table 6) suggesting that authority in sourcing is differentiated. The survey also revealed that respondents did not think that crowdsourcing would become the most important source (percentage of participants who agreed with that statement were: 16% in the UK, 29% in Germany, 15% in the UK, 2% in Canada, 25% in Finland, 12% in the Netherlands and 17% in Sweden).

In terms of differences it is notable that the Scandinavian countries show a different sourcing pattern compared to the other countries in the survey with PR sources being less and the public being more prominent as a key source for journalists (Table 6). This can be explained by a relatively late introduction of PR in these countries and that PR originated within state authorities (Larsson 2006) rather than in commercial entities influencing how it has been perceived and applied. Another reason is arguably the Nordic media model of Scandinavian countries characterised by strong newspaper sector and public service media, as well as lasting democratic corporativistic traditions (Nord 2008). The role of the public as a key source for journalists was especially important in Finland (Table 6), which apart from the reasons just mentioned can also be attributed to the small size of the country. The relatively small size, with a population of five million, means that its news environment is inherently closely networked which arguably instigate a different attitude towards a more limited number of authoritative sources allowing a greater importance of the public as a news source.

Results in relation to sourcing also revealed some areas where old media logic is challenged. One such finding is that approximately a third of the respondents in all of the surveyed countries, with a lower figure in Finland, stated that because of social media they were less reliant on PR sources (36% in the UK, 30% in Germany, 27% in the US, 38% in Canada, 38% in the Netherlands, 35% in Sweden and 17% in Finland). In Germany and the US results also showed that respondents who used social media more were more likely to choose the public as one of their top two sources (Table 7) suggesting increased importance of new media logic in sourcing with social media adoption. However, as Table 7 shows this relationship was only found in those two countries and not in the others indicating that the importance of traditional source types for journalists is enduring in many places.

Table 7 - Analysis of variance results on how frequency of social media use effects perceived importance of sources

	PR sources	Other media outlets	General public/crowdsourcing	Industry contacts/experts	Government/officials
Canada	F(5,207)=.191, p=.966	F(5,207)=.590, p=.708	F(5,207)=.991, p=.425	F(5,207)=.762, p=.578	F(5,207)=.636, p=.672
Finland	F(5,288)=1.498, p=.190	F(5,288)=.782, p=.564	F(5,288)=.780, p=.565	F(5,288)=1.514, p=.185	F(5,288)=1.389, p=.228
Germany	F(5,448)=.827, p=.531	F(5,448)=.875, p=.498	F(5,448)=5.973, p=.000 ¹	F(5,448)=.815, p=.540	F(5,448) = .374, p=.866
Netherlands	F(5,214)=.551, p=.737	F(5,214)=.480, p=.791	F(5,214)=1.009, p=.413	F(5,214)=.452, p=.812	F(5,214)=2.303, p=.046
Sweden	F(5,257)=1.336, p=.249	F(5,257)=2.461, p=.034	F(5,257)=1.626, p=.153	F(5,257)=.940, p=.455	F(5,257)=1.797, p=.114
UK	F(5,583)=1.232, p=.292	F(5,583)=.828, p=.530	F(5,583) = 2.176, p=.055	F(5,583)=1.128, p=.344	F(5,583) = .636, p=.672

US	F(5,724)=1.6 43, p=.146	F(5,724)=2.87 8, p=.014	F(5,724) =2.424, p=.034	F(5,724)=1.63 2, p=.149	F(5,724)=2.709, p=.020
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Note: Highlighted results show significant statistical relationship. Statistical analysis was based on a 95% confidence interval. Post hoc test on the significant relationships using the Bonferroni correction indicated the following results: (1) In Germany respondents who used social media for less than two hours a day or not at all were less likely to choose public/crowdsourcing as one of their two most important sources than those who used social media for more than two hours in a typical day ($p < .05$); (2) In Sweden respondents who used social media for less than two hours a day or not at all were less likely to choose other media outlets as one of their two most important sources ($p < .05$); (3) In the US respondents who used social media for less than two hours a day or not at all were less likely to choose other media outlets and public/crowdsourcing as one of their two most important sources but were more likely to choose government/officials as one of their key sources ($p < .05$).

RQ4: How do journalists perceive the changes regarding the relationship with their audience?

The majority of participants agreed that they were more engaged with their audience because of social media (Table 8) indicating that interactive new media logic is more prevalent in this area of journalists' work. This view was prominent in all of the surveyed countries, although there were some differences in terms of how dominant the view was (ranging from 81% agreeing in the UK to 66% in Sweden) which suggests that specific journalistic traditions, cultural and media environmental factors influence how the relationship with the audience is changing. A correlation analysis also revealed that the more respondents used social media for their work the more they felt they were better engaged with their audience (Table 8), which indicates that with higher levels of social media adoption levels of interaction and participatory audience relationship would increase.

Table 8 – Respondents' views on engagement with their audience

	Canada	Finland	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden	UK	US
% of respondents who agreed with 'Because of social media I am more engaged with my audience'	80%	70%	72%	76%	66%	81%	76%
Correlation between views on audience engagement and frequency of social media use	$r_s = .291$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .484$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .385$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .480$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .399$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .362$, $p < 0.01$	$r_s = .465$, $p < 0.01$

Note: Figures in last row show that a Spearman's rho correlation revealed a significant correlation between frequency of social media use and views on audience engagement in all of the surveyed countries ($p < .01$).

The survey also asked respondents about their interactive activities on social media. Results (Table 9) show that a large proportion of participants were interacting with their audience and the outside world regularly. However, there were some considerable differences between the countries, especially between the UK, US and Canada on the one hand and

Germany and Finland on the other. UK respondents were the most and those from Finland were the least likely to reply to comments they received on social media on a daily or weekly basis (70% and 36% respectively) and this was the same in relation to using social media to make new contacts in their work (64% and 32% respectively). Respondents from North America were the most likely to add comments to someone’s page or profile. The results suggest that how and why journalists engage with their audience vary between countries influenced by journalistic traditions and media environments.

Table 9 – Selected interactive activities on social media (% of respondents)

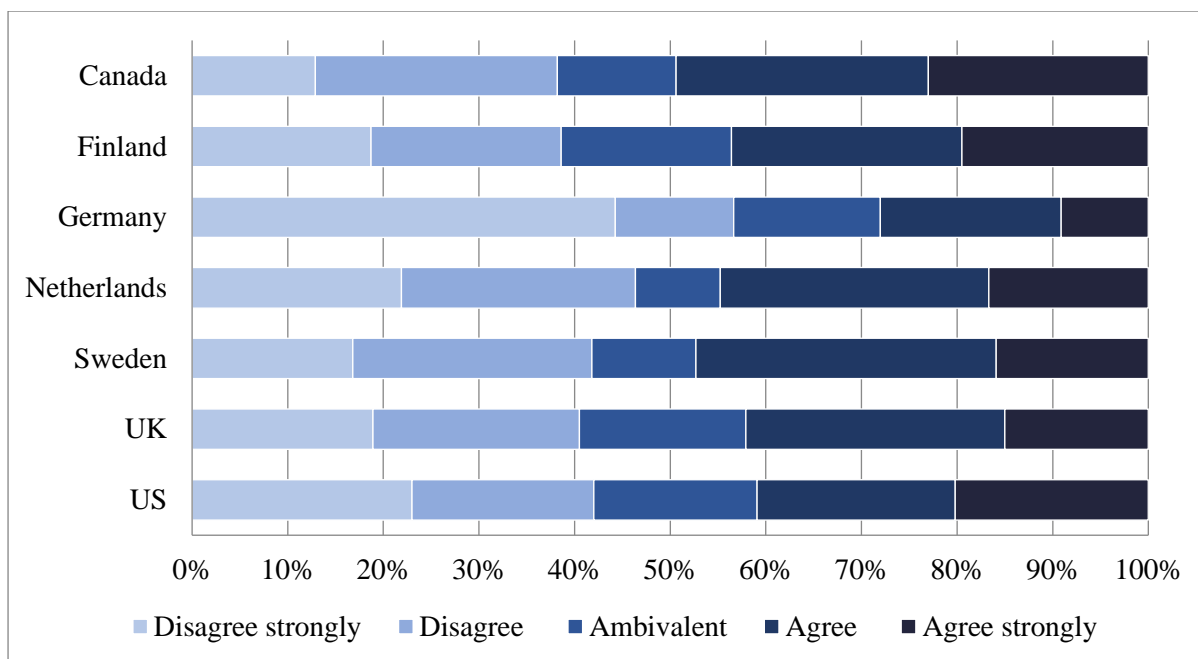
	Canada	Finland	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden	UK	US
Reply to comments received in relation to their work on social media							
Daily	37	12	22	40	21	34	34
Weekly	25	24	27	23	31	36	27
Use social media to make new contacts in their field of work							
Daily	30	8	15	24	19	26	21
Weekly	33	24	22	36	26	38	30
Add comments to someone's page or profile on social media							
Daily	24	22	14	18	24	18	25
Weekly	28	27	20	25	30	30	25

RQ5: How do journalists view the impact of social media on their work?

Social media were perceived to have changed work practices by the majority of respondents. For example, social media became an important tool for sourcing stories. On average about a quarter of respondents reported that they published a story based on information they had found on social media on a daily or weekly basis, however the figure varied between the countries (37% in Canada, 17% in Finland, 20% in Germany, 33% in the Netherlands, 27% in Sweden, 38% in the UK and 34% in the US). And nearly half of the participants said that online sources of information were more important for their work than offline sources (48% in Canada, 45% in Finland, 40% in Germany, 50% in the Netherlands, 40% in Sweden, 53% in the UK and 39% in the US).

Many of the respondents thought that social media helped them to be more ‘effective’ in their work. 56% of respondents in Canada, 42% in Finland, 28% in Germany, 52% in the Netherlands, 57% in Sweden, 43% in the UK and 44% in the US agreed that social media improved the productivity of their work. There were some differences between the countries indicating the importance of country specific factors in how the impact of social media is perceived. Figure 1 illustrates respondents’ views on how indispensable they saw social media in their work. Opinions varied about the statement ‘I would not be able to carry out my work without social media’ not just between the countries, but even more so within the countries. The results show split views and mixed picture regarding respondents’ perceptions about the impact of social media on their work. This coincides with findings of other studies (e.g. Canter 2013; Hedmana and Djerf-Pierre 2013) that found variations in journalists' assessment of social media.

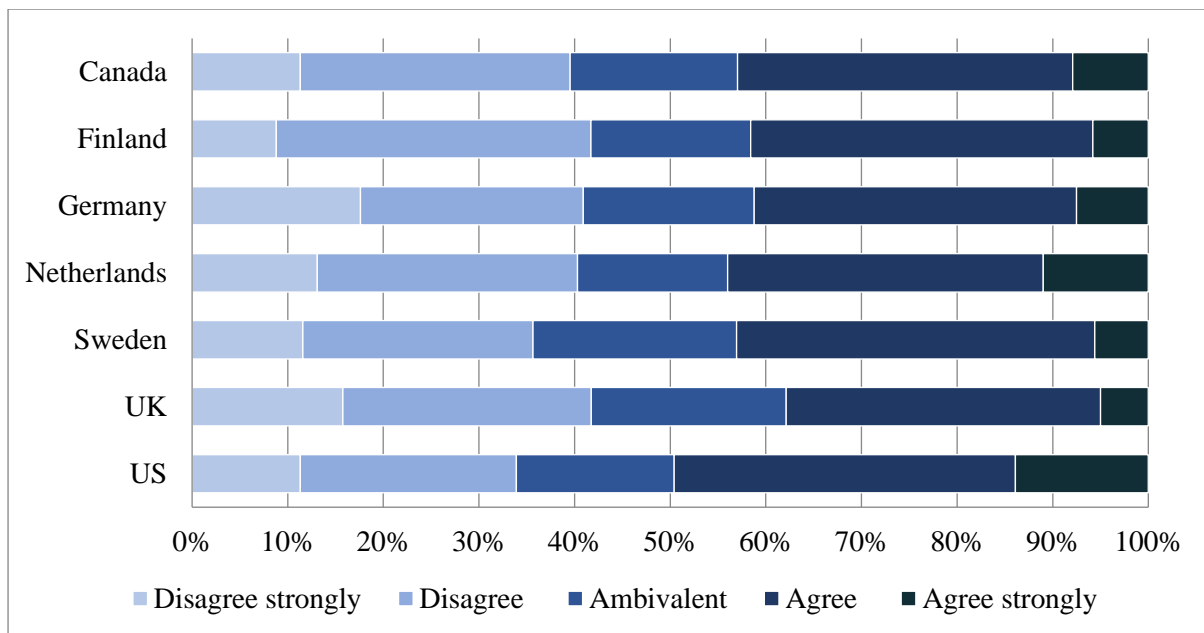
Figure 1 - Survey participants' response to the statement: 'I would not be able to carry out my work without social media' (% of respondents)



RQ6: How do journalists view the impact of social media on the values of their profession?

Results also showed a mixed picture in relation to respondents’ perceptions about the transformative potential of social media for their profession. The majority of the respondents did not think that professional journalism was in demise (81% in Canada, 97% in Finland, 82% in Germany, 85% in the Netherlands, 86% in Sweden, 89% in the UK and 80% in the US). However, a significant portion agreed that social media were undermining traditional journalistic values. As Figure 2 illustrates views were divided about this impact within the countries more so than between the countries. Respondents were more in agreement about difficulties around accuracy, a traditional professional norm, on social media. The majority of participants agreed that accuracy was the biggest problem with social media (80% in Canada, 68% in Finland, 70% in Germany, 81% in the Netherlands, 65% in Sweden, 73% in the UK and 79% in the US).

Figure 2 - Survey participants' response to the statement: 'Social media are undermining traditional journalistic values such as objectivity' (% of respondents)



Discussion and Conclusion

This article applied the notion of hybridity to compare social media adoption by journalists in the seven surveyed countries. Complexity, interdependence and transformative potential, three constructs of hybridity, provided the framework for the analysis. Hybridity proved to be a useful concept to apply as it allowed to analyse social media adoption holistically and provided a practical framework to carry out an international comparison on a complex and multifaceted topic.

Bearing in mind the limitations of this exploratory study some key findings can be noted in relation to the three constructs of hybridity. The analysis demonstrated that social media adoption is a complex process and could not be broken down into simple, unified essences. Social media use by journalists in all of the surveyed countries was shown to be intrinsically diverse, where not one platform, purpose or specific activity type dominated and the tools were used for a variety of journalistic tasks. In relation to the interdependence notion of hybridity the results showed that a new media logic was more evident in some areas and in some countries but not in others. In particular, respondents across all of the surveyed countries felt that they were more engaged with their audience and many of them reported to carry out a variety of interactive activities. However, in relation to sourcing stories results showed a continued importance of old media logic actors and strategies where authority played a key role. Further research would be beneficial in this area to explore to what extent sourcing is a key purpose in the increased engagement with the audience and in general what motivates journalists to interact with their audience. In relation to transformative potential of social media it was notable that the impacts of social media were perceived variedly, both in terms of respondents having positive as well as negative views about social media as well as split opinions in the sample within countries about how extensive and ‘game-changing’ the impact of social media were.

The results above pinpoint to two broader conclusions which are tentative given the limitations of the study. First, that social media adoption among journalists are broadly similar in the surveyed countries highlighting that the underlying features of the process and that of the new media environments are comparable. Second, that social media adoption is both about

integration and fragmentation, a duality that produces ruptures and tensions. On the one hand it is about integration as hitherto existing processes, elements and norms of journalistic practices are mixed and blended. On the other hand, it is also about fragmentation as social media affordances and flexibility allow for a great degree of individualisation and differentiation, as a result there is a plethora of unique combinations of the specific ways in which social media are embedded in journalistic practices. For a comparative analysis, such as this study, this means that social media adoption is both about increasing as well as decreasing similarities and differences between countries. The findings showed some differences between the countries, especially in relation to popularity of particular social media platforms, specific combination of professional tasks social media were used for, levels of interactive activities carried out on social media, and perceptions about the impacts of social media. These differences are results of dissimilarities in journalistic traditions and cultures, media systems, media environment, and political economic factors of media industries.

The study has a number of limitations. These included that the samples were not representative and the general weaknesses of a quantitative methodology (see e.g. Weaver 2008) including lack of qualitative insights. Additionally, given the scope of the study there was a limit to how many specific research questions the theoretical constructs could be explored with, arguably a greater number of questions would have provided richer and more comprehensive analysis. These limitations of the study also highlight some future research directions. More comprehensive comparative studies using different methodologies would help us to better understand social media adoption and its impact on journalism. There is also a need for further studies on the specific ways in which country specific characteristics, such as journalistic traditions and cultures or media environmental features, influence social media adoption.

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