

TEKGROUP
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May 2011

Social Media

News Survey



TOP-LINE FINDINGS

Preliminary results of the second annual social media news survey conducted by TEKGROUP International and Associate Professor Ken Payne of Western Kentucky University continue to underscore the importance of the online newsroom to corporate communicators and amplify the need for a comprehensive social media news strategy when targeting or influencing key constituents in the social media space. The survey - which specifically measured acceptance, use, and attitudes of social media tools to follow, share, and post news and information – garnered 573 responses from April 15 – May 15, 2011. The study is especially intriguing in its sampling methodology as Twitter.com used exclusively to solicit survey participation from a select group of social media mavens.

- The majority of the survey sample indicated they have been using social media tools for more than 5 years (32.6%) with more than 53% indicating upwards of 3 years of social media tool experience. Roughly 71% say they make use of social media tools between 1 and 4 hours per day, more from home (82%) than from work (68%)
- Trending with earlier findings, 84% of our respondents indicated they frequently (62%) or exclusively (22%) use social media tools to follow or monitor news and information.
- Nearly 75% of the survey sample reported sometimes (31%), very often (27.5%), or all the time (15.5%) use of the venerable corporate website when engaged in these tasks. Responses for use of press releases for the same tasks were nearly identical.
- Moreover, nearly 75% of survey respondents indicate they sometimes or frequently visit a corporate web site after learning of a news story through social media channels.
- Predictably, timeliness of social media tools was a distinct advantage, according to our social media mavens, with 76% indicating that news gathered through social media channels was either slightly (31%) or much more (45%) timely than traditional news outlets.
- Not so predictable, however, was respondent's attitudes toward accuracy and reliability of news gathered using social media tools. Almost half (49.6%) rate news gathered via social media sources as "roughly the same" as traditional news sources in terms of accuracy, up a full 10% from our last survey.
- More than 90% cite the use of Twitter and 85% the use of Facebook as a primary source of news and information when following, sharing or posting – roughly twice that of NYT.com.
- For the first time, Twitter (30%) edged out television (27%) as the identified source of initial awareness of a major international event – the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Moreover, both Twitter (61%) and Facebook (55%) bettered word-of-mouth (49%) as the method of choice for spreading news of the devastation.
- Facebook seems to be a platform of choice for local news as 27% of survey respondents indicate they particularly tune-in for this type of information - compared to 15% for Twitter, and 10% for blogs.
- Among social media sites, Twitter (90%) and Facebook (86%) take top honors as preferred social media news sources, with news aggregators Google News (55%) and Yahoo! News (27%) trailing the pack. Surprisingly, Wikipedia remains a valid news and information source among survey respondents the more than 50% of this group indicating they make use of the often-criticized site in their news gathering and processing activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

Survey respondents were asked to quantify their social media use habits and, not surprisingly given the survey sample, this group is connected in big numbers. The majority of the survey sample indicated they have been using social media tools for more than 5 years (32.6%) with more than 53% indicating upwards of 3 years of social media tool experience. Roughly 71% say they make use of social media tools between 1 and 4 hours per day, more from home (82%) than from work (68%).

However, the work number represents a 10% decrease over last years' survey, perhaps foreshadowing the move toward mobile social media use as 66% of survey respondents indicate they frequently or always access social media tools from their smart phones or other mobile devices.

While support for social media favorites such as Facebook and Twitter remain strong – 87% of respondents indicating 50+ Facebook friends and 80% of respondents indicating 50+ Twitter feeds followed – the relative weakness of YouTube, Flickr and blogs as a news and information sharing tool continues to be cause for concern among strategic communicators.

The majority of respondents (79%) indicate they follow fewer than 25 blogs with roughly 18% saying they follow no blogs at all. Support for YouTube as a news and information tool of choice trends surprising low as well with 43% the respondents saying they have never posted a video to the service, and more than 60% saying then have recommended fewer than 25 YouTube videos to others. Flickr faired no better with 58% of survey respondents indicating they have never recommended a photo to someone else, and 62% saying they have never posted to the popular photo-sharing site.

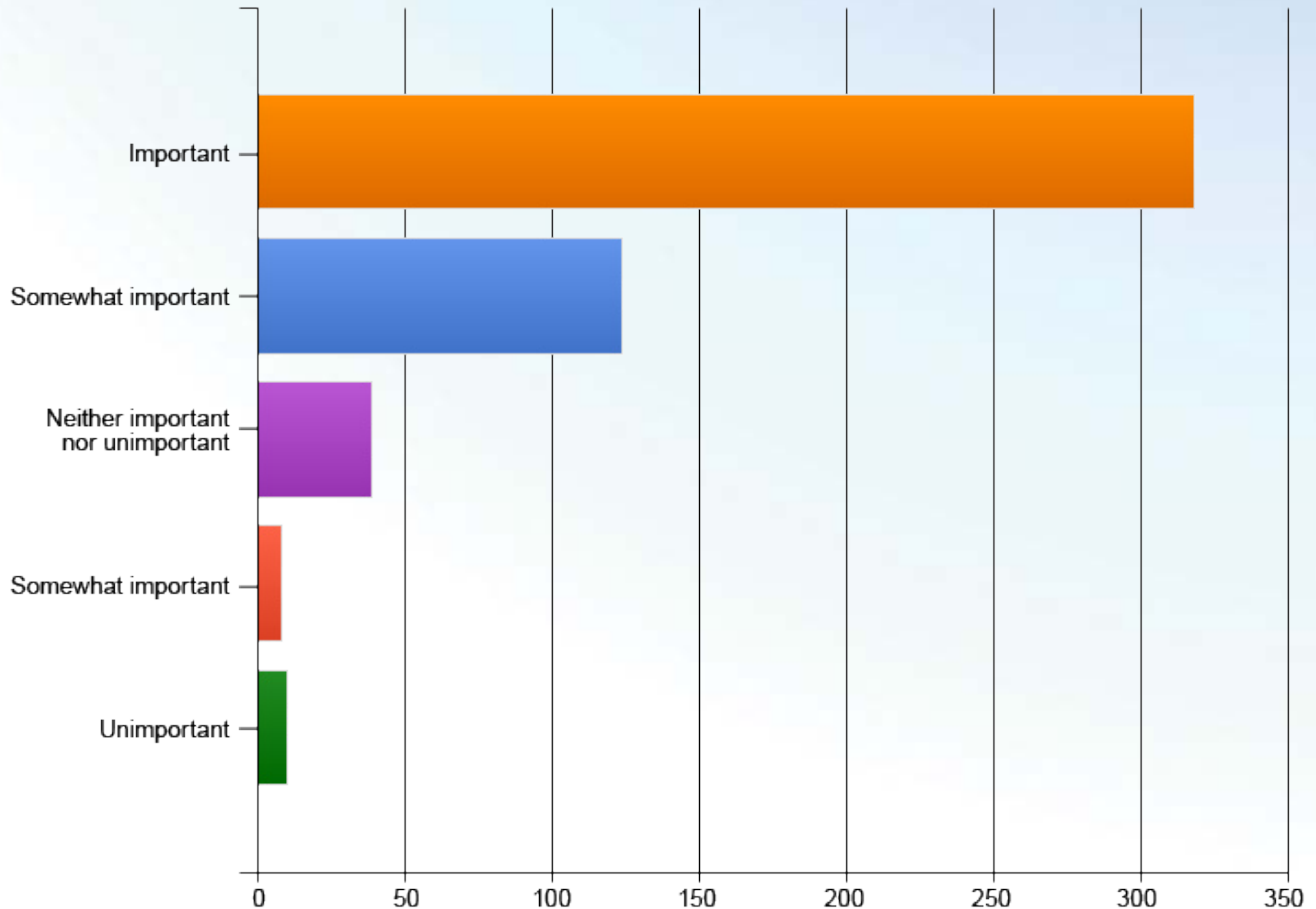
Also of note was the disparity between monitoring and participation when using social media tools. While it is obvious that the survey sample was very active in social media monitoring, especially Facebook and Twitter, apparently very few take an active, participatory role when engaging the platforms with more than 85% indicating they write or maintain fewer than 5 Twitter feeds, 96% writing or maintaining fewer than 5 blogs, 99% fewer than 5 Tumblr sites, and 92% fewer than 5 Facebook pages.

From a connectivity perspective, the majority of survey respondents use social media tools to stay in touch with people in their respective profession (72%) and those who share similar hobbies or recreation activities (72%). Interestingly, only 36% say they use social media tools to connect with people who share similar political interests or religious views (15%)

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

As mentioned in an earlier section, our survey sample was keen on using social media tools as a news gathering and distribution method. This became even more evident when we asked our respondents to quantify their use of social media tools for these specific tasks during the past 6 months. Trending with earlier findings, 62% of our respondents indicated they frequently use social media tools for follow or monitor news and information, with another 22% indicating they use social media tools exclusively for this task; roughly the same number indicate they use social media tools to share or recommend news and information; 62% say they frequently use social media tools to write or post news and information.

How important have social media tools (Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) become for posting/writing news and information?



What was not anticipated was the widespread use of these tools for following a breaking news story with more than 65% citing the use of social media tools for this purpose. Equally interesting was the use of social media tools for fact-checking information with well more than half of our respondents indicating a preference for social media tools for this task.

And for those in the business of engineering consent, it appears our survey respondents sometimes (32%), frequently (37%), or always (7%) monitor public opinion using social media tools - a finding supported by the overwhelming use of social media tactics in election campaigns.

Perhaps of greatest importance to corporate communicators was the high degree of reliance among this group on corporate web sites and press releases for monitoring, sharing, and posting news and information. Nearly 75% of the survey sample reported sometimes (31%), very often (27.5%), or all the time (15.5%) use of the venerable corporate website when engaged in these tasks. Responses for use of press releases for the same tasks were nearly identical.

Moreover, nearly 75% of survey respondents indicate they sometimes or frequently visit a corporate web site after learning of a news story through social media channels.

Nearly half of survey respondents indicate they begin their search for news and information on a search engine such as Google – no surprise there. It seems, however, that social media tools (22.2%) edge out traditional news sites (21.8%) as the second most popular starting place for news gathering activities.

Finally, Twitter and Facebook seem to be the weapon of choice for survey respondents with 73% indicating frequent or all-the-time use of the Internet upstarts for news and information related tasks. Supporting previous finding, blogs (28%) and YouTube/Flickr (21%) were used sparingly by this sample group for news related activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA ATTITUDES

Quite possibly the most telling finding to emerge from this second survey was the measure of respondent's attitudes toward the reliability, accuracy, and timeliness of news and information gathered through social media sources as opposed to traditional sources. Predictably, timeliness of social media tools was a distinct advantage, according to our social media mavens, with 76% indicating that news gathered through social media channels was either slightly (31%) or much more (45%) timely than traditional news outlets.

Not so predictable, however, was respondent's attitudes toward accuracy and reliability of news gathered using social media tools. Almost half (49.6%) rate news gathered via social media sources as "roughly the same" as traditional news sources in terms of accuracy, up a full 10% from our last survey. More than 45% say news and information gathered this way is just as reliable as news obtained from the Fourth Estate. In fact, a relatively small percentage rates the same variables as much less reliable (8.6%) or much less accurate (7.4%).

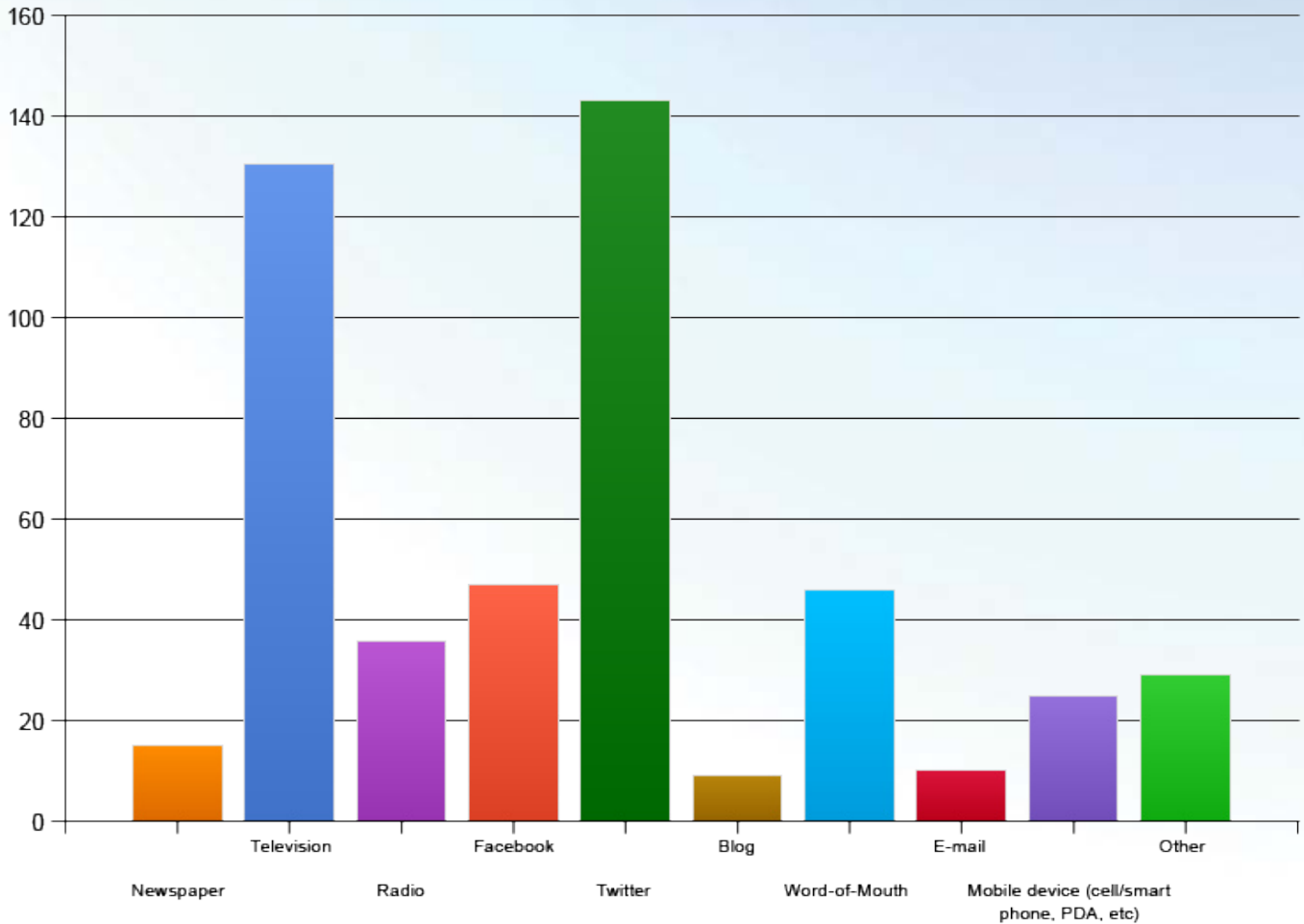
Finally, the importance of social media as a news gathering and distribution platform is not lost on our respondents with roughly 90% attributing a somewhat high, or high level of importance to social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs for following, sharing, and posting news and information.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their primary sources of news and information while following, sharing, and posting. Not surprisingly, CNN.com (56%), NYT.com (47%), BBC.com (35%) and ESPN.com (33%) were the traditional sources most cited by the social media sample.

What might surprise some observers, however, is the reliance amongst survey respondents on social media sources for the tasks in question. More than 90% cite the use of Twitter and 85% the use of Facebook as a primary source of news and information when following, sharing or posting – roughly twice that of NYT.com. In fact, it appears among avid social media users Wikipedia is used more often than CNN.com as a source for news and information.

Thinking back, where did you first learn that an earthquake and tsunami had hit Japan?



And finally in the news aggregation battles, Google News is preferred almost 2-to-1 over Yahoo! News for following, sharing and posting activities.

EVENT RECALL/SPREAD

This survey, as the last, sought to identify the channels of communication most relevant for frequent users of social media tools. To that end, respondents were asked to identify the source of initial awareness to several national and international news stories of the past year. Further, respondents were asked to identify their method of distribution of the same news and information.

REVOLUTION IN EGYPT

This question challenged respondents to identify their source of awareness of a breaking international news item – the recent move toward democracy in Egypt. Here, results were striking with Twitter (27%) and television (36%) running neck-and-neck as the primary source of news awareness – an amazing race given Twitter’s rather shallow market penetration and user base in relation to television. However, Facebook again trails the pack with only 5% of survey respondents using the social networking tool as a news

and information awareness tool - newspapers faring even worse with 3.7% of respondents indicating they rely on paper.

Lending support to earlier findings, Twitter (51%) and word-of-mouth (53%) remain strong methods-of-choice for spreading breaking news after initial awareness with Facebook (34%) ending up a respectable third. This finding provides communicators' strong support for using social media tools to increase the reach of awareness campaigns.

EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI IN JAPAN

As a follow-up to the situation in Egypt, survey respondents were asked to identify their source of awareness for another event with global implications, the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. And, for the first time, Twitter (30%) edged out television (27%) as the identified source of initial awareness. Moreover, both Twitter (61%) and Facebook (55%) bettered word-of-mouth (49%) as the method of choice for spreading news of the devastation.

CHARLIE SHEEN FIRING

When asked to recall where they learned of a major breaking news story in the entertainment world, just as many respondents chose social media (26.3%) as television (26.7%) for initial awareness. This finding strengthens the notion of using social media tools for initial distribution of breaking corporate news and information.

Predictably, word-of-mouth (42%) surfaced as the slightly dominant method of distribution for news of Mr. Sheen's firing over Twitter (39.5%) as news mavens searched for answers to lingering questions surrounding his lifestyle problems. However, as noted in other similar situations, the relative weakness of e-mail (6.8%) and mobile device (8%) for spreading news and information after initial awareness should not be overlooked.

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS INTEREST

When we asked respondents what their interests were in their use of blogs, there was a wide array of responses. Local/National/International news interests made up nearly 42% of the total interest with Business and Financial news accounting for almost 17% of the total interest. Also of particular note are the nearly 20% of respondents that do not use blogs to follow, share or post news.

When survey respondents were asked their interests in using Twitter the results showed a variety of popular interests including Local/National/International news totaling nearly 60% of the total interest, identical to our 2010 survey. Sports and Entertainment interest was a combined 19%. One noticeable comparison to people's use of blogs vs. Twitter for news consumption can be seen in the difference between blogs (20%) and Twitter (5%) of people that do not use these for following or sharing breaking news.

When asked about interests in using Facebook to follow, share or post news, respondents totaled just more than 55% for Local/National/International news. However, Facebook seems to be a platform of choice for local news as 27% of survey respondents indicate they particularly tune-in for this type of information

- compared to 15% for Twitter, and 10% for blogs. And, as with blogs, roughly 20% say they do not use Facebook to follow, share or post news.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In congruence with several studies of social media acceptance and use, demographic data submitted by our sample population revealed a distinct bias toward youth, financial independence, and upward mobility.

- Most of the survey respondents had substantial education and financial means with nearly 51% indicating they had achieved a 4-year college degree and roughly 22% indicating education at the master's level.
- Survey respondents reported levels of employments consistent with their education with trained professional (23%), upper management (15%), middle management (14%), and self-employed/partner (10%) garnering the most recognition.
- Nearly 75% of the survey respondents were between the ages of 18-45 with 26% reporting income in excess of \$100,00 per year.
- Gender for the survey sample trended more toward women (55%) than men (45%) with roughly 20% indicating they work in the marketing, advertising or public relations industries.
- Nearly half (47%) of the survey respondents were married, 36% single, with the rest somewhere in between

METHODOLOGY

This survey report was compiled from data collected from active social media users during the period April 15 – May 15, 2011. The online survey - which specifically measured acceptance, use, and attitudes of social media tools to follow, share, and post news and information – garnered 573 responses (completion rate of 82.2%). The sample methodology for this report is novel in that the researchers used social media tools (Twitter) exclusively to solicit participation in the survey. Invitations to participate in the 2011 Social Media News Survey were randomly posted on Twitter accounts maintained by TEKGROUP International in three waves spaced one week apart.

ABOUT TEKGROUP INTERNATIONAL, INC. – www.tekgroup.com

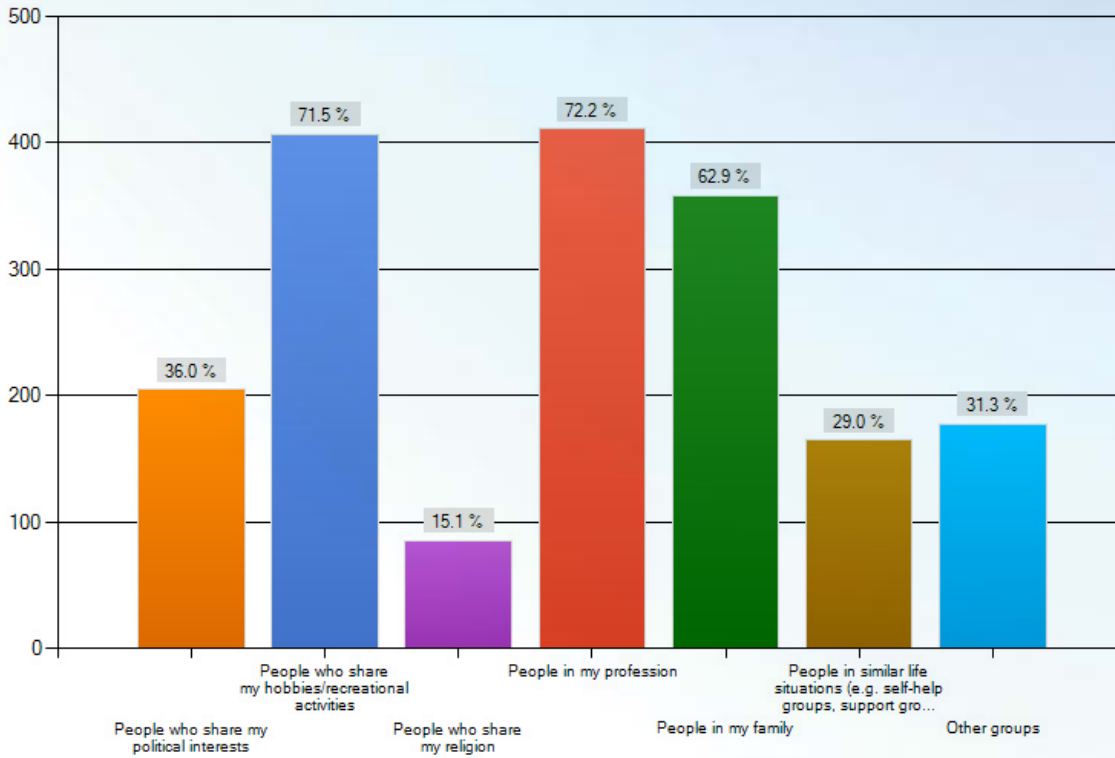
TEKGROUP International, Inc. is an award-winning Internet software and services company that develops online newsrooms with social media integration, and e-business software solutions. TEKGROUP clients include AAA, Accenture, Carlson Hotels Worldwide, CIGNA, Detroit Lions, Ford Motor Company, PRSA, Prudential Financial, Starbucks, VMS, and Walgreens.

ABOUT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S

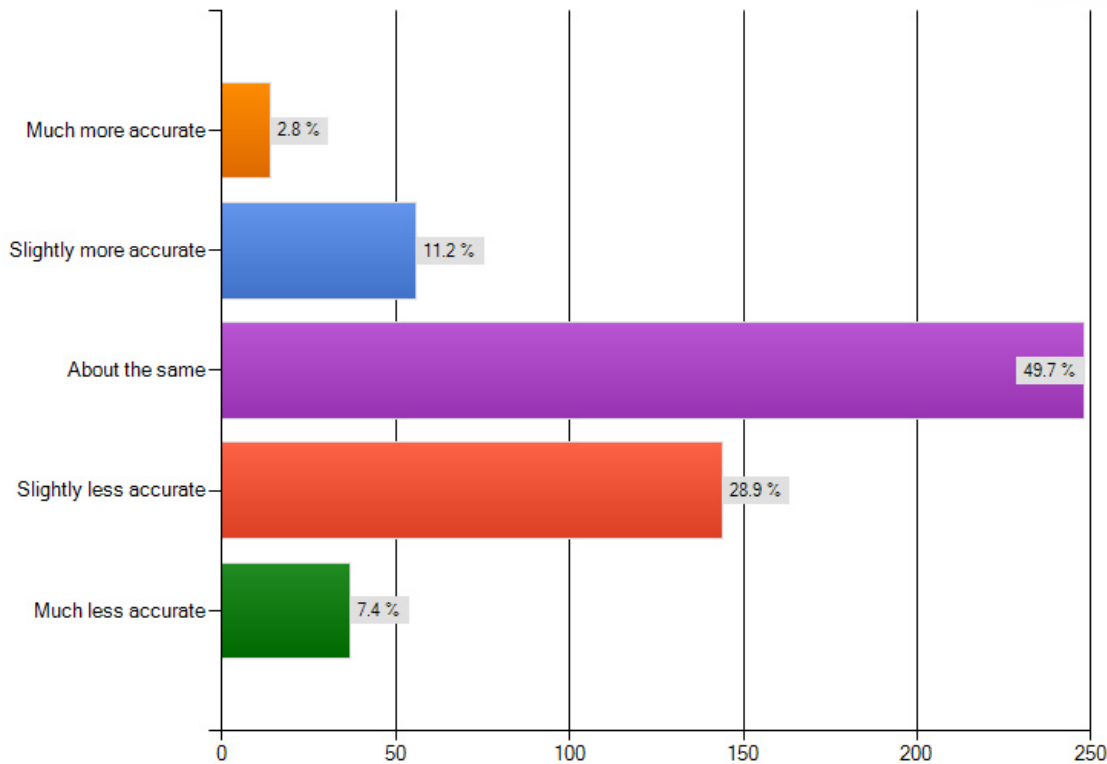
School of Journalism & Broadcasting – www.wku.edu/journalism

The School of Journalism & Broadcasting offers undergraduate majors in advertising, broadcasting, mass communication, photojournalism, news/editorial print journalism and public relations. The school holds as its ultimate aim the encouragement of students to be active participants in today's society, and leaders within their chosen fields. Ken Payne is an associate professor within the public relations major and has research interests in the acceptance and use of emerging technologies within the public relations sector.

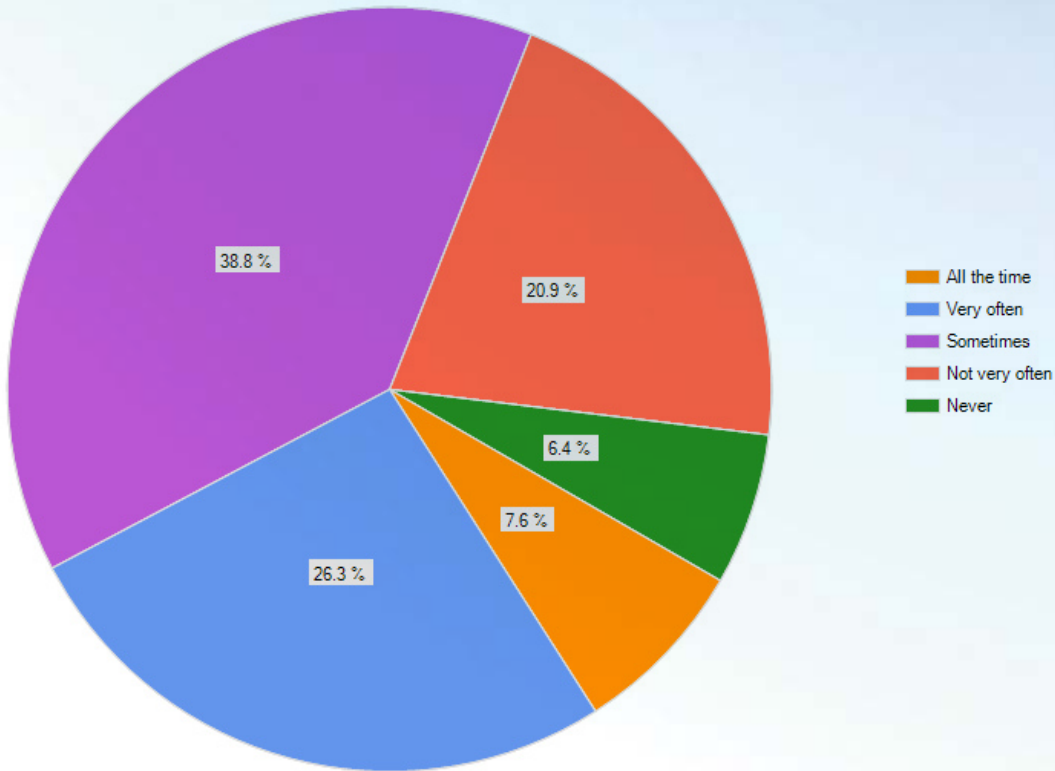
To which of these groups have you become more connected through the use of social media tools? (Please check all that apply.)



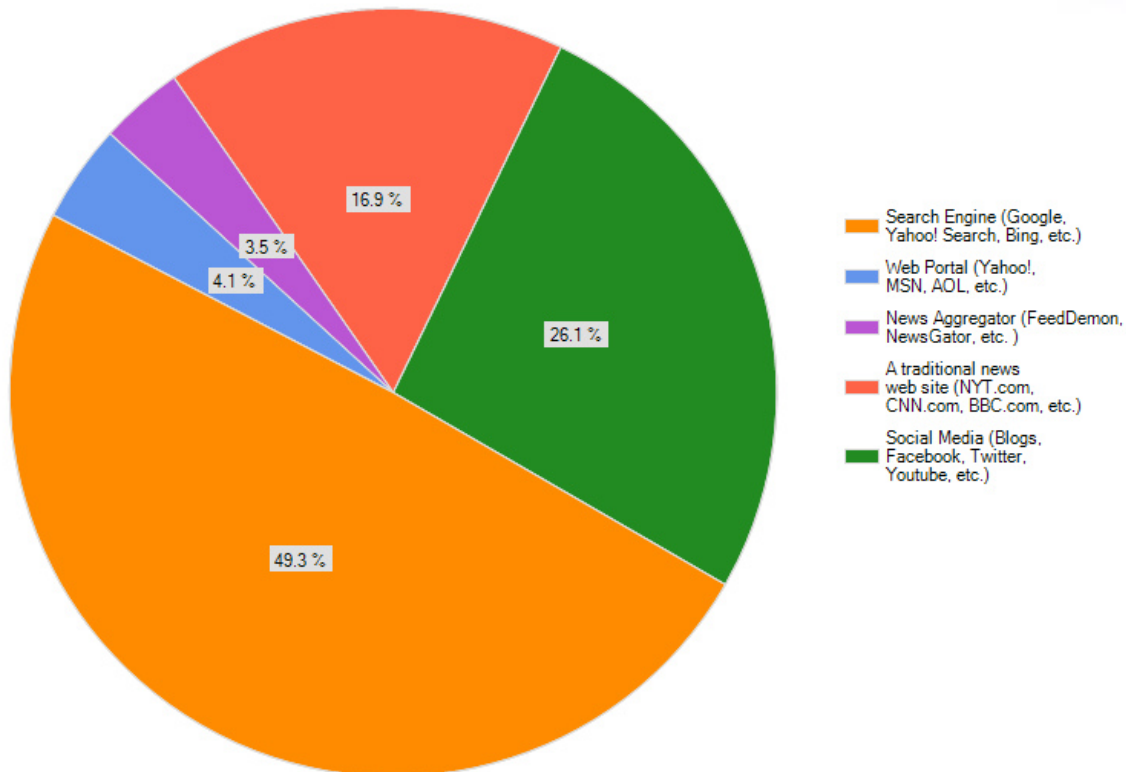
Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less accurate than news gathered via traditional news sources?



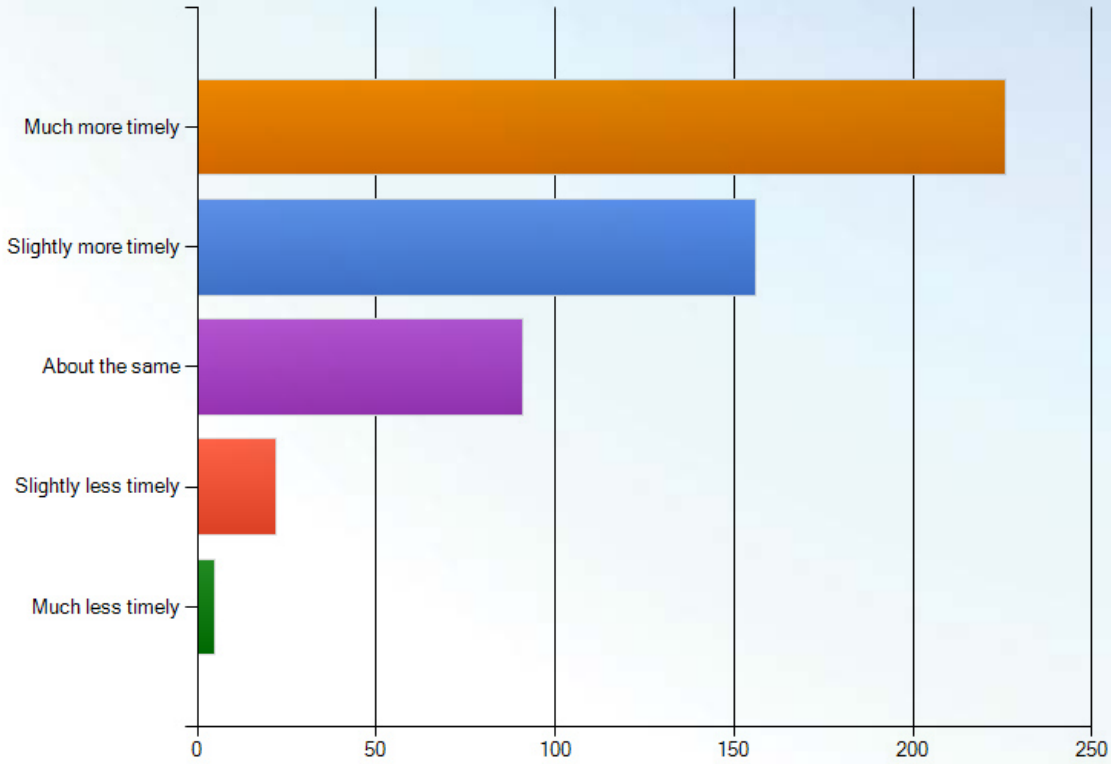
How often do you make use of corporate websites when following, sharing or posting news and information?



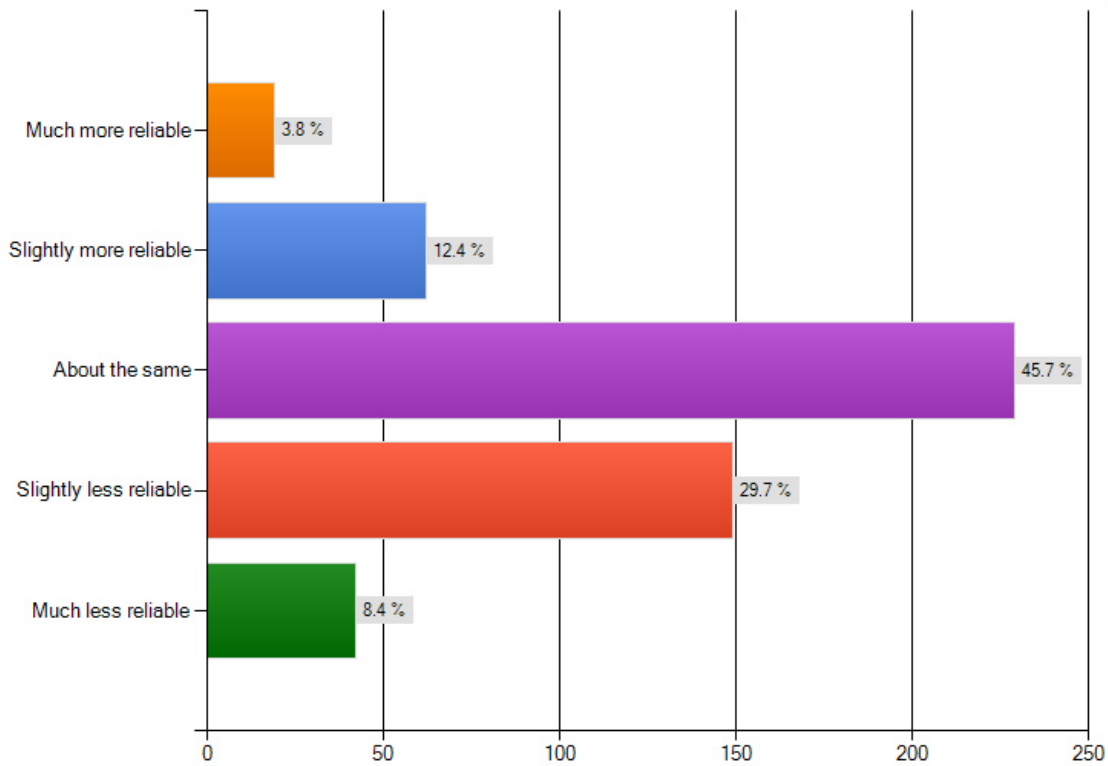
When following/monitoring news and information, on what type of website do you start?



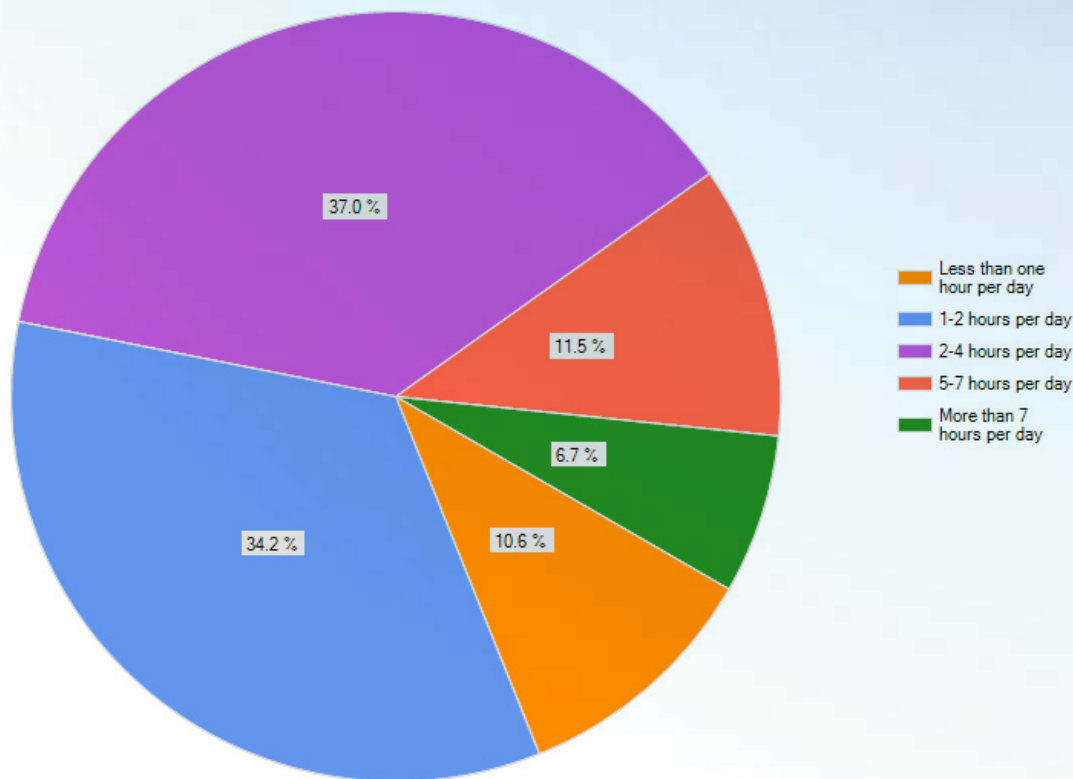
Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less timely than news gathered via traditional news sources?



Do you think news gathered via social media sources is more or less reliable than news gathered via traditional news sources?



Generally speaking, how many hours per day do you spend using social media tools (Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)?



How often do you make use of press releases when following, sharing or posting news and information?

