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Usage of Collaboration/Communication Tools and Social Media Usage Among Journalists

KV Kurmanath

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad, India

Corresponding Author: **KV Kurmanath**

Abstract

The advent of media convergence has resulted in journalists using various collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and other such platforms to communicate with colleagues; gather and share information; generate content; and coordinate with different departments within the media organisation. They also use various social media platforms for the same purpose. This study tries to understand how these collaboration tools and social platforms are transforming journalism practice and the

media landscape. It seeks to identify the most commonly used collaboration tools and social media platforms among journalists and newsrooms. This study is based on a survey of 211 respondents for my Ph.D. thesis on the Impact of Media Convergence on Journalists and Newsrooms. The findings will give a peek view into the collaboration tools and social media tools used by journalists and how they are helping in content creation and optimising newsroom workflows.

Keywords: Media Convergence, Collaboration Tools, Social Media, Impact of Media Convergence on Journalists, Content, Journalism, Journalists, Media Organisations

Introduction

Media convergence has been a continuous process. The invention of telecommunications, the radio, and television expanded the reach and scope of media. The advent of the Internet has resulted in the merging of one or more media, helping organisations expand their reach.

Flew (2017)^[5] says media convergence brings together the “three C’s”—computing, communication, and content.

Jenkins (2006)^[7] said that transmedia storytelling involves presenting a single narrative on multiple media platforms. He argues that media convergence, which fosters the development of collective intelligence. This is facilitated by digital technologies and social media, which enable users to connect, collaborate, and share their insights and ideas.

Convergence in media organisations, according to Stephen Quinn and Vincent F. Filak (2019)^[14], happened in different ways – ownership convergence, tactical convergence, information-gathering convergence, and story-telling convergence.

Klineberg, Eric (2004)^[10] feels the Internet is the right medium for expanding coverage with links to text, graphics, and video. Backed by technological solutions and resultant converged processes, it offered the ‘most exciting possibilities for creating new forms of journalism’.

The Internet helped different media platforms converge, facilitating a flow of content across multiple media platforms (Jenkins, 2006)^[7].

Convergence is not just the adaption of technology. It is also about the culture within the organisations. Jenkins (2006)^[7] felt that convergence is not just about a technological process. It, he says, is defined by social, cultural, and economic factors as well. He says convergence culture resulted in a more participatory media environment, which allows consumers (readers and audience) to engage with content and chip in.

In sharp contrast to the way journalists gathered news in the past, convergence helped them newer sources and access points for gathering and dissemination of news. Dwyer Tim (2010)^[3] contends that the blurring of boundaries between various media forms impacted how journalists gathered news and how they presented it. According to him, convergence technologies changed the content production processes.

Media organisations are increasingly using social media platforms to distribute the news for more reach. According to a study by Sadia Jamil (2020)^[12], Pakistan’s ethnic and mainstream news media both use social media as a news distribution platform. W. Russell Neuman (2017)^[16] said there was a need to acknowledge the changing perceptions of media and journalists.

Collaboration/communication tools and social media use
Convergence technologies, coupled with collaboration tools like Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams, changed how journalists interact and collaborate.

Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) [8] talk about 'spreadable media' to relate to how content is being shared and distributed across platforms and networks by audiences themselves. It emphasises the importance of readers in propagating important content, impacting the visibility of the content generated by media organisations.

Christoph Neuberger, Christian Nuernbergk & Susanne Langenohl (2019) [2], in their study of Czech media, found that Facebook and Twitter serve multiple journalistic purposes. In contrast, blogs and YouTube are more specialized tools.

Media organisations are encouraging journalists to use social media platforms for official work. Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk & Anders Olof Larsson (2018) [9] said organisations are willing to allow journalists to utilise them rather than to restrict their use, while Bente Kalsnes & Anders Olof Larsson (2018) [1] said news sharing across different social media platforms is increasingly impacting news consumption habits.

Zelizer, B. (2017) [17], contends that collaboration tools facilitate journalists to collaborate and work together across geographies and produce innovative content, while Usher (2014) [15]'s ethnographic study of The New York Times throws light on how collaboration tools were integrated into the news production process, including workflows, communication, and decision-making.

Significance of the study

This study aims at finding what kind of collaboration tools that journalists are using to meet their professional requirements.

It also wants to find what kind of social media platforms they are using, and for what purposes.

Review of Literature

Collaboration/communication tools have become inevitable in the life of a journalist. Post the pandemic, these tools have become much more relevant and important. As they helped in reducing time and effort in attending events, they also allowed reporters to remove the barriers of geographies to talk experts to create innovative and audience-centric news content (Zelizer, B 2017) [17].

It also helped in better coordinating with the departments inside and getting better and quick access to sources.

Realising the importance of technology-based collaboration, organisations have integrated collaboration tools into the news production and decision-making processes (Usher, N. 2014) [15].

According to Örnebring (2010) [11], there are two reasons for the persistence of technological determinism as an explanatory factor among journalists. It (technology) has become part of the everyday working life of journalists.

Christine Schmitz Weiss (2008) [13] argues that news organisations 'demand a different work structure' to complete newer tasks in the era of convergence.

Methodology

To achieve this, a mixed method has been chosen. Besides surveying 211 journalists, representing different media, I spoke to about 25 journalists for in-depth interviews.

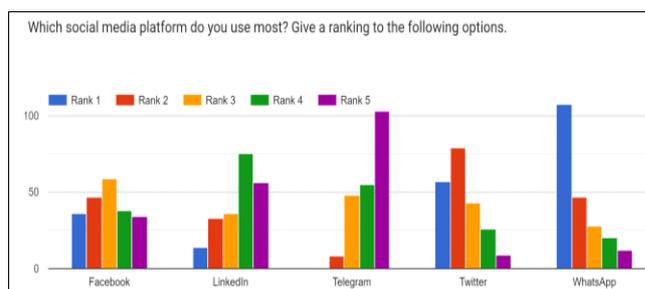
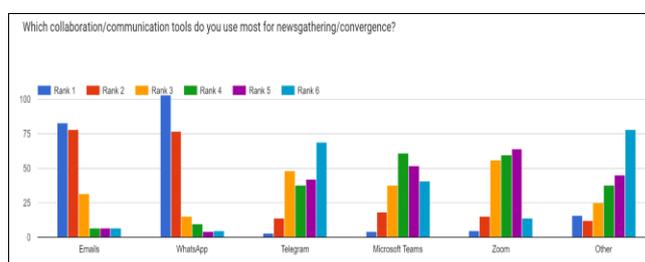
I have piloted the questionnaire on Google Forms with

experts drawn from media, academicians, and researchers to test it for content and format. After factoring in the feedback, the questionnaire was revised. It was divided into 67 questions. A questionnaire was prepared for in-depth interviews to fill the gaps.

I have taken a few questions and responses for the current paper.

Conclusion and Discussion

As many as 74 per cent of the 211 respondents were men, with the remaining 26 p.c. of them being women, which broadly reflects the actual break-up in various media organisations. With regards to the age profile, a majority of them (27.00 p.c.) are in the age group of (51-60 years). This is followed by the respondents in the age group of 31-40 years (26.50 p.c.), and those in 41-50 years (25.60 p.c.), and respondents in the age group of 21-30 years (18.50 p.c.). A small percentage of them are over 60 years of age.



When asked to give rankings to the five collaboration tools of Emails, WhatsApp, Telegram, Microsoft's Team, and Zoom, a majority of them a little over 100 respondents (out of the 211 respondents) said they rank WhatsApp as the prime collaboration tool. About 80 respondents ranked emails as their top option, followed by Teams, which was preferred by about 62 respondents.

Emails and WhatsApp emerge as the two most preferred collaboration tools. About 74 respondents said WhatsApp is their second most preferred collaboration tool, while 76 respondents said email is their second most preferred collaboration tool.

Telegram, Teams, and Zoom are not among the most preferred collaboration tools, with less than five respondents each assigning them as their first choice.

Among those who assigned different ranks for Telegram, Teams and Zoom, the bulk of them gave 3rd, 4th, and fifth ranks to the collaboration tools.

Responding to an open question to indicate any other collaboration tool/tools that they use, about 94 respondents said they use Google Meet, Slack, Twitter, Chat forums, Slack and Signal, Reddit, Instagram, LinkedIn, In-house messenger, phones, foot work (physical meetings) and Facebook.

Social Media use

WhatsApp seems to be a leader in this aspect too. As many as 102 respondents out of the 211 respondents said WhatsApp is their most preferred social media platform. Twitter is the second most preferred social media platform for journalists, while LinkedIn is the third most preferred platform with 73 respondents using it most. Facebook with 57 respondents follows.

Limitations

The study mostly covered journalists in top metros and tier-ii cities. Journalists working in tier-iii and sem-urban areas might be using a different set of communication tools and social media platforms. It's the same case with journalists working in rural areas.

Scope for further studies

With social media platforms and collaboration tools/solutions occupying an important role, there is a need to study the specific use-cases and why a particular platform is preferred most. It would help identify the ease of using a particular tool or platform for particular function.

Studies can also be conducted to identify whether a combination of two or more tools/platforms increase the utility and enhance collaboration.

Within the collaboration task, a key component is sharing of files or sending attachments. A look into this aspect would help others to quickly embrace the specific tool or platform.

Usage of collaboration/communication tools and social media platforms might significantly vary in non-metro cities and in rural areas. A study among journalists in these geographies would reflect their needs. Awareness levels in those areas may not be as high when compared with their peers in metro areas.

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