

Media Use Among Social Networking Site Users in Latvia

IANIS BUCHOLTZ¹

Institute of Social, Economic, and Humanities Research
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia

This article explores the relationship between social networking site use and mass media consumption. Based on data from an online survey, the study examines the consumption of print media, radio, television, online news sites, and social media by Latvian users of three social networking sites. According to the findings, most of the surveyed social networking site users regularly consume other media, although they are more likely to consume online news media than print or broadcast media. However, those users who spend the most time on social networking sites do not exhibit much interest in other types of media. Thus, the main distinction among the surveyed individuals is not between online and traditional media use but rather between the use of social media and traditional/journalism-based media. These results are relevant to the discussions of the potential of social media to attract audiences for the mass media.

Keywords: social media, social networking sites, traditional media, media consumption, online media audiences

Social media are increasingly employed not only for interpersonal contacts but to follow current events and find relevant information. Users of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, can follow media organizations' status updates, visit links to media reports posted by their online friends, and distribute this information further by sharing it with the members of their online social networks. In addition, by using various types of tools for blogging and self-expression, individuals can provide commentaries on and gather links to media content and take part in reporting and reinterpreting the information.

The spread of information through social media enables an emergent practice of information consumption, where users get information in their online social networks rather than actively seeking it out by regularly visiting a handful of external information and entertainment sources (Newman, Levy, & Nielsen 2015; Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Olmstead, 2010). Such practices of accessing and consuming information have implications for mass media, many of which are declining in popularity and are exploring ways to reach their potential audiences through social media.

Ianis Bucholtz: ianis@diskurss.lv

Date submitted: 2014-09-08

¹ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful suggestions and comments.

Copyright © 2015 (Ianis Bucholtz). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

The opportunities offered by social media to media organizations and their audiences raise questions about the information behaviors of social media users and how their online activities are associated with consumption of other, including journalism-based, media. To explore the relationship between these different kinds of media, this article analyzes the activities of Latvian users of three online social networking sites and their media preferences.

Latvia's media system is characterized by a mixture of traits that can also be observed in a number of other East European countries (Jakubowicz, 2007; Šulmane, 2007). A special characteristic in the Latvian media market is the large Russian-speaking minority, which constitutes 27% of the population, while about 62% of inhabitants are Latvians (Veģis, 2012). The number of daily Internet users in Latvia is above average among Eastern and Central European countries (Seybert & Reinecke, 2014). In line with global trends (Alexa, 2015), the most popular online services are Web search, e-mail, social networking, video, and news sites (TNS, 2014a). At the same time, traditional media retain relatively large audiences (Eurobarometer, 2013). Latvia's media environment is discussed in more detail later in the article; yet the general trends suggest that the Latvian case is suitable for illustration of the relationship between the use of social networking sites and the consumption of traditional media.

Social Media Users and the Consumption of Other Media

In recent decades, a large body of research has examined the relationship between Internet use and other activities, including consumption of mass media. However, since social media is a more recent phenomenon, fewer studies have been devoted to associations between the use of these particular types of online media and other media. Recognizing this evolution in research, I begin with a review of studies concerning online communication and the media in general, followed by studies that cover social media use in particular.

Media Displacement and Complementarity Approaches

Media scholars have long explored the issue of whether new media displaces or complements old media (see, e.g., Kaplan, 1978; Lazarsfeld, 1940; McCombs, 1972; Robinson, 1981). Several studies discuss this issue in the context of Internet media, too, but research on media displacement and complementarity has produced conflicting results.

Hsiang Iris Chyi and Dominic Lasorsa (2002) observed an overlap between online and print media readership and noted that Internet users prefer the print format of the same outlet. Similarly, Scott Althaus and David Tewksbury (2000) found that using the Internet as a news source was positively associated with newspaper readership. Mohan Dutta-Bergman (2004) suggests a "media complementarity" approach, which states that, within a particular content domain, the traditional and online media complement rather than displace each other. According to his conclusions, Internet users with an interest in certain kinds of news will also consume such news in traditional media.

Other researchers have analyzed Internet use through the displacement perspective, according to which new media substitute for the established media. For example, Norman Nie and Lutz Erbring (2002)

claim that the more time individuals spend on the Internet, the less they consume other media. Paul Lee and Louis Leung (2008) found that the time spent online for activities related to accessing information and news correlated negatively with reading newspapers and watching television. Additionally, they found that spending time on the Internet for entertainment purposes was negatively linked to not only newspaper reading and television watching but also radio listening.

Rapid and ongoing changes in the online media environment must be taken into consideration when interpreting these conflicting findings. As noted by Ester De Waal and Klaus Schoenbach (2010), the relationship between new and established media depends on which of them satisfies users' needs better, but their ability to do so and the ways users evaluate them changes over time. This means that supplementary effects can turn into displacement effects.

When discussing possible displacement effects, it also should be mentioned that online media use is growing much faster compared to the speed at which the consumption of traditional media declines. Although some types of media are experiencing a decline in popularity, the growth of Internet use outpaces the reduction of traditional media audiences. Thus, even though the rise of online media consumption potentially influences the consumption of traditional media, this is not a zero-sum situation. Rather than taking over existing audiences, online media create new ones. This is one of the reasons that Nic Newman, William Dutton, and Grant Blank (2012) claim that the interaction of news media/traditional media and interpersonal communication/social media cannot be adequately explained in terms of competition versus substitution of these distinct realms. The actual consumption of news and other information by online/social media users also must be taken into account.

Another challenge for the analysis of the relationship between the use of online media and traditional media is related to the categories that are used for measurement. A considerable amount of previous research measures "Internet use," which is a broad category. It would be more insightful if specific categories were measured. Jan Bosman and Karsten Renckstorf (1996, p. 46, cited in Case, 2007, p. 79) have identified three main motivations for why individuals acquire information. Information has (1) a social utility (people can talk about it); (2) an instrumental utility (it improves decision making and enables other actions); and (3) an intrinsic utility (it provides entertainment and other gratifications). Based on this categorization, the basic purposes of Internet use can be identified as seeking information and reading news, entertainment, communication, studies, and work.

Finally, the affordances and functions of online media platforms can be extremely diverse, so users of different media may experience different outcomes. Few authors have compared various online media, but those that have done so report considerable differences even among relatively similar sites (Papacharissi, 2009; Zhang & Pentina, 2012). These differences are caused by peculiarities in both the sites' architecture and the sociocultural aspects related to their use.

Social Media Users and Their Information Sources

Taking into account the aforementioned complexities, I argue that research on links between online and traditional media use should focus on more specific kinds of media. When considering which media should be addressed in this context, social media is an obvious choice. Social media platforms have become popular online venues where individuals communicate and collaborate while creating, discussing, and sharing media content. A report by the Pew Research Center stresses that consumption of news nowadays is a social activity, manifested in audiences' online activities. The report notes that 72% of Americans read news that is shared with them through social networking sites or e-mail and 52% of Americans share news with others through these media themselves (Purcell et al., 2010).

In light of these trends, it is anticipated that social media users are becoming increasingly important to other media outlets, and their communication practices must be taken into account to raise audiences and distribute their content. For example, British media such as the BBC, the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Economist* all have experienced a remarkable increase in the proportion of their audiences that access their content through the links that have been published on social media and shared by users (Newman et al., 2012). This suggests that social media do not diminish the significance of traditional reporting, but instead popularize and add an additional layer of social interaction to it.

Social interactions, which are based on sharing of media content, depend on certain variables, though. Chei Sian Lee and Long Ma (2012) demonstrated that individuals who use social media for information seeking, socializing, and raising their status are more likely to share news on social media. Another variable is generational. According to the results of a survey by the Pew Research Center, younger audience members are less interested in the news despite their increasing use of the Internet (Kohut, 2013). The younger the audience, the less time they devote to following news. In addition, little evidence was found that contemporary media users' consumption of news increases as they age. The Pew report concluded that, although the focus of journalism-based media on online audiences is reasonable, the popularity and diversity of the means of online communication may not allow news media to regain the size of audiences many of them once had (Kohut, 2013).

The Pew report refers only to time spent online in general and interest in news among different generations. However, for the purposes of this study, of particular importance is the consumption of content from other media by social media users. So far, few studies have explored this subject, but the existing results suggest that the use of various social media platforms is associated with differing levels of exposure to media content. By surveying U.S. adults who use social media, researchers from the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project found that 52% of Facebook users and 47% of Twitter users get news or news headlines on Facebook and Twitter, respectively. Still, only 30% of Google+ and 20% of YouTube users say the same. On the professional social networking site LinkedIn, news consumption is just 13%, while most Pinterest users have even less interest in news (Holcomb, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2013). These distinctions can be explained by the fact that various social media platforms attract users who differ in their interest in media content or—as a more plausible interpretation—that different media platforms can have different purposes for the same user.

Moreover, the analysis of news diffusion through social media demonstrates that the spread of information depends on the theme of news and the type of media. According to a study by Minkyong Kim, David Newth, and Peter Christen (2013), news media outlets have the most influence on the diffusion of information related to business and economic themes, while social networking sites and blogs are the most influential for political and cultural themes. Information that involves controversy, such as political protests or the multiculturalism debates, tends to be diffused simultaneously across multiple social media platforms, but entertainment news tends to spread within separate, single platforms.

These studies explore the media consumption habits of Internet/social media users from various angles. Some researchers have measured information behavior–related activities in relation to other types of media (for example, newspapers, radio, or television), while others highlight specific genres (especially interest in the news). In the context of this topic, measures of both the media type and genre have certain drawbacks. The boundaries between news and entertainment, especially on television, have become blurred (Thussu, 2007); thus, the concept of “interest in news” does not necessarily refer to consumption of hard news or quality journalism content. As noted by Gregory Cermak (1996), information and entertainment per se are not separate entities—media provide both of them and often at the same time. Because the purpose of this study is to analyze relationships between social media use and the consumption of other media rather than to evaluate the informational value of different media, I will rely on a traditional classification of media types, which includes print newspapers, magazines, radio, television, online news sites, blogs, and social networking sites. I recognize that the use of any given type of media itself does not necessarily convey information about the actual content that is being received, but such classification does illustrate social media users’ general media preferences and the success of different types of media in reaching online audiences.

To summarize, the previous research points to a number of aspects that must be taken into account when considering directions for social research on media audiences. First, while the impact of Internet use on other activities, including media consumption, has been analyzed in detail, social media have received less attention in this regard, and their use is mostly studied in relation to consumption of news. It has been demonstrated that users of different social media sites hold varying levels of interest in news, but we also need data on the social media user’s interest in different types of media. Such information would demonstrate how successful traditional and/or journalism-based media are in reaching social media audiences.

Second, although previous research has found that social media users are interested in information from other media and redistribute it through these communication platforms, such activities are a nonuniform phenomenon shaped by various factors. Social media differ greatly in their functionality and uses, so the measurements of media use should be evaluated in the context of users’ dominant activities on the particular sites, and research should not focus on just one such site. Based on these considerations, this article poses the following research questions:

RQ1: What other types of media do social media users consume?

RQ2: How is the time spent on social networking sites associated with users’ interest in other media?

Additionally, much previous research has focused on media use in North America, but this study addresses these issues in a predominantly Latvian context, thus providing another perspective on this topic. The next section describes the media environment and use of the Internet in Latvia.

Media Environment in Latvia

Latvia is an Eastern European country with a population of about 2 million (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2015). Around 62% of inhabitants are Latvians, and ethnic Russians make up the second largest ethnic group (27%) (Veģis, 2012). Because of the existence of the two ethnic-linguistic groups, the Latvian media landscape is also divided into parts. This split makes the available market for media even smaller, because these two groups demand different products (Šulmane, 2007). However, part of the publishers exploit economies of scope and maintain different media outlets that are aimed at various audience groups. This especially applies to online news sites, many of which offer both Latvian- and Russian-language editions.

As a country with a postcommunist legacy, Latvia has a media system that shares many of its traits with those of other countries in the region: On the one hand, it has witnessed the adoption of Western-style media practices; on the other hand, much of it is characterized by media partisanship, partiality, and tabloidization (Jakubowicz, 2007; Šulmane, 2007). Latvian media are pluralistic in terms of opinions expressed, which also includes some hostility toward the officially recognized basic principles of the state (Skudra, Šulmane, & Dreijere, 2014).

The use of the Internet has risen steadily over the last decades. In 2014, 76% of the Latvian population had used the Internet in the past three months, and 61% used it every day. This is a bit lower than the average among European Union countries, which was 78% and 66%, respectively (Seybert & Reinecke, 2014), but higher than the average among Eastern and Central European countries—71% and 57%, respectively. Similar trends can be observed in social media use. For example, in 2012, 51% used the Internet for social networking, and by the next year, the number of social media users reached 53% (TNS, 2014a). On average, social networking sites are used by 52% of Europeans (Eurobarometer, 2013)

The most popular websites in Latvia (TNS, 2014b) are the Google search engine (average daily audience is 43.2% of all users), Inbox.lv e-mail and entertainment service (28.6%), social networking site Draugiem.lv (25.3%), video site YouTube (25.1%), and news site Delfi (22.7%) (see Table 1). All in all, this list concurs with the general trends reflected in the Alexa (2015) country-level rankings of the most visited websites, which are dominated by social networking services, search engines (in both cases, usually international ones), news sites, and video-sharing services. In most European countries, the most frequently visited website is either Google or Facebook, followed by news sites, classified ads, shopping services, or other social networking and Web search providers.

The most popular activities on the Internet in Latvia, as in other countries (see, e.g., Purcell, 2011), are using Web search engines, reading online news, using social media, and exchanging e-mails. Although such activities demonstrate a strong interest in news and information among Internet users, the list of the 20 most frequently visited Web resources in Latvia contains no websites of television channels,

radio stations, or newspapers. Latvia is by no means unique in this regard, but several European countries do have at least one newspaper or broadcaster among the 10 most frequently visited websites (Alexa, 2015).

Table 1. Ten Most Popular Websites or Web Services in Latvia.

Website	Average daily audience (thousands)	Average daily audience (%)
Google	886	43.2
Inbox.lv (e-mail and entertainment service; Latvian- and Russian-language versions)	586	28.6
Draugiem.lv (social networking service)	520	25.3
YouTube	516	25.1
Delfi (news site; Latvian- and Russian-language versions)	467	22.7
TVNET (news site; Latvian- and Russian-language versions)	353	17.2
Facebook	315	15.3
SS.lv (classified ads)	271	13.2
Gmail	253	12.3
Apollo.lv (news site)	246	12.0

Source. TNS (2014b).

Globally, the increasing popularity of social networking services can best be described in terms of the number of users. Facebook, the most popular social networking site in the world, has about 890 million daily active users (Facebook, 2015). Draugiem.lv, the Latvian social networking site, is one of the few among Facebook's local rivals that still dominates its home market (Aptauja.lv, 2014; Linsell, 2011). It has about 382,000 daily users (TNS, 2014b), but the number of monthly users is above 700,000 (Aptauja.lv, 2014), which is around half of all Internet users in Latvia.

Regardless of their popularity on the Internet, many traditional media entities still have considerably large audiences. According to Eurobarometer (2013), around 92% of the Latvian population watch television and 78% listen to the radio at least once a week. These results are similar to European averages, which are 95% and 74%, respectively. While the circulation of print media, especially newspapers, has fallen dramatically in many markets (Meyer, 2009), 65% of the Latvian population still read print media at least once a week. The European average also is 65% (Eurobarometer, 2013).

By analyzing the activities of users from three social networking sites and their media use, this article seeks to gather additional evidence on the interactions between users of social media and traditional media.

Method

Based on data from an online survey of users from three social networking sites used by Latvians ($N = 662$), I analyzed how activities on these sites are associated with consumption of other kinds of media—traditional media and online publications, blogs, and social media.

One of the three sites included in the survey was Draugiem.lv ($N = 317$), a general use social networking site similar to Facebook and the most popular such site in Latvia. The second site was LiveJournal ($N = 47$), an international blogging/online diary site built on social networking principles. As with most social networking sites, LiveJournal users create profiles, choose usernames (usually pseudonyms), publish diary entries and write comments to them, and add friends—users in whom and/or in whose diary entries they have an interest. LiveJournal's orientation toward social interaction sets it apart from many other blogging sites (Zakharov, 2007). LiveJournal has about 2 million active users (LiveJournal, 2013). The third site is the Latvian-language site Sviesta ciba (phonetic transcription: [sv'iestʌ 'tsibʌ]) ($N = 298$). It is based on the LiveJournal engine—thus, the architecture of these two sites is similar. Established in 2002, Sviesta ciba is one of the oldest Latvian online communities of its kind still operating. It has about 2,000 active users (Sviesta ciba, 2015). According to the survey data, the mean age of Sviesta ciba users is 25 years ($SD = 5.6$), Draugiem.lv, 27 years ($SD = 8.3$), and LiveJournal, 28 years ($SD = 7.4$).

The sites selected for this study are diverse in some respects but similar in others. They can be compared either by the nationality of their users (Latvian vs. international) or their architecture (Facebook-like vs. online diary-based). LiveJournal has a mostly Russian-speaking community of users from Latvia, while the other two sites are predominantly used by Latvian speakers. Such possibilities for comparisons enhance the basis for interpreting the data related to these sites.

Data were gathered through online surveys in which respondents participated based on self-selection. Such an approach makes it more difficult to reach a representative sample (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003), but this weakness in the surveying was countered by including elements of snowball sampling: I reached out to a number of participants and requested that they fill out the survey and publish the link to it on their profile. Thus, while it may not be possible to receive responses from all the user segments on the particular sites, the participants are not completely randomly encountered individuals with few or no connections between them, and their responses can illustrate the social processes and experiences that they encounter on the site. Furthermore, the aim of the snowball sampling was to reduce the possibility that one person could fill out the survey as a user of different sites. Many Sviesta ciba users have an account on Draugiem.lv, but because of the sampling approach and the fact that most participants would probably hesitate to fill out two nearly identical surveys, it is unlikely that there is a significant overlap between the sites in the sample. LiveJournal users usually do not use Sviesta ciba or Draugiem.lv.

The survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their use of the particular social networking site, their media consumption, what activities they use the Internet for, and how often. Descriptive statistics demonstrated the frequency of each answer, and correlation analysis was used to

determine the participants' preferences for media they use. Since the data did not comply with the parameters of a normal distribution, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient r_s was used for calculations.

Results

Here the discussion turns to users' media preferences, including the frequency of media consumption and associations between social networking site use and media consumption.

First, the participants in the survey were asked to state how often they used any of the kinds of media on the list—every day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, less often, or never (for a list of all the survey questions and available answers, see the Appendix). To focus on heavy consumers of particular kinds of media, answers were combined from those who use these media at least once a week—including every day, several times a week, and once a week. Table 2 displays the proportion of such users on the surveyed social networking sites. The table provides details on each site and average values of all three together, thus allowing evaluation of the similarities among and differences between them.

Table 2. Percent of Participants Who Consume Different Types of Media at Least Once a Week.

	Sviesta ciba	Draugiem.lv	LiveJournal	Average of all three sites
Daily newspapers (print)	26.8	37.9	12.8	31.1
Weekly magazines	17.1	35.6	6.4	25.2
Monthly magazines	10.7	14.8	6.4	12.4
Television	57.0	81.4	63.8	69.2
Radio	53.7	76.3	51.1	64.4
Online news sites	91.6	95.3	89.4	93.2
Blogs	74.5	30.0	72.3	53.0
Social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	88.6	41.3	70.2	64.7
Online social networking site on which survey was conducted	98.3	97.8	100.0	98.0

Some common trends can be observed between the participants from different social networking sites. Unsurprisingly, among the three least consumed are print media—newspapers and weekly and monthly magazines (31.1%, 25.2%, and 12.4% of the participants read them on at least a somewhat regular basis, respectively). Similarly, the prominence of online news sites (93.2%) and the site on which the survey was conducted (98%) could be expected: These media are the most convenient for the Internet users. The results regarding the popularity of television and radio are uneven among the surveyed sites. Yet together the data indicate that electronic media have considerable audiences in this sample, and they are consumed by more than 64% of participants. Moreover, the surveyed social media

users have a diverse media diet: Since only print media are regularly read by a minority of the participants and all other types of media are consumed relatively often, it is highly unlikely that a significant part of the users get their news and other information from just one source or a small number of sources.

However, as noted earlier, media use is not a zero-sum game. Because online media audiences grow faster than the popularity of traditional media declines, the prevalence of one media type does not provide sufficiently detailed information about the whole media diet of users from these sites and whether interest in one type of media is linked to other types of media. Taking this into consideration, the next steps of the analysis measured how the use of social networking sites is associated with other activities that are related to information activities and consumption of media content. To concentrate on the general trends, in the remaining calculations, the participants of the three sites are combined into one group.

The next step of the analysis examined how the amount of time users spend on the Internet correlates with their reported frequency of media use. The participants were asked to report how many hours a day they spend on the Internet and on the social networking site on which the survey was conducted. They chose from a set of answers that includes various time intervals—for example, one hour or less, two to four hours, five to eight hours. This type of scale complicates the calculation of averages, but this obstacle can be bypassed and approximate data obtained through recoding of the scale and replacing the existing ordinal values with those that represent the middle values of time measurements. Thus, “one hour or less” becomes 0.5 hours, “two to four hours” is coded as three hours, “five to eight hours” becomes 6.5 hours, and so forth. The average time the users spend online daily is 5 hours and 59 minutes ($SD = 3.36$), and the average time they spend on the particular social networking site is 2 hours and 13 minutes ($SD = 2.05$).

The data on time spent on the Internet or on the social networking site were correlated with participants’ answers to how regularly they consume different types of media. The results in Table 3 show a reverse association between the time devoted to online activities and the frequency of consumption of traditional, off-line-based media. This can be observed best regarding the total amount of time the participants spend daily on the Internet. Moreover, time spent on the Internet in general is positively associated with consumption of online information sources—reading blogs, using other social media, and visiting online news sites. Thus, unsurprisingly, Internet use is associated with consumption of online, rather than off-line media.

Table 3. Correlations of the Amount of Time Spent on the Internet With Types of Media Consumed.

	Print newspapers	Weekly magazines	Monthly magazines	Television	Radio	Online news sites	Blogs	Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	Online social networking site on which survey was conducted
Amount of time spent daily on the Internet (all activities)	-0.12**	-0.13**	-0.07*	-0.13*	-0.11*	0.10**	0.28**	0.24**	0.14**
Amount of time spent daily on the social networking site on which the survey was conducted	-0.11**	-0.08*	-0.04	0.06	-0.07	0.04	0.07	-0.03	0.43**

** $p < .01$, two tailed. * $p < .05$, two-tailed.

To a lesser extent, this trend is also visible regarding the use of the online social networking site on which the survey was conducted: Reading print newspapers and magazines is negatively associated with time spent on that site, and no association exists between time spent on the social networking site and consumption of radio, television, online news sites, and other social media. Thus, users who spend much time on the social networking site on which the survey was conducted do not necessarily have a keen interest in online news sites or other media, which at least potentially can include news and other journalism-based materials in their content.

Finally, I reviewed the purposes for which participants use the Internet. They were asked to evaluate the purposes for their Internet use—for seeking information and reading news, entertainment, communication, studies and work—and the frequency—often, sometimes, hard to say, seldom, or never. In calculations, the answer hard to say was coded as a missing value.

As shown in Table 4, seeking information and reading news are positively associated with the frequency of consumption of most types of media. Similarly, using the Internet for work is associated with reading newspapers, magazines, visiting online news sites, blogs, and other social media, and listening to the radio. However, there is no correlation between work-related Internet activities and the use of the online social networking site on which the survey was conducted. Using the Internet for both entertainment and communication purposes, on the contrary, is positively associated only with activities

on the online social networking site on which the survey was conducted, other social media, and visiting blogs. Using the Internet for studies only correlates with reading newspapers and using social media.

Table 4. Correlations of Internet Uses With Types of Media Consumed.

	Print newspapers	Weekly magazines	Monthly magazines	Television	Radio	Online news sites	Blogs	Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	Online social networking site on which survey was conducted
Seeking information, reading news	0.14**	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.11**	0.20**	0.06	0.05	0.09*
Work	0.18**	0.14**	0.15**	-0.04	0.09*	0.15**	0.14*	0.10*	-0.01
Studies	0.09*	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.15**	0.07	0.12**	0.03
Entertainment	-0.00	-0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.20*	0.22**	0.19**
Communication	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.10*	0.14**	0.18**

** $p < .01$, two tailed. * $p < .05$, two-tailed.

These calculations reveal that individuals who use the Internet for arguably more serious activities (seeking information and reading news, and especially work) are more likely to use a variety of media regardless of whether they are online-based or traditional media. Those who use the Internet for lighter activities, such as communication and entertainment, limit their media use not only to online media in general but to specific, nonjournalism types of media—blogs and other social media.

Such classification of Internet use suggests that, among individuals who on social networking sites engage in some of the most common activities (including communication), the main distinction is not between consumption of online media and traditional (electronic and print) media but rather between social media and traditional, journalism-based media. Depending on the amount of time they spend on the social networking site on which the survey was conducted, social media users can be divided into those who are interested in diverse sources of information regardless of whether the media are print, electronic, or online-based and those who are mostly interested in online, nonjournalism, and nontraditional media.

Discussion

Social networking sites are attractive communication environments where users can develop and maintain connections with others and express themselves. These activities also include sharing and discussing content from other media (Newman et al., 2011; Purcell et al., 2010). Although such developments are promising for mass media, especially those that in their traditional format are losing audiences, not enough is known about social media users' interest in other media.

In this study, data from three social networking sites used by Latvians were examined to find out what other types of media this cohort consumes and how this is linked to the time spent on the social networking site. According to the results, the participants mostly use online-based media, including blogs and social media, rather than traditional media; unsurprisingly, print publications receive the least attention. Online news sites are the dominant journalism-based type of media in which the participants are interested in. This also was to be expected, since active users of the Internet will likely prefer that much of their information needs are satisfied through their preferred means of communication.

However, analysis of the time users spend on the Internet in general and the social networking site in particular suggest that the association between these and the consumption of other media is not unequivocally optimistic for those who hope that the increase in the use of social media naturally leads to increased audiences for mass media (Kohut, 2013). Individuals who spend more time on the Internet do visit online media more often, including social media and online news sites, but they tend to read print media or consume electronic media more seldom. Moreover, time spent on the social networking site on which the survey was conducted is not associated with increased consumption of electronic media or online news sites. This means that heavy users of social networking sites do not display particular interest in other media except for social media. In addition, media consumption is linked to the purposes of Internet and social networking site use: More serious activities such as work and information seeking are associated with the consumption of diverse media regardless of whether they are online or offline-based, but using them for entertainment and communication purposes is only associated with visiting blogs and other social media. These observations can be explained by the fact that various social networking sites differ in their users' information behavior—including the percentage of users who access news on a given site (Holcomb et al., 2013). Thus, the kinds of users with differing interests that a given social networking site attracts, the functionality it provides, and the purpose it fulfills each can affect the results on users' information behavior and media diet.

Instead of supporting either displacement (Lee & Leung, 2008; Nie & Erbring, 2002) or complementarity (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004) interpretations of the relationship between online and traditional media, this study has demonstrated that social media users' consumption of other media is linked to several variables, and diverse scenarios are possible. This is illustrated by the facts that most of the participants do use various types of media and that most of the correlations presented in the study are weak. This study makes no claims that the use of social media causes a lack of interest in other media. Still, the finding that heavy users of the social networking sites are not those who are the most interested in various types of media does have implications for the general media landscape. According to the data on the social networking site users'

media choices and time they spend on the Internet and the social networking site, the main distinction is not between users who are interested in traditional media or online media but rather between users who are interested in diverse types of media (including such potential channels for journalism-oriented information as traditional media and online news sites) and those who are interested in social media.

Most users of social media—especially personal blogs and social networking sites—employ these communication platforms to maintain their social networks (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, & Vitak, 2011; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008), express themselves, write about their lives, and exchange information and emotional support (Baker & Moore, 2008; Huang, Shen, Hong-Xiang, & Shin-Shin, 2007; Lenhart & Fox, 2006), but discussions on politics and other topics traditionally associated with mainstream journalism and public communication usually are of lesser importance for them. These previous findings help to explain the results of the present study, which states that those users who spend the most time on the Internet for communication and entertainment activities are the most frequent social media users—but they do not display increased interest in traditional or journalism-based media.

Social networking sites can serve as gateways through which audiences access news and information, but only a specific type of user from the surveyed social networking sites intensively consumes a wide range of traditional and/or journalism media—these users are generally interested in diverse kinds of information. For other groups of users, social media provide space for activities that they may find more exciting than following information from other media.

These observations relate to previous research on the impact of easy access to diverse media on an individual's information behavior. Markus Prior (2005) has pointed to a seeming paradox whereby an increase in available information about politics has not led to significant change in political knowledge and voter turnout. He explains this paradox by the fact that a widening of media choice allows individuals to find content that they prefer, and this has a twofold effect: Some people use their access to the Internet and cable TV to further engage in politics, while others use these opportunities to reduce their exposure to such themes. Thus, if increased media choice widens the "knowledge gap" (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien 1970), which means that improved access to information magnifies the differences between well-informed and less-informed citizens, the results of the present study hint at a "media consumption gap" along the edges of which social networking site users separate as the availability of these online services and the diversity of their uses grows.

Although the commercialization of media and the underdevelopment of quality press and investigative journalism, as well as the division of media along ethno-linguistic lines are all significant issues in the Latvian media landscape (Šulmane, 2007), it is unlikely that the current state of media in Latvia has had a decisive influence on the results of this study. The overall consumption of traditional and/or journalism-based media in Latvia is comparable to European averages, but, naturally, not all social groups are equally interested in media content. At the same time, the fact that none of the 20 most popular websites in Latvia belongs to a newspaper, magazine, or broadcaster (TNS, 2014b) can be interpreted as a sign that traditional media have not been able to compete successfully for online audiences' attention, and thus it cannot be expected that these media would be popular among social media users.

Conclusion

The emergence of social media, such as blogs and social networking sites, has been linked to changes in how individuals access information, interact, and express themselves. New York University professor Jay Rosen (2006) once famously called contemporary media users “the people formerly known as the audience.” Rosen pointed to the wide range of opportunities that users have in the new, decentralized media system that enables horizontal, individual-to-individual connections. However, most online audiences do not take part in such activities (Bird, 2011). The results of this study also show that, although, in general, the users do consume various types of media, their level of interest in these varies and is linked to a number of variables—including time spent on the social networking site and the purposes of Internet use. Thus, in addition to challenging agendas set by mass media, as implicitly or explicitly suggested by several researchers (Dutton, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Rosen, 2006), and facilitating their access to information distributed by mass media, social media also allow users to take part in a variety of unrelated activities and abandon the consumption of other media altogether (Prior, 2005).

The data used in this study have a number of limitations. As pointed out earlier, the classification of media types that was used in the survey and subsequent data analysis—print newspapers, magazines, radio, television, online news sites, blogs, and social networking sites—does not necessarily exemplify the content preferences of social media users. Still, if people are interested in hard news and other materials associated with quality journalism, they most likely will find such content in the traditional or online news media—in which heavy (frequent) users of social media are not particularly interested.

Additionally, the survey included some of the social networking sites used by Latvians but left out others—most notably, Facebook, which is currently the second most popular such social networking site in Latvia (Aptauja.lv, 2014). The approach used in conducting the survey was designed to capture a number of user segments in the corresponding online social networks and thus make the data indicative of a variety of social phenomena as experienced by certain groups of users; however, the data cannot fully represent the users of these sites, nor Latvian social media users in general. Furthermore, each social networking site attracts different types of users; users of the various such sites are exposed to different levels of news (Holcomb et al., 2013) and possibly other information as well; and the architecture of these sites facilitates certain ways of interacting (Papacharissi, 2009). Because of such differences in purposes and functions, it is possible that users of other sites have different levels of interest in other media. Thus, generalizing based on data from just a few social networking sites is complicated. Taking into account the limitations of the study, further research on this topic is needed.

References

- Alexa. (2015). *The top 500 sites in each country or territory*. Retrieved from <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries>
- Althaus, S. L., & Tewksbury, D. (2000). Patterns of Internet and traditional news media use in a networked community. *Political Communication*, 17, 21–45. doi:10.1080/105846000198495

- Andrews, D., Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2003). Electronic survey methodology: A case study in reaching hard to involve Internet users. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 16(2), 185–210. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.151.94&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Aptauja.lv. (2014). *Populārākais sociālais tīkls Latvijā joprojām ir Draugiem.lv* [Draugiem.lv still is the most popular social networking site in Latvia]. Retrieved from http://aptauja.lv/lat/about_us/research/1/
- Baker, J. R., & Moore, S. M. (2008). Distress, coping, and blogging: Comparing new Myspace users by their intention to blog. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 11(1), 81–85. doi:10.1089/cpb.2007.9930
- Bird, E. (2011). Are we all producers now? Convergence and media audience practices. *Cultural Studies*, 25(4), 502–516. doi:10.1080/09502386.2011.600532
- Case, D. O. (2007). *Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior* (2nd ed.). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Academic Press.
- Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2015). *Population—key indicators*. Retrieved from <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-key-indicators-30624.html>
- Cermak, G. W. (1996). An approach to mapping entertainment alternatives. In R. R. Dohlakia, N. Mundorf, & N. Dohlakia (Eds.), *New infotainment technologies in the home: Demand-side perspectives* (pp. 115–134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Chyi, H. I., & Lasorsa D. L. (2002). Explorative study on the market relation between online and print newspapers. *Journal of Media Economics*, 15(2), 91–106. doi:10.1207/S15327736ME1502_2
- De Waal, E., & Schoenbach, K. (2010). News sites' position in the mediascape: Uses, evaluations and media displacement effects over time. *New Media and Society*, 12(3), 477–496. doi:10.1177/1461444809341859
- Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2004). Complementarity in consumption of news types across traditional and new media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48(1), 41–60. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4801_3
- Dutton, W. H. (2009). The Fifth Estate emerging through the network of networks. *Prometheus*, 27(1), 1–15. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1167502>
- Ellison, N. B., Lampe, C., Steinfield, C., & Vitak, J. (2011). With a little help from my friends: How social network sites affect social capital processes. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 124–145). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Eurobarometer. (2013). Media use in the EU. *Standard Eurobarometer 80*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_media_en.pdf
- Facebook. (2015). Facebook reports fourth quarter and full year 2014 results. *Facebook investor relations*. Retrieved from <http://investor.fb.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=893395>
- Holcomb, J., Gottfried, J., & Mitchell, A. (2013). *News use across social media platforms*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/files/2013/11/News-Use-Across-Social-Media-Platforms1.pdf>
- Huang, C. Y., Shen, Y. Z., Hong-Xiang, L., Shin-Shin, C. (2007). Bloggers' motivations and behaviors: A model. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(4), 472–484. doi:10.2501/S0021849907070493
- Jakubowicz, K. (2007). The Eastern European/post-communist media model countries. In G. Terzis (Ed.), *European media governance: National and regional dimensions* (pp. 303–313). Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Kaplan, S. J. (1978). The impact of cable television services on the use of competing media. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 22(2), 155–165. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ183845>
- Kim, M., Newth, D., & Christen, P. (2013). Modeling dynamics of diffusion across heterogeneous social networks: News diffusion in social media. *Entropy*, 15, 4215–4242. doi:10.3390/e15104215
- Kohut, A. (2013). Pew surveys of audience habits suggest perilous future for news. *Poynter*. Retrieved from <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/225139/pew-surveys-of-audience-habits-suggest-perilous-future-for-news/>
- Lazarsfeld, P. (1940). *Radio and the printed page*. New York, NY: Dell, Sloan & Pearce.
- Lee, C. S., & Ma, L. (2012). News sharing in social media: The effect of gratifications and prior experience. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28, 331–339. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2011.10.002
- Lee, P. S. N., & Leung, L. (2008). Assessing the displacement effects of the Internet. *Telematics and Informatics*, 25(3), 145–155. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2006.08.002
- Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet's new storytellers. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewInternet.org/files/old-media/Files/Reports/2006/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf.pdf>

- Linsell, K. (2011, November 7). Facebook wins battle of clones as Europeans seek network: Tech. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-11-07/facebook-wins-competition-of-clones-as-europeans-seek-global-network-tech.html>
- LiveJournal. (2013). *Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.livejournal.com/stats.bml>
- McCombs, M. (1972). *Mass media in the marketplace. Journalism Monographs, 24*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- McCullagh, K. (2008). Blogging: Self presentation and privacy. *Information & Communications Technology Law, 17*(1), 3–23. doi:10.1080/13600830801886984
- Meyer, P. (2009). *The vanishing newspaper: Saving journalism in the Information Age* (2nd ed.). Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Newman, N., Dutton, W. H., & Blank, G. (2012). Social media in the changing ecology of news: The Fourth and Fifth Estates in Britain. *International Journal of Internet Science 7*(1), 6–22. doi:10.2139/ssrn.1826647
- Newman, N., Levy, D. A. L., & Nielsen R. K. (2015). *Reuters Institute digital news report 2015: Tracking the future of news*. Oxford, UK: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2619576
- Nie, N. N., & Erbring, L. (2002). Internet and society: A preliminary report. *IT&Society, 1*(1), 275–283. Retrieved from http://www.nomads.usp.br/documentos/textos/cultura_digital/tics_arq_urb/internet_society%20report.pdf
- Papacharissi, Z. (2009). The virtual geographies of social networks: A comparative analysis of Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld. *New Media & Society, 11*(1/2), 199–220. doi:10.1177/1461444808099577
- Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(3), 577–592. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00143.x
- Purcell, K. (2011). *Search and email still top the list of most popular online activities: Two activities nearly universal among adult Internet users*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewInternet.org/~//media//Files/Reports/2011/PIP_Search-and-Email.pdf
- Purcell, K., Rainie, L., Mitchell, A., Rosenstiel, T., & Olmstead, K. (2010). *Understanding the participatory news consumer: How Internet and cell phone users have turned news into a social experience*.

- Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewInternet.org/~media//Files/Reports/2010/PIP_Understanding_the_Participatory_News_Consumer.pdf
- Robinson, J., (1981). Television and leisure time: A new scenario. *Journal of Communication*, 31(1), 120–130. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1981.tb01211.x
- Rosen, J. (2006, June 27). The people formerly known as the audience. *Pressthink*. Retrieved from http://archive.pressthink.org/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr.html
- Seybert, H., Reinecke, P. (2014). Internet and cloud services: Statistics on the use by individuals. *Statistics in Focus*, 16. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Internet_and_cloud_services_-_statistics_on_the_use_by_individuals
- Skudra, O., Šulmane, I., & Dreijere, V. (2014). The media in a democratic society. In J. Rozenvalds (Ed.), *How democratic is Latvia? Audit of democracy 2005–2014* (pp. 201–218). Riga, Latvia: Advanced Social and Political Research Institute of the University of Latvia. Retrieved from http://www.szf.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/szf_faili/Petnieciba/sppi/demokratija/ENG_Audit_of_Democracy_2015.pdf
- Subrahmanyam, K., Reich, S. M., Waechter, N., & Espinoza, G. (2008). Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(6), 420–433. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2008.07.003
- Šulmane, I. (2007). The Latvian media landscape. In G. Terzis (Ed.), *European media governance: National and regional dimensions* (pp. 375–386). Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- Sviesta ciba. (2015). *Statistika* [Statistics]. Retrieved from <http://klab.lv/stats/>
- Thussu, D. K. (2007) *News as entertainment: The rise of global infotainment*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Tichenor, P. J., Donohue, G. A., & Olien, C. A. (1970). Mass flow and differential growth in knowledge. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34(2), 149–170. doi:10.1086/267786
- TNS. (2014a). *TNS Latvijas mediju pētījumu gadagrāmata 2013/2014* [TNS Latvia yearbook of media research, 2013/2014]. Riga, Latvia: Author. Retrieved from http://www.tns.lv/wwwtnslv_resources/images/Mediju_petijumu_gadagramata/TNS_Latvia_mediju_petijumu_gadagramata_2013-2014.pdf
- TNS. (2014b). Viedtālrunis lieto jau 38% Latvijas iedzīvotāju [38% of Latvians already use smart phones]. *TNS Latvia Digital*. Retrieved from <http://www.tns.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=4678>

Veģis, P. (2012). *On key provisional results of population and housing census 2011*. Riga, Latvia: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/key-provisional-results-population-and-housing-census-2011-33306.html>

Zakharov, P. (2007). Structure of LiveJournal social network. In J. Kertész, S. Bornholdt, & R. N. Mantegna (Eds.), *Proceedings of SPIE. Vol. 6601: Noise and stochastics in complex systems and finance*. Florence, Italy: SPIE. doi:10.1117/12.726738

Zhang, L., & Pentina, I. (2012). Motivations and usage patterns of Weibo. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(6), 312–317. doi:10.1089/cpb.2009.0003

Appendix

Survey Questions

1. **What media do you use?** *Please specify frequency: every day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, less often, never.*
 - a. Daily newspapers (printed)
 - b. Weekly magazines
 - c. Monthly magazines
 - d. Internet news portals
 - e. Social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - f. Blogs
 - g. Television
 - h. Radio
 - i. Social networking site on which the survey was conducted

2. **How much time per day do you spend on the Internet for all activities?**
 - a. One hour or less
 - b. Two to four hours
 - c. Five to eight hours
 - d. Nine to 13 hours
 - e. More than 14 hours

3. **How much time per day do you spend on this social networking site (Sviesta ciba, Draugiem.lv, or LiveJournal)?**
 - a. I use it less than once a day
 - b. One hour or less
 - c. Two to four hours
 - d. Five to eight hours
 - e. Nine to 13 hours
 - f. More than 14 hours

4. **How often do you use the Internet for these activities?** *Please specify frequency: often, sometimes, hard to say, seldom, never.*
 - a. Seeking information, reading news
 - b. Entertainment
 - c. Communication
 - d. Work
 - e. Studies