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CHAPTER 4

The Influence of Social Media on Greek News Journalism: A Case Study of the Use of Twitter by Greek News Journalists

Chrysi Dagoula

INTRODUCTION

The most comprehensive study of the influence of social media on Greek news journalism in English is the Digital News Report provided by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. Since 2012, the report offers an annual, extensive, multidimensional, and cross-national trends analysis of how audiences experience digital news journalism by recording audiences’ news preferences in terms of platforms and websites (Digital News Report 2021). The net effect of these reports is that they allow us to get a glimpse of the annual state of Greek media market over time and the changes and stresses it faces. To this end, the findings of these reports cover a wide range of topics related to audiences’
digital news behaviours, including audiences’ social media use for accessing the news. In short, the reports place their emphasis upon audiences. I wish to add to this picture by trying to understand how Greek news journalists and news media use Twitter as part of their journalistic practices and subsequently, how audiences respond to this.

The effect of Twitter on journalists and the use of the platform for journalistic purposes is a well-studied topic. Academic research shows that from the news industry’s perspective, social media (Twitter included) is considered as both “a blessing and a curse” (Hermida, 2016a, p. 87; Lee, 2015), that not only offers opportunities to journalists but also challenges their practices and ethics. In a similar vein, social media is considered as “a space full of paradoxes”, where “the news is everywhere and nowhere” (in the sense that access to news might be incidental), and where “the news is becoming more personalised and individualised while at the same time more collaborative and collective” (Hermida, 2016a, p. 89). Therefore, it is this paradoxical situation that poses challenges both for journalists and news organisations. As Hermida (2016a, p. 89) notes, for journalists, social media provide a space that “it is not just a personal, professional, public or private space”, but a composition of all these, where the platform, the context, and individuals’ choices have a direct effect on journalists’ professional work. Which only goes to emphasise the importance of context and with that the significance of local circumstances and cultures. In other words, local practices (local ways of doing the job of news reporting) mean that the use of Twitter for the purpose of news journalism varies according to locally accepted professional norms.

With regard to Greece the impact of social media (specifically Twitter) and how Greek news journalists use it is significantly under-studied. And while reports, such as the Digital News Report, enhance our understanding on the topic, their emphasis on the audiences’ point of view obscures what we might say is “another point of view”—namely that of the Greek news journalists themselves. In an attempt to redress this and with a view to comparing these two different points of view, I undertook a case study of Greek news journalists’ use of Twitter and its impact on their role as news journalists, by examining the use of the platform in legacy news organisations and net-native news organisations, and journalists. Ultimately the aim of the case study is to provide an extra layer to the Oxford account of the impact of social media on news journalism. Accordingly, the first step is to analyse the data provided by the Digital News Report over the six-year period 2016–2021.
The Digital News Reports (2016–2021)

The background to the reports is quite simply the extremely high use of social media for the purposes of obtaining the news in Greece as shown by Fig. 4.1. As Kalogeropoulos notes, even in 2021 when the social media usage number slightly decreased to 69%, this percentage represents a much higher share than many other countries examined in the report (Kalogeropoulos, 2021, p. 82).

With regard to breaking down this high volume of social media usage and understanding the significance of how audiences used social media for news purposes, the reports adopted a quantitative methodological approach. Specifically, the research team records audiences’ news consumption habits and annual trends in a variety of areas, such as audiences’ trust in journalism and media organisations, audiences’ preference in specific brands, and audiences’ willingness to pay for news. In addition, the report also examined the weekly news reach per device and per source, as well as documenting the top social networking sites for news. The report relies on the use of online questionnaires addressed to a large pool of respondents enquired primarily digital audiences.

Contextualising their findings, the reports also considered local media and cultural factors that both influence audiences’ social media use and which provide the Greek context with regard to news consumption. As Kalogeropoulos (2016, p. 70) notes:

![Use of social media for news (2016-2021)](image)

**Fig. 4.1** Digital News Report: The use of social media for news (Greece, 2016–2021)
The sharp fall in newspaper circulation, the low figures for paying for online news, and the very high figures for ad-blocking software (the second highest in our survey) portray a gloomy picture for publishers in Greece. All these developments go hand in hand with the low trust in journalists and news organisations, which in turn mean that many Greeks feel that news is not something they have to pay money for. As a result, Greeks tend to read news in social media at higher rates than other countries.

Interestingly, this “gloomy picture for publishers” remains mostly unchanged over the years, particularly in the key areas of audiences’ trust in news and news organisations and correspondingly their willingness to pay for news. It is telling that audiences’ willingness to pay for digital news has only increased minimally from 7% in 2016 to 12% in 2021. Likewise, trust in news has only increased 12% in five years, from 20% in 2016 to 32% in 2021. In 2016, Greece had the lowest trust percentage among the 26 countries included in the survey, whereas in 2021, the country is “still well behind most other countries in trust” (Kalogeropoulos, 2016, 2021). The overall conclusion is that in spite of the increase in Internet’s penetration in Greece (from 63% in 2016 to 73% in 2021), this has not led to any significant changes in the overall profile of trust and willingness to pay for news.

Table 4.1 is a summary of Digital News Reports’ trends analyses and findings for the last six years. What it shows is the interconnectedness between political and economic/market and the Greek news ecology.

In essence, this summative table highlights two points: a) that the Greek media market is confronted with a crisis of confidence in the integrity of legacy media organisations and b) that audiences’ social media use and its influence on Greek news journalism cannot be examined in isolation from this crisis. The findings presented in the table accord with the journalists’ perceptions, as captured by the findings of academic research into the Greek news ecology. Two studies prove this point.

Touri et al.’s study that consists of interviews with professional Greek journalists shows that journalists’ responses not only “reinforce well-established observations regarding the lack of strong journalism culture in Greece which has been further weakened by the ongoing financial crisis” (Touri et al., 2017, p. 246) but also suggest that the Internet and social media platforms could be regarded as an “escape route” out of this “gloomy” situation. As the authors note:
Table 4.1  Digital News Report: Summary of key findings (2016–2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the news</td>
<td>Low trust in media</td>
<td>Very low levels of trust in journalism</td>
<td>Extremely low trust in the news</td>
<td>Very low levels of trust in the news</td>
<td>Very low levels of trust in the news</td>
<td>Lack of trust in the news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation of online news market</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Extreme fragmentation</td>
<td>Congested and highly disrupted online news market</td>
<td>High fragmentation</td>
<td>Online fragmentation</td>
<td>Casual and fragmented nature of digital news consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV sector</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>TV market in turmoil due to controversial TV licensing process</td>
<td>TV market in turmoil</td>
<td>Changing and polarised TV market</td>
<td>Changing and polarised TV market</td>
<td>National TV landscape relatively stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print sector</td>
<td>Newspaper industry faces strong pressures (sharp fall in newspaper circulation)</td>
<td>Decline in newspaper circulation continued</td>
<td>Weak print sector (deep crisis)</td>
<td>Print sector in crisis</td>
<td>Print sector in crisis</td>
<td>Politically polarised press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
<td>High use of social media for news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the role of the internet and the emergence of online news platforms are treated in a rather ambivalent manner: as a source of competition and further financial insecurity, but also as an escape route and an opportunity to free themselves from the political and economic control of media owners and their political allies. (Touri et al., 2017, p. 246)

Likewise, Siapera et al. paint a similar picture: the crisis in journalism could be understood as journalism being in a “critical juncture” due to “the combined effects of the structure of the field and the ongoing political, economic and social crisis in Greece” (Siapera et al., 2015, p. 460). As a means to confront the industry’s adherence to “no longer relevant practices and monopolies” and as a way to intervene into the future of the country’s media future, professional journalists interviewed by the authors suggest the “prioritization of the ethos of new/social media, including collaboration, sharing and witnessing, over standard journalistic practices” (Siapera et al., 2015, p. 460).

From both of these studies it is reasonable to conclude that Greek journalists (like Greek audiences) also see new/social media as a potential way to shape their journalistic future and to enhance not only their practices but also their relationships with their audiences in terms of redressing the lack of confidence in legacy news organisations and news journalism. On the one hand, journalists see social media use as a way to surpass the processes that undermine their journalistic practices, such as the weakening of their journalistic autonomy (Siapera et al., 2015, p. 460). On the other hand, due to “decades of corruption, political and business undue influences, and their targeting by left- and right-wing populist parties” which “have resulted in the media being widely distrusted by Greeks” (Kalogeropoulos, 2019, p. 88), Greek audiences seek their news on social media platforms.

These observations provide a useful background picture of the relationship between news and audience. They depict a structural problem related to audience confidence in the integrity of legacy news organisations of and the flight to social media for news. Nevertheless, these studies do not focus on the significance of social media platforms nor undertake to show how some platforms have influenced Greek news journalism. What is missing and what is necessary to complete the picture of the influence of social media on Greek news journalists is an account of Greek news journalists’ uses of social media. To this end, I undertook a case study to understand journalists’ use of Twitter to enable me to add an extra layer to the Digital News Reports’ account of the impact of social media on news journalism.
CASE STUDY

Why Twitter?

Twitter is amongst the most popular social networking sites for news in many countries, whilst it is also populated by users that consider themselves as “news lovers”, in contrast, for example, to Facebook that is populated by “casual users” (Newman et al., 2015, p. 82). Recent research in the United States agrees that “news plays a prominent role on Twitter”, where “roughly seven-in-ten U.S. Twitter users (69%) say they get news on the site” (Mitchell et al., 2021). Likewise, Digital News Report’s 2021 findings highlight that:

When asking people to choose their main motivation for using a network, we find clear differences between Twitter, which users see as a good place to get and debate the latest news, and other networks like Facebook, where people are ‘mainly there for other reasons’. (Newman et al., 2021, p. 24)

Interestingly, findings from many countries suggest that Twitter users pay most attention to legacy media outlets when consuming news on Twitter (considerably more than for politicians, alternative news sources, or other influencers), which justifies also journalists’ effort to cultivate their presence on Twitter.

These findings are also reflected in the quite extensive academic research that examines how Twitter is implemented in journalistic practices (see, e.g., Lasorsa et al., 2012; Murthy, 2013; Broersma & Graham, 2016; Hedman, 2015, 2016; Hermida, 2012, 2016a, 2018; Bruns, 2018). One of the earliest studies on the topic referred to how Twitter could be used for breaking news (Mills et al., 2007), whereas Hermida characterised Twitter as “an ambient news environment” in the sense that “Twitter is an arena that always contains news”, but also as an “awareness system” where “news information is received in the periphery of users’ attention and do not require their cognitive attention” (Hermida, 2010). Twitter’s journalistic significance is also echoed in journalists’ views that regard Twitter as “the first draft of journalism” (Stross, 2016) and in news media organisations’ guidelines that encourage “a vibrant presence on social media” as a means to maintain status (New York Times, 2020). Additionally, Twitter itself recognises journalism’s impact on the platform—in the words of Jack Dorsey, Twitter’s CEO, news is a key reason why people use Twitter (Dorsey, 2015). Even though we do not have information about the
qualitative characteristics of this use in relation to Greece specifically, the Digital News Report’s (2021) summative data suggest “that mainstream news brands and journalists attract most attention around news in both Facebook and Twitter” (2021). Given this, we need to return to the Greek context and the question of how journalists in Greece use the Twitter platform and how their efforts to be present on Twitter are translated into news journalistic practices.

**Methodological Design and Data Collection**

To address this, I conducted a large-scale case study on Twitter. For this case study, I collected all the tweets posted by a variety of news media accounts for a period of two months (January and February 2019), aiming to map the diversity of Greek journalism on Twitter. The final datasets include tweets from five legacy media accounts (including the one belonging to the public service broadcasting), from two free newspapers, from three net-native media outlets, and from ten journalists (Table 4.2). The criteria for the choice of the accounts are a) their popularity within the platform, as defined by the number of their followers; b) their active presence in the platform, as defined by the number of the tweets they post.\(^1\)

Conducting both thematic and textual analysis, all collected tweets were initially filtered into original tweets and retweets and then the first were analysed on the basis of:

(a) Descriptive characteristics, such as the inclusion of a biographical note, so to examine media and journalists’ surface engagement with Twitter.

(b) Activity of the account, so to examine the degree in which Twitter is used by the studied accounts.

(c) Tweets’ formatting, such as textual and linguistic characteristics (e.g., use of emotive words, use of emoticons), so to examine each account’s communicative techniques.

(d) Use of Twitter’s conversational markers (retweets and replies) and hashtags, so as to examine to what extent media organisations and journalists adjust to the platform’s communicative tools.

\(^1\) It should be noted that this process was conducted manually, as there is a significant lack of data in relation to the use of Twitter by news media and journalists in Greece.
Table 4.2  The final sample of the studied accounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Twitter handle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Legacy media</td>
<td>@skaigr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Legacy media</td>
<td>@kathimerini_gr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Legacy media</td>
<td>@real_gr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Legacy media</td>
<td>@protothema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Legacy media</td>
<td>@ERTsocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Free newspaper</td>
<td>@athensvoice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Free newspaper</td>
<td>@lifomag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Net-native media</td>
<td>@enikos_gr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Net-native media</td>
<td>@protagongr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Net-native media</td>
<td>@in_gr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Journalist</td>
<td>@tsapanidou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Journalist</td>
<td>@NikosChatzinikolaou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Journalist</td>
<td>@KostasVaxevanis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Journalist</td>
<td>@SiaKossioni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Journalist</td>
<td>@ArisPortosalte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Journalist</td>
<td>@dimoikonoumou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Journalist</td>
<td>@cantonopoulou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Journalist</td>
<td>@spiroxaritatos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Journalist</td>
<td>@kzoulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Journalist</td>
<td>@mdenaxa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Findings**

(a) *Descriptive Characteristics: Biographical Notes and the Aspect of “Following”*

Descriptive characteristics are important as they consist the first impression audiences acquire when visiting a journalist’s or a medium’s account (Molyneux et al., 2018). In addition, along with the activity of each account, this aspect acts as an indicator of a journalist’s or medium’s perception of the platform and surface engagement.

In relation to the inclusion of a biographical note, eight out of ten media accounts (excluding @real_gr and @protagongr) include this information. In this biographical note, we encounter two main approaches, regardless of the category the medium belongs to: media accounts either refer to the organisation’s impact beyond Twitter (e.g., “the leading news site in Greece”), or they include the medium’s slogan. Interestingly, apart from three accounts (@skaigr, @ERTsocial, and @lifomag), all the other accounts do not include a link to their website or other social networking
platforms. In journalists’ accounts, eight out of ten include a biographical note. The approaches here differentiate: four of them include their professional affiliation and four of them include links to their other social media accounts. One account (@mdenaxa) includes contact details as well as a disclaimer (“all views expressed, solely mine”).

Regarding the aspect of bi-directional following (meaning how many accounts media and journalists “follow back”), media accounts (regardless of the category they belong to) follow a very small number of Twitter users, which comes in direct contrast to the high number of followers they have. Free newspapers’ accounts follow more users, but the number is still considered as low (Fig. 4.2).

Qualitatively, media accounts (excluding here the free newspapers’ accounts) choose to follow accounts that belong to other news organisations and media outlets, to official governmental sources, and to journalists, including their employees. This choice could be related to Twitter’s function as a news source (Dagoula, 2017); however, it seems that for this purpose media rely more to colleagues and official sources rather to other Twitter users. We could hypothesise that media accounts potentially seek for information by asking questions to their audiences through the platform; however, this use did not come up in the qualitative analysis of the content of media organisation accounts’ tweets.

Fig. 4.2 Visual representation of bi-directional following on Twitter (news media accounts) (Dagoula, 2019)
Journalists follow more accounts, but this number is still substantially lower than the number of their followers (Fig. 4.3).

(b) Activity of the Accounts

In quantitative terms, media organisations use Twitter more extensively than journalists. However, in qualitative terms this use is questionable, as media organisations Twitter accounts (regardless of the category they belong to) consist an automated news distribution mechanism that shares the news they publish in their respective websites along with a link to the respective articles, thus they aim to direct more audiences to those websites. Journalists’ accounts present differences, showing that the use of Twitter could be unrelated to the medium they work for, but dependent on their personalities. Interestingly, journalists’ popularity on Twitter is not related to their Twitter use: inactive or semi-active Twitter accounts have a substantive number of followers. This raises questions about audiences’ choice to follow a journalist on Twitter, which could be dependent on other factors (e.g., journalist’s professional standing or journalist’s popularity in another medium or platform).
(c) Formatting of Tweets

The active presence of media organisations on Twitter contributes to the existence of an ambient news environment—an environment where news is omnipresent and part of the users’ experience. By further analysing the formatting and the textual characteristics of the collected tweets, it is aimed to examine whether news media or journalists use language as an invitation to audiences to participate in discussions or in journalistic processes. In addition, these textual characteristics may add to a user’s impression and evaluation of a media organisation or a journalist. As a result, a potential positive perception could also be transferred to their journalistic product (Lee, 2016).

Nonetheless, all news media accounts use Twitter exactly the same—the majority of the tweets follow the Headline + Link format or a variation of it. Exceptions include tweets that contain author’s name or an indication about the content (e.g., “video included”) or tweets that emphasise specific words (by using hashtags) so to enhance their searchability on Twitter (@skaigr and @protagongr implement this practice). However, the overall impression of media organisations’ Twitter accounts is uniformity—as much in individual news media accounts as collectively. This difficulty to point to the differences among news media accounts that belong to different media organisations could lead to the argument that media organisations miss the opportunity of using Twitter as an additional channel to present their unique identity. To some extent, this unskilful use of Twitter is reminiscent of the early years of the web, when newspapers used their websites to recycle their printed content (Bardoel, 2002).

All journalists use Twitter in their professional capacity, as this is reflected in the formulation of their tweets: to disseminate news and information, to promote their journalistic work, for political or social commentary, and to respond to users (Table 4.3). Variations exist showing that journalists’ personalities and personal choices define the formatting and the textual characteristics of their tweets. For instance, @mdenaxa’s tweets include a detailed approach to dissemination of news and information—in her tweets she includes the maximum amount of information, resources (such as visual material), and the source of the provided information.

With regard to promotion of journalistic work, this consists mainly of tweets with information about journalists’ online or offline work or information about the medium they work for. Journalists (e.g., @NikosChatzinikolaou) employ the retweet function to also share and promote the work of his news website. When it comes to social and political
Table 4.3  Twitter’s use by journalists in Greece as depicted in the formulation of their tweets (Dagoula, 2019, p. 66)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dissemination of news</th>
<th>Promotion of journalistic work</th>
<th>Social and political commentary</th>
<th>Interaction with audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>@tsapanidou</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@NikosChatzinikolaou</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@KostasVaxevanis</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@SiaKossioni</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@ArisPortosalte</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@dimoikonomou</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@cantonopoulou</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@spiroxaritatos</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@kzoulas</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@mdenaxa</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary and to interaction with audiences, journalists’ tweets present textual flexibility that balances between formal and informal expressions and that reflects their personality and social media personas.

(d) Use of Twitter’s Conversational Markers

News media organisations (regardless of the category they belong to) present a minimal use of Twitter’s conversational markers (retweets, replies) and hashtags. Exception to this are the accounts of one legacy medium’s account (@skaigr) and of the public broadcaster’s account (@ERTsocial) that use hashtags in their tweets. The account @skaigr uses hashtags to highlight specific tweets so to enhance the searchability of their tweets. The accounts of @ERTsocial and to a lesser extent the account of @protagongr use hashtags more in a self-referential way (e.g., by adding their account name also in the form of a hashtag). Similar is the case in relation to the use of mentions: quantitatively, news media accounts use this marker minimally. Here again, @skaigr, @ERTsocial and @protagongr use this marker not as means to interact with audiences, but rather either to highlight the name of the author of an article or to engage with a politician.

Journalists’ use of the conversational markers differentiates quantitatively (on the extent of their use), but not qualitatively (on the ways these markers are used). For example, journalists mainly use the retweet
function to disseminate their work. However, they are also sharing their colleagues work and occasionally, as, for example, in @NikosChatzinikolaou case, retweets include also other users’ tweets (usually tweets that mention the journalist already). Hashtags are used mostly by @KostasVaxevanis and @SpirosXaritatos to highlight the medium they work for. In respect to mentions, most journalists engage minimally or do not engage in conversations with other users on Twitter. Exceptions are the accounts of @NikosChatzinikolaou, @KostasVaxevanis, and @ArisPortosalte that use mentions to respond to questions, to greet some users, or to engage in discussion some official or governmental source.

Whilst the case study primarily reveals how news journalists in Greece use Twitter, it also sheds light on how news audiences in Greece use Twitter to access the news, by examining news media and journalists’ “passive” and “active” audiences on Twitter. The term “passive audience” refers to news media and journalists’ number of followers, whereas the term “active audience” refers to the number of retweets their tweets receive (Engesser & Humprecht, 2015). Even though retweets do not necessary imply endorsement of a tweet’s content, it contributes to its wider dissemination and occasionally, it adds a new interpretative approach to a tweet. Or as Hermida (2016b, p. 411) notes, retweets are used “to add another layer of meaning to the news. Audiences routinely choose to select, comment on, and rebroadcast specific tweets, reframing or reinterpreting a message”.

By examining this aspect in relation to news media accounts, we observe a disproportion between their active and passive audience: while news media organisations have a lot of followers on Twitter, they receive very few retweets on average (Fig. 4.4). The same point applies to news journalists, as shown by the juxtaposition of their active and passive audiences (Table 4.4, Fig. 4.5).

CONCLUSION: ADDING TO THE PICTURE

This chapter sought to understand how Greek news journalists and news media use Twitter as part of their journalistic practices and subsequently how audiences respond to this. In doing so this chapter sought to provide an extra layer to the Reuters Institute Digital News Reports’ account of the impact of social media on Greek news journalism. A layer which consists of an empirical account of how Greek news journalists and news media organisations actually use Twitter, how they engage with the
Fig. 4.4 Average number of retweets (news media organisations) (Dagoula, 2019, p. 79)

Table 4.4 Juxtaposition of journalists’ passive and active audience (Dagoula, 2019, p. 80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of followers (passive audience)</th>
<th>Average number of retweets (active audience)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>@tsapanidou</td>
<td>16,600</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@NikosChatzinikolaou</td>
<td>34,100</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@KostasVaxevanis</td>
<td>2312</td>
<td>29.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@SiaKossioni</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@ArisPortosalte</td>
<td>8580</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@dimoikonomu</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@cantonopoulou</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@spirosxaritatos</td>
<td>1673</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@kzoulas</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>129.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@mdenaxa</td>
<td>3706</td>
<td>32.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 4.5 Visual representation of the juxtaposition of journalists’ passive and active audience. Blue indicates the number of followers (passive audience) and orange indicates the average number of retweets an account receives (Dagoula, 2019, p. 81)

platform for the purposes of providing the news, and how they relate to audiences and audiences to them through passive and active accounts and through the use of conversational markers.

The findings suggest that Greek news media and news journalists use Twitter in a minimal and mostly unskilful way which has the effect of limiting audience participation and involvement. This is initially depicted in the “surface engagement” with the platform that consists of the presentation of their biographical note, their “following” practices, and their activity on the platform. It is also demonstrated through the formulation of their tweets and their use of conversational markers and hashtags. In the case of news journalists, we encounter variations that show signs of more skilful engagement—for example, in cases of journalists that engage in conversation with audiences or use Twitter to provide information in a coherent and structured way (see, e.g., @mdenaxa). Even so, these are mostly exceptions. However, when it comes to news media accounts, the findings reveal homogeneity: regardless of the category they belong to (legacy media or net-native media), news media use Twitter in exactly the same way to the point that it is difficult to allocate content to a specific account. As such, news media miss the opportunity to use Twitter as an additional channel to promote their unique identity.
Moreover, this use does not encourage audiences to engage with news media and journalists on Twitter. For example, all these findings of the differences between active and passive audiences suggest that even though audiences are present on Twitter and seek to follow media organisations and journalists (via the “following” function), this practice does not necessarily translate into engagement with news media and journalists’ tweets (e.g., via the “retweet” function). Therefore, a potential reason for this limited engagement could be traced not only to the qualitative use of the Twitter by media organisations but also to the degree that every news media or journalist account encourages users to engage with their Twitter account or in dialogue with them.

Overall, the findings from Digital News Reports show that audiences interested in the news resort to social media for news. What this chapter’s case study of Greek news journalists and news media shows is that meeting the high demand for news within social media platforms is not being maximised. Quite simply, Greek news journalists and news media use Twitter in a very basic and limited way. The potential for audience involvement is by and large not being realised, and with that the possibility of a more discursive and informed public sphere is also not being realised. This is not to suggest that the relationship between social media and the public sphere is guaranteed to be benign, far from it, but it is replete with real possibilities for a more knowledgeable public sphere.

REFERENCES


