

Social Media and Newsroom Production Decisions

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Abstract :

Social media affects not only the way we consume news, but also the way news is produced, including by traditional media outlets. In this paper, we study the propagation of information on social media and mainstream media, and investigate whether news editors are influenced in their editorial decisions by stories popularity on social media. To do so, we build a novel dataset including a representative sample of all tweets produced in French between July 2018 and July 2019 (1.8 billion tweets, around 70% of all tweets in French during the period) and the content published online by about 200 mainstream media during the same time period, and develop novel algorithms to identify and link events on social and mainstream media. To isolate the causal impact of popularity, we rely on the structure of the Twitter network and propose a new instrument based on the interaction between measures of user centrality and news pressure at the time of the event. We show that story popularity has a positive effect on media coverage, and that this effect varies depending on media outlets' characteristics. These findings shed a new light on our understanding of how editors decide on the coverage for stories.