

# Determinants of Dependence on Social Media for Accessing News A Study on a Sample of Journalists in the Newsroom

**Faycal Farhi**

Communication And Media College, Al Ain University, Uae

**Salami Saidani**

Media And Communication Department, Mohamed Boudiaf University Of M'sila, Algeria

**Riadh Jeljeli**

Communication And Media College, Al Ain University, Uae

## ABSTRACT

As a result of the great advances in the field of media and communication, the development of the Internet and the emergence of social media as a communication and media actor in public life, there has been an urgent need to understand the reciprocal relationship between the elements of the media structure represented in social media, on the one hand, and – on the other hand – those media professionals who make the news. We aim to do this by studying the reliance determinants for accessing news and by identifying the extent of dependence on social networking sites compared with dependence on the electronic press, thereby deriving clear explanations of the reliance determinants.

**Keywords** Newsroom, Social Media, Determinants of media dependency, Dependence on the media.

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## Introduction

The need for individuals and societies to access information in different spheres of life, including political, economic, cultural spheres etc... has become necessary in order to keep up with current events in those areas and to take the necessary decisions.

This need is met by a great development in the different types of media, in terms of spread, diversity and technological development, in addition to the spread of digital and information technology. As a result of this urgent need, and the rapid developments in technology, information has become a source of power and distinction for those who own it and for those who have access to it (Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M, 2012).

There is no doubt that the revolution in the telecommunications field over the past few decades has significantly strengthened this relationship and has enabled means of communication to reach out to individuals and groups to influence their behavior and to seek to form their attitudes on various public issues (Mary

Beth Oliver, Arthur A. Raney & Jennings Bryant, 2019).

As a result of these great developments in the field of media and communication, the development of the internet and the emergence of social networks as a communication and media actor in public life, there has been an urgent need to understand the reciprocal relationship between those elements of the media structure represented on social-media sites and those who make the news from media professionals, By focusing on studying the determinants in the accreditation process to obtain news (Iryna Pentina & Monideepa Tarafdar, 2014 ).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Media Dependency Theory

The interest in this theory has increased in the last two decades due to the tremendous technical development and the knowledge revolution that we are going through. Denis McQuail points out that the existence of the internet and its increasing impact, with its huge information capabilities and its multiple uses, has brought about development in the media environment and in the traditional

relations between the individual and the media system. One of the main goals of the Media Dependency Theory is to reveal the reasons why the media sometimes have strong and direct effects, while having indirect and somewhat weak influence at other times (McQuoid, Denis Mc Quil's, 2010)

It can be stated that Media Dependency Theory is an (environmental theory) which views society as an organic structure. It examines how parts of social systems, small and large, are related to each other and then tries to explain the behavior of those parts with regard to these relationships (Jody Louise Davis & Jeffrey David Green, 2009).

The media system is supposed to be an important part of the social fabric of modern society and this system is related to individuals, groups, organizations and other social systems. (Melvin Defleur, 2017)

The main relationship that governs them is the dependence relationship between the media, the social system and the public. These relationships may be with all media systems or with one of them, such as newspapers, radio, television or internet, (Mohamed AbdelHamid, 2010).

The reasons for choosing this theory to study the determinants of dependence on social media are as follows:

- This study seeks to reveal the extent of media dependence on social media for the consumption of news, consistent with the main goal of the theory that seeks to explain: "Why does the media sometimes have strong and direct effects on cognitive aspects, yet have a weak influence at other times?" (Denis McQuail, 2020).

Even if the theory does not refer directly to reliance on social media as a medium of communication, it implicitly indicates every medium that provides information and constitutes a source of news.

- The theory assumes that the public will increasingly rely on the media to obtain information and news in order to form its knowledge and to know the contents of trends

relating to what is happening in society (Shyam Sundar.S, 2015). This intersects directly with an important part of the study in terms of identifying the various media professionals' determinants of their dependence on social media to access information and news.

### **Implications Of Media Dependency**

A number of implications result from the individuals' dependency on media:

- Cognitive Effects: these include developing attitudes, prioritization, breadth of beliefs, values (Brent D. Ruben., Leah A. Lievrouw, 2017).
- Emotional effects: These can be concretized particularly through the messages that individuals exchange on websites or through contacting others, as these messages support the feelings of anxiety and fear that can appear during periods of tension and crisis (Mohamed Abdel Hamid, 2010).
- Behavioral effects: these are the outcome of cognitive and emotional influences and they contribute to confirming or avoiding roles and to effectiveness or ineffectiveness as a result of shaping the trends that knowledge and emotions have contributed to their development (Sanne, P.N.C. & Wiese. M, 2018).
- The model clarifies the relationship between public opinion and the media and shows that the public influences the media and the social system as a whole (Melvin Defleur, 2007).
- One of the benefits of the model is that we can use the same basic concepts that apply to more specific relationships between individuals and the mass media, (Mohamed Abd El Waheb, 2002).
- The main assumption of this model is that dependence on the media ultimately leads to emotional, cognitive and behavioral effects, (Melvin Defleur & Sandra Ball Rokeach, 2018).

- This theory is considered one of the best and most comprehensive and influential theories in dealing with the social system (Wael Salah Najib, 2003).
- It is a comprehensive and integrated theory because it combines many visions and perspectives, including visions drawn from psychology and sociology and visions derived from the theory of uses, fulfilments and media influences, (Wajdi Helmi Abdeldhahir, 2005).
- The model is open and includes a number of influences and capabilities. The model attempted to avoid models of media influence, models of direct impact and models of unlimited influence on the audience. (Mohamed Sadik Ismail, 2010).

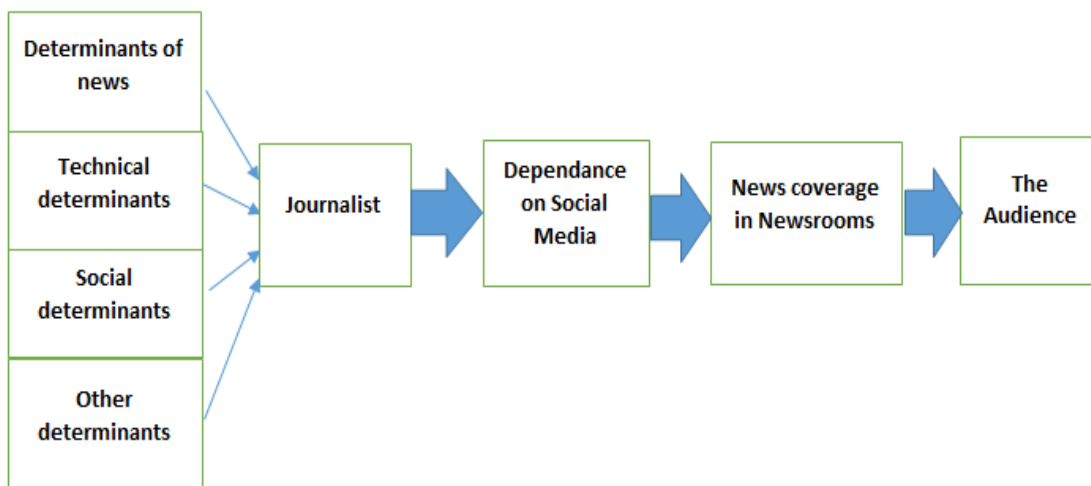
**The Limits Of Employing The Theory In The Current Study**

The findings of the theory have been adopted to formulate the theoretical framework of our study and build upon it. Whereas the theory of interdependence is an environmental theory that considers society as an organic structure, it examines how parts of small and large social

systems are related to each other and explains the behavior of the parts in terms of these relations, including the media system which is an important part of the social fabric, related to other social systems through interdependence, (Deuze. M, 2003). We started from this approach in an attempt to explain the dependence relationship between two small social systems, the media content maker and the media outlet, which is considered one of the sources on which the media professional depends to obtain information, especially in light of the tremendous developments that this medium has undergone. We also attempt to explain the determinants of this dependence and to identify which has the greater effect on the degree of dependence. (Chung. D, 2005).

**RESEARCH FRAMEWORKE**

This illustrative form provides a clear explanation of the theoretical framework of the study, as it clarifies the form of the relationship between the various determinants that affect the existing contact in the newsroom, in its dependence on news and no other social media sites, which later reflects on the type and nature of news coverage and therefore of the article The news that the audience consumes.



**METHODOLOGY**

We would like to identify, through this scientific paper, the determinants of reliance on social media to access news. Are they mainly news-related determinants and what relates to them in terms of news reliability, news reporting, etc? Or are they technology-related and what relates to them in terms of form and content? Or are there any other

determinants that have not been addressed yet, through an empirical study of a sample of social-network users, taken from media professionals in various media?

The current study attaches great importance to identifying the extent of reliance on social media compared with dependence on the electronic press, thereby deriving clear explanations in terms of

dependence determinants. While accessing news on cyberspace, media professionals often differentiate between electronic newspapers, which are more professional and whose content is made by journalists, and social-media websites whose content is fed by internet users and by ordinary citizens (Poell Thomas & José van Dijck, 2014).

From this standpoint, the study tries to answer the following main question: What are the determinants of journalists' dependence on social media to obtain news?

### Study Questions

- What are the reasons that make journalists in newsrooms adopt social media as news sources?
- What kind of websites prefer journalists in newsrooms for getting news?
- Are the determinants of reliance on social media to access news related mainly to news consumption, or to technical reasons? Or are there any other determinants?
- To what extent do journalists in newsrooms rely on social media compared to their reliance on online journalism?

### The Importance Of The Study

There is a lack of readily available data on the determinants of exposure and reliance on social media, particularly in Arab studies, as most of the specialist studies in this field are limited to dealing mainly with the exposure patterns and the incentives of use. (Grensing-Pophal. L, 2010)

A problem has been raised concerning the effectiveness of traditional media versus new media in providing the public with important news on current events, and the extent to which the public relies on these (Anderson, C. W, 2011).

As a result of technological developments in cyberspace in general, and in social media in particular, and because of the emergence of new applications that have changed the form and content of these means and consequently the methods of interaction, causes, motives and determinants (Steen Steensen & Cozy Journalism,

2011), we need to keep abreast of these changes through research and studying.

### Study Objectives

The study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the reasons for media professionals' dependence on social media.
- To monitor media professionals' reliance on social media and to identify areas for increasing this.
- To monitor and analyze the determinants of dependence on social media and to try to reveal the contexts affecting these.

### Study Community And Sample

The study community consists of media practitioners in the available media (written, audio-visual, traditional and electronic). The condition of working in a well-known media establishment with an experience of not less than two years was respected.

The sample of this study is a natural random sample of 200 individual media professionals of both sexes, whose responsibilities and functions range from journalist, to head of department and editor.

### Information-Collection Tools

An electronic questionnaire was distributed through Google Drive and divided into the following chapters:

- Reasons why media professionals resort to social media for news consumption.
- Determinants of dependence on social media to access news, where a group of news-related determinants were identified, as well as technical determinants and other various determinants.
- The dependence of media professionals on social media versus their dependence on electronic newspapers.
- Media professionals' expectations for the future of news content on social media.
- An actual test of the questionnaire was also conducted by applying it to a sample of 15%,

equivalent to 30 media professionals, to ensure the clarity and understandability of the questions and the questionnaire was reformulated into its final form according to the observations made by the respondents (Anders Hansen & David Machin, 2018).

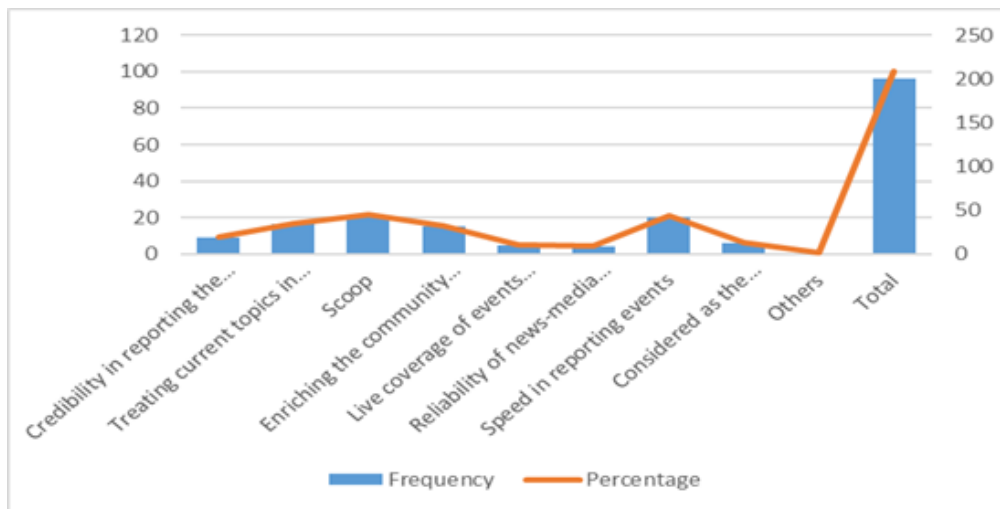
The questionnaire was re-applied to the same sample of respondents, approximately two weeks

after the first application of the questionnaire. The reliability ratio between the two applications was calculated and reached 0.92, a high percentage, indicating the applicability of the questionnaire (Daniel Riffe.,Stephen Lacy.,Frederick G.Fico, 2005).

**Final Study Results**

**Table 1.** Reasons for media professionals’ dependence on social media as a source of news

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage	$\chi^2$	Significance
Credibility in reporting the news	19	9.5	56.640	Significant at the significance level (0.01)
Treating current topics in society without restrictions	34	17.0		
Scoop	43	21.5		
Enriching the community with global ideas	31	15.5		
Live coverage of events from their location	10	5.0		
Reliability of news-media content	8	4.5		
Speed in reporting events	42	21.0		
Considered as the mouthpiece of society	12	6.0		
Others	1	5.0		
Total	200	100.0		



**Figure 1.** Reasons for the dependence of media professionals on social networking sites

The above table shows respectively the reasons behind the dependence of Algerian media professionals on social networks as news sources:

“Scoop” is ranked first (21.5%), followed immediately by “Speed in reporting events” (21%), then by “Treating current topics in society without restrictions” (17%), “Enriching the community with global ideas” (15.5%), “Honesty”

(9.5%), “Considered as the mouthpiece of society” (6%), “Live coverage of events from their location” (5%), «Reliability of news-media content” (4.5%) and finally “Others” (5%).

These results clarify that the main reasons for media practitioners’ dependence on social media are primarily related to the speed of reporting events, regardless of their credibility or reliability.

Thus they highlight the media professionals’ desire to obtain information and to compete to get the scoop.

**The previous results can be explained by the following scientific elements:**

The scoop is one of the main reasons why media professionals resort to social media. Thus it becomes clear that the credibility of news-media content is a paramount priority for media professionals as a basis for their increased exposure to social media.

The speed of social media in reporting news plays an important role in influencing the media professionals’ decision to resort to social media and depend on them as a source of news.

Reasons related to obtaining information through covering events locally and globally from their location, and getting the scoop, represent one of the media professionals’ motives for dependence on social media.

Media practitioners consider that the speed of social media in reporting news is one of the factors affecting their decision to resort to such media.

**Table 2.** Media professionals’ awareness of the determinants of dependence on social media to access news.

Determinants	1		2		3		4		5		D	$\chi^2$
	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%	FREQ	%		
Opinion is not separated from information and facts in social-media news content.	17	8.5	81	40.5	65	32.5	37	18.5	0	0	2.6	48.8
I believe in what is published on social media because it is documented with pictures.	20	10.0	59	29.5	65	32.5	46	23.0	10	5.0	2.8	58.05
News coverage is bigger and faster than news on social media.	36	18.0	77	38.5	37	18.5	50	25.0	0	0	2.5	21.88
News-media content on social media is concerned only with scoops.	8	4.0	28	14.0	84	42.0	80	40.0	0	0	3.1	86.08
The news reported by non-media professionals is often untrue.	4	2.0	35	17.5	79	39.5	74	37.0	8	4.0	3.2	125.55
News-media content on social media does not care about presenting views in a balanced manner.	12	6.0	48	24.0	72	36.0	64	32.0	4	2.0	3.0	93.6

The absence of sources, dates, names, numbers and statistics decreases my confidence in some of the news published on social media.	22	11.0	32	16.0	61	30.5	80	40.0	5	2.5	3.0	91.35
The news published on social-media websites is often true because I trust the users of these websites.	16	8.0	51	25.5	69	34.5	56	28.0	8	4.0	2.9	70.45
News content on social media is usually characterized by addressing issues that directly affect the interests and concerns of society.	30	15.0	123	61.5	33	16.5	14	7.0	0	0	2.1	146.28
News content on social media is weak as it does not care about social details.	36	18.0	96	48.0	42	21.0	26	13.0	0	0	2.2	59.04
Through what is published on social media, I can be aware of all elements of societal issues.	8	4.0	79	39.5	72	36.0	37	18.5	4	2.0	2.7	121.85
The public makes the content of social media and breaks the news from its reality, which makes it closer to the events.	6	3.0	48	24.0	99	49.5	41	20.5	6	3.0	2.9	146.45
The news published on social media reflects the	2	1.0	56	28.0	73	36.5	57	28.5	12	6.0	3.1	96.55

interests of society in a large way.												
Social media do not provide interpretation and analysis of social problems; they only provide the news and leave the analysis to the recipient.	15	7.5	58	29.0	47	23.5	66	33.0	14	7.0	3.0	58.75
Rapid technical developments in social media makes them more accessible.	31	15.5	90	45.0	61	30.5	16	8.0	2	1.0	2.3	126.05
Digital technology has made it easy to obtain information on social media.	46	23.0	84	42.0	43	21.5	27	13.5	0	0	2.2	35
The presence of social media on different technological platforms allows for easy follow-up on various devices.	14	7.0	91	45.5	69	34.5	24	12.0	2	1.0	2.5	145.45
Various applications and programs allow quick and easy access to social.M	32	16.0	100	50.0	44	22.0	24	12.0	0	0	2.3	70.72
Some applications and sites allow you to verify the authenticity of the news, videos and pictures posted on social media.	47	23.5	73	36.5	43	21.5	27	13.5	10	5.0	2.4	55.4
The news published on social media can be tracked technically and its source can be reached.	2	1.0	15	7.5	71	35.5	88	44.0	24	12	3.5	139.75

Note: Significance Level = 0.05



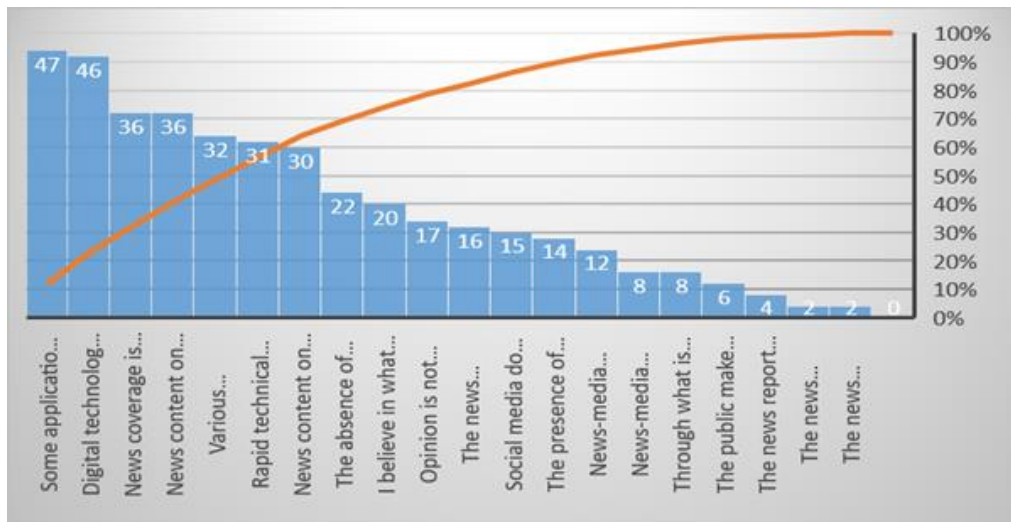


Figure 2. Determinants of media professionals' accreditation on social networking sites

Given the data provided in the table above, we find that:

The study sample places the determinant “opinion is not separated from information and facts in social-media news content” as a primary determinant for relying on social media to access news from among the first eight determinants stated in the table, which are classified as news-related determinants with a figure of 40.5%.

This explains the desire of the respondents to obtain information and facts related to the opinion so that it becomes easier for them to explain the event and to link it to other contexts. The media professional does not make an effort to give explanations.

The study sample agrees that the determinant “News content on social media is usually characterized by addressing issues that directly affect the interests and concerns of society” comes within the most important determinants in ranking social determinants ordered in the table from 9 to 14, with a figure of 61.5%, which may explain the desire of media professionals to address and deal

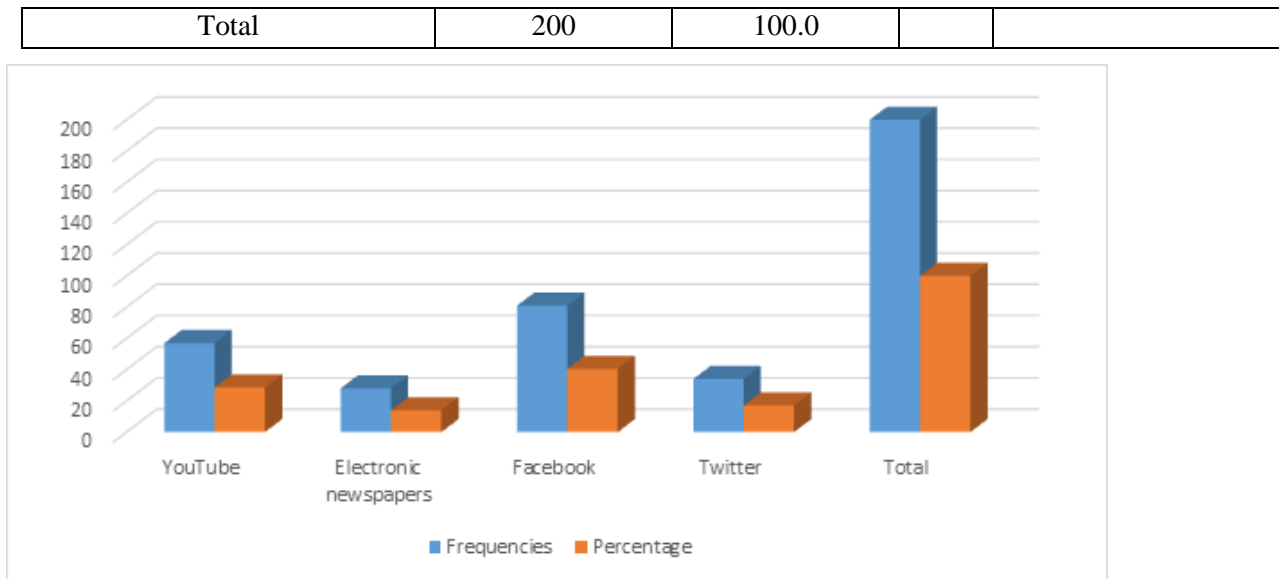
with topics that are closely related to the problems and concerns of the society in which they live.

A total of 50% of respondents agree that “Various applications and programs allow quick and easy access to social media”. This determinant comes first in terms of frequencies of the technical determinants ordered in the table above from 15 to 20. This indicates that the media professionals in this study do not find it difficult to deal with technology and this is what encourages them to rely more and more on social media.

Through conducting a comparison between the social and technical determinants of the news, the social determinant has the highest rate (61.5%), which clearly shows that this is a priority for media practitioners, driving them to rely more on social-networking sites. This can be explained by the fact that media professionals prefer to obtain information from unofficial sources that are close to social reality, rather than from traditional media or from official sources. The social dimension and the interest of social-networking sites in transferring and discussing citizens’ daily problems without supervision gives it priority in this field.

Table 3. The social-networking sites on which media professionals depend to access news in comparison with electronic newspapers.

SM/EN	Frequencies	Percentage	$\chi^2$	Significance
YouTube	57	28.5	35	Significant at the significance level (0.01)
Electronic newspapers	28	14.0		
Facebook	81	40.5		
Twitter	34	17.0		



**Figure 3.** Determinants on social media and electronic newspapers

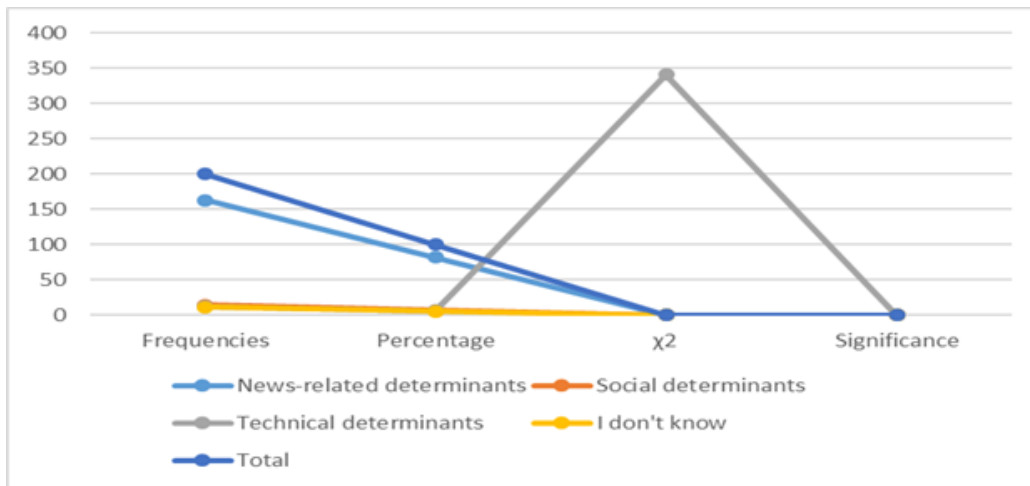
The table above shows that the websites on which the media professionals depend on for their news are, respectively, as follows: Facebook ranks first with 40.5%, followed by YouTube with 28.5%, Twitter with 17% and finally electronic newspapers with 14%. This order confirms the following facts:

Media professionals prefer social-media sites to electronic newspapers and they also prefer those websites that support their personal and social needs in terms of communicating with friends, keeping up with events, renewing and strengthening relationships with friends and expressing free opinion. This indicates the

importance of Facebook as a means of communication among media professionals as it ranks first, far ahead of other websites. This may actually intersect with, and confirm, the results that we reached in the second table on the determinants of media professionals' dependence on social media, confirming the primacy of social determinants over news or technical-related ones. It is clearly proven that media professionals prefer social-networking sites because they provide news related to social fact, even though they often represent unofficial sources and tend not to rely on electronic newspapers which are the products of published-media organizations.

**Table 3.** Media professionals' expectations for the future of news content on social media

Expectations	Frequencies	Percentage	$\chi^2$	Significance
News-related determinants	163	81.5	340.6	Significant at the significance level (0.01)
Social determinants	14	7.0		
Technical determinants	12	6.0		
I don't know	11	5.5		
Total	200	100.0		



**Figure 4.** Determinants most influencing dependence

The indicators in the table above confirm the precedence of news-related determinants in the future in terms of media professionals’ dependence on social-networking sites and this is according to the expectations of the study sample which ranks this determinant first with 81.5%. In comparison with the results of the second table, which state that social determinants emerge as a priority for media practitioners in their dependence on social-networking sites, it is proven that news-related determinants may rank first in the future despite the social determinants currently influencing media professionals’ dependence. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, in the future, social-networking sites will become the leading media source of information in the presence of expectations that limit the role of other means, including electronic newspapers. Consequently, the social determinants will be replaced by news-related ones.

**CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the foregoing, we have reached very important conclusions on the subject, as follows:

The main reasons behind media professionals’ dependence on social media are primarily related to the speed of reporting news, regardless of their credibility and reliability, which highlights the media professionals’ desire to compete in getting the latest news.

The social determinant is a priority for media practitioners, which drives them to rely more on

social-networking sites. This can be explained by the fact that media professionals prefer to obtain information from unofficial sources that are close to social reality, rather than from traditional media or official sources. The social dimension and the interest of social-networking sites in transferring and discussing citizens’ daily problems without supervision gives it priority in this field.

Media professionals prefer social-media sites to electronic newspapers and they also prefer those websites that support their personal and social needs in terms of communicating with friends, keeping up with events, renewing and strengthening relationships with friends and expressing free opinion. This indicates the importance of Facebook as a means of communication among media professionals. This may actually intersect with, and confirm, the results that we have reached in the second table on the determinants of media professionals’ dependence on social media, which confirmed the primacy of social determinants over technical or news-related ones. It is clearly proven that media professionals prefer social-networking sites as they provide news related to social facts, even though they often represent unofficial sources and tend not to rely on electronic newspapers which often represent media organizations.

Although the social determinants are currently affecting media professionals’ dependency on social media, this will not prevent news-related determinants being at the forefront in the future. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, in the future,

social-networking sites will become the leading media source of information in the presence of expectations that limit the role of other means, including electronic newspapers, and consequently the social determinant will be replaced by the news-related determinant.

From the previously mentioned partial results, the study concludes that the sample representing media professionals relies mainly on social media to access news, which indicates the power of these sites in reporting news in a way that fulfills the media practitioner's desire in the newsroom and satisfies his need for a scoop. This finding intersects with the results that confirm the predominance of social determinants. Media professionals are mainly interested in the social dimension of news consumed from social-networking sites that are closely related to social reality. These sites also have the ability to transmit this reality without any editorial background, often at the moment it occurs, a mission that traditional media, or even electronic newspapers, cannot fulfill. However, the results show that news-related determinants will be among the media professionals' top determinants in their attempts to access news in the future.

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