

STATE OF THE ART RESEARCH ON CONVERGENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH AGENDAS AND ROADMAPS

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This report by COMPACT project aims at enhancing awareness about the latest scientific discoveries - state of the art research on social media and convergence - among key stakeholders in the context of social media and convergence. For this purpose, we have gone through over 1,200 mostly academic articles dealing with convergence and social media, published in more than 20 EU and non-EU countries between 2013 and 2017 and in some cases beyond.

Main research findings

The most dominant issue that researchers encountered seems to be conflict and integration/merger of legacy and new media functions. The second most frequently tackled relationship is between private and public roles and issues. This latter issue was reflected in studies on personal data, protection of minors, libel and hate-related issues. **Producer-consumer relationship is the third most often researched issue.**

Individuals and technology companies have become much more important curators of information and news than they were before. However, the legacy media – mostly audio-visual media and media websites – have a significant role to play. In fact, the news that is most read, shared, and discussed in social media is produced by professional news organisations. In particular, the profession of journalist is very much needed for the society.

Especially in North-Central Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland), the shift to convergence culture was impeded by a long and strong tradition of print journalism. Spanish and Portuguese news managers demonstrate more diverse strategic approaches to adapting to the possibilities of new media environments. They implemented new editorial routines with more effort and made use of new formats and trans-media storytelling.

Convergence, implemented primarily as a cost effective strategy, does not promote better journalism. Facebook, in particular, seems to push news media organisations to replace their 'editorial logic' by an 'algorithmic logic' for the presentation of news. On the one hand, the immediacy of Twitter enhances journalists' awareness and anticipation capabilities, as well as enables to convert on-site capital into discursive authority in the public sphere. On the other hand, the paralysis, which seizes the press in times when important decisions are impending, gets intensified through Twitter and can lead to inconsistencies and misperceptions in media reporting.

Impact on life satisfaction

In general, rather than enhancing life satisfaction, social media seem to foster materialism and dissatisfaction with life in general.

Impact on business

Discussions on relationships between producers and consumers in business suggest that **social media seemed to play relatively marginal role in business with the exception of Facebook (at least until recently) and Google.com.** Allegedly, it is the personality of the users that determines the willingness to receive marketing communication messages. Apparently, **a company's ability to maintain trust becomes a key differentiator.**

Two general contradicting trends appear; **going local and going global.** On the one hand, FDI and online networking converge into international corporations. On the other hand, some companies pursue a local strategy in corporate social media campaigns.

Impact on working life

The tentative summary of results of research on convergence between playing and labour/professional activities advocates that **a successful engagement of social media as a component of a productive convergence in organisations can be facilitated if employees benefit from the provided content as well as process.**

Both working comfort and affectivity of knowledge workers suffer from negative sides of convergent social media use, such as escalating engagement, pervasive interruptions or social overload. Impact on education

As digital media and social networks are integral part of life for vast majority of students and pupils, **integrating these technologies as tools into learning processes in schools is a big topic,** EU-wide and worldwide, researched by many scholars. Most of them perceive this path as inevitable, but with many challenges.

Impact on regulatory practice

Personal data protection findings suggest that ICTs have the tendency to launch their own practices rather than to "follow" the regulatory (pre) choices of the legislator. Yet technical solutions cannot substitute the law.

Privacy protection of children

The parents do not often express concern regarding privacy of their children and they usually use social media to underline their role as mother. While there are laws about individual rights, they are not usually enforced by mothers themselves in the case of child photos on social media.

Fake news

A complex of issues targeting hate speech, disinformation, libel and terrorism advocates that the problem with fake news is that **there is occasional but strong interaction on selected false/fake items disseminated via Facebook.**

Focus of research

On the one hand, the researchers in our sample by and large **missed to give due consideration to the trends in the social media use**. On the other hand, **there is a slight tilt towards applied research** used by researchers in our sample which suggests practical focus of majority of research.

YouTube, usually the second most popular social media, was heavily under-researched as compared to the research on Facebook. Moreover, **some arguably important pairs of convergence phenomena have been ignored in majority of cases of specific social media**. **Interpersonal human relations as well as ICT** seem to be two major sectors identified within research on social media and convergence.

Trends in adaptation of social networks

In some unique cases (the case of Slovakia), an older news social network managed to survive while adapting to a new challenge by copying features from the new challenging social media.

In other cases, the success of social media networking sites was determined by business decisions (a pilot investment) combined with national habits in communication or acquisition of a social media application and its amalgamation with a major social

media platform, (a development which did not suit many users), and supported by marketing campaigns (the cases of Greece and of Croatia).

Furthermore, there are **trends among young people that reflect changing usage preferences** as indicated in UK and Ireland for Snapchat and Instagram social media. In contrast, trends among older people (or general higher usage of the Internet) seem to explain high popularity of Google+ in Malta. Regulatory aspects

About **two thirds of research articles on social media and convergence do not take care of any regulatory issues**. Marginally, we have identified specific regulatory issues such as banking sector secrets, revision of AVMSD, right to free assembly, cyber surveillance at workplace, pre-employment background checks on social networking sites, cyber-bullying, emergency communication, violence on social networks and digital policy.

Compiled by SCM (2019)

Dr. Andrej Školkay

This work has been supported by the European Union H2020 CSA Project COMPACT: *From research to policy through raising awareness of the state of the art on social media and convergence*, Project Number 762128, Grant Agreement 762128.

Table 1: The Most Popular Social Media Used for Any Purpose in Selected EU Countries in 2017 (in %)

Any purpose	Facebook	YouTube	Facebook Messenger	WhatsApp	Google Plus	Twitter	Instagram	Viber	Snapchat	Pinterest	Telegram	LinkedIn	Pokec.sk
Austria	63	66	30	67		12	20						
Belgium	65	54	42	34		11	9						
Czech Republic	77	65	47	24		11	16						
Croatia	75	74	48	46				54			11		
Cyprus (alternative source)	97	2				2				4			
Estonia	n.a.												
Germany	52	52	25	60		13	16						
Greece	78	79	58			24	33	49					
Hungary	81	75	58		13	13	20						
Ireland	67	60	44	52		25	59 – alternative source		19 (89 alternative source)				
Italy	75	69	36	73		24	32						
Latvia	n.a.												
Lithuania	n.a.												
Malta (data from Misco)	87	46			50	12	24			9			
Poland	73	71	44	19	13	17							
Portugal	75	69	62	40			34					25	
Romania	83	75	52	52	17	17							
Slovakia	73	64	45		14		18						14
Spain	75	74		82	13	39	35						
United Kingdom	66	49	44	44		29			12				