

Tweeting the viewer – Use of Twitter in a talk show context

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Abstract

Twitter is currently one of the most popular outlets of so-called social media, Internet services that allow their users to communicate and share content in a variety of ways. As with the Internet itself, Twitter has been heralded to hold interesting possibilities within the context of journalism – potentially bringing journalists and their respective audiences closer to each other through supposedly common Twitter practices like @ messages and retweeting. This paper presents a large-scale empirical study on Twitter use in the journalistic context. The aim is to assess patterns of journalist-audience interaction on Twitter. Specifically, the paper outlines a structural analysis of Twitter use pertaining to the first season of the current events talk show *Höbimette*, which aired on Swedish public service television during the fall of 2011. Employing state-of-the-art approaches for data collection and analysis, the paper shows that while traditional patterns of journalist-reader relationships are most common, some users are employing the Twitter platform in somewhat unforeseen ways.

Introduction

While the claim that 'journalism has always been shaped by technology' (Pavlik, 2000, p. 229) holds validity, the character and speed of such technologically induced change is nevertheless a topic for debate. Indeed, results from scholarly efforts looking into these matters have been varied. While there definitely are merits to the suggestion that many journalists and media practitioners approach the concept of online audience interactions rather cautiously (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; Chung, 2007; Larsson, 2012a; Larsson, 2012b; Robinson, 2011; Schultz, 2000; Thurman, 2008), scholars have also uncovered more innovative approaches to the possibilities of the Internet on behalf of journalists and audiences (e.g. Bruns, 2010; Deuze, 2006). The introduction of a "web 2.0" dictum (O'Reilly, 2005) has led to an influx of hopes and fears regarding the potential of social media like blogs, Facebook or Twitter for journalist-audience interaction.

The aim of this paper is to assess patterns of journalist-audience interaction on Twitter. What types of relationships, as understood in terms pertaining to Twitter use, emerge as both groups employ the service? The paper places its focus on the Twitter activity related to Swedish talk show *Häbinette*, which premiered on public service television during the fall of 2011. Twitter messages (tweets) relevant for the show were collected throughout the entire season, allowing for a comprehensive structural analysis of the online communicative patterns that took place between staffers and audience members. In total, 2314 messages were collected and analyzed. As such, the study provides important empirical insights into how journalists and audiences approach a new means of communication, focusing on the usage patterns of high-end users of the service at hand.

As pointed out by Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009, p. 577) studies on online news professionals have largely been performed in the US context. By providing data from Sweden, a

country boasting high figures regarding Internet use and news consumption (e.g. Carlsson & Facht, 2010; Facht & Hellingwerf, 2011), the present study assesses Twitter and its uses in the journalistic context (as suggested by Ahmad, 2010, p. 147), making a contribution to the growing number of studies on this and similar topics (e.g. Larrondo Ureta, 2011; Larsson, 2012a; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2011; Lin & Peña, 2011; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010; Rebillard & Touboul, 2010). By providing empirical data on journalist-audience interactions, the study is available to the 'hyperbole about the potential of Twitter' in the journalistic context (Hermida, 2010b, p. 303).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The following section presents a review of recent literature on journalist-audience interaction, focusing on the Twitter platform and its perceived consequences for said relationship. The third section discusses details pertaining to the case at hand - the *Hïibinette* talk show. The fourth section presents the rationales employed for data collection and analysis. Subsequently, the fifth section presents the results of the study. The sixth and final section provides a discussion of the findings and their limitations, while also suggesting some areas of future research.

Literature review

Journalists and audiences online

While research on online journalism has sometimes focused on the perceived quality of journalistic work routines and output (e.g. Garrison, 2011), the online relationship between journalists and their respective audiences has likewise been subject for scholarly inquiry for over a decade. As for the audience members, a recent assessment of research looking into consumption of news suggested that 'online news consumers have not behaved radically differently from traditional media audiences' (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010, p. 1086). Likewise, research has

suggested that media practitioners have been rather slow and sometimes cautious on the uptake of the features made available on the Internet (e.g. Domingo, 2008; Domingo, et al., 2008; Singer, 2010; Singer & Ashman, 2009; Thurman, 2008).

In one early study, Newhagen and Cordes (1995) content analyzed a sample of 650 e-mails sent to *NBC's Nightly News* as responses to an invitation from the show. Focusing on the style of the messages, they were classified according to a dichotomous heuristic. Macro-scopic messages were akin to "letters to the editor" and took a more formal tone, whereas micro-scopic messages were characterized by their authors' high perception of interactivity. Somewhat later, Singer (1997) interviewed US newspaper journalists and editors regarding their transfer to online environments for news dissemination, finding that most of her respondents viewed the gatekeeping role as consisting less of selecting, and more of a recommending content - 'bolstering the value of what they disseminate so that it rises to the crest of the information tidal wave' (Singer, 1997, p. 72). However, the sheer size of such a metaphorical wave, including audience generated content, has proven difficult for journalists to handle. As the same author, over a decade later, puts it: 'the number and nature of [audience] contributions, coupled with what is universally seen as inadequate newsroom resources to handle them, is creating considerable anxiety' (Singer, 2010, p. 138). Such anxiety could be expected to lead to a minimum of such features being employed by journalists. Indeed, in a study on the uses of interactive features by online newspapers in Sweden, Larsson (2012a) concluded that a little more than a third of the features identified in his study were employed by the average Swedish newspaper.

Analogous patterns of "traditional" journalistic practices has been suggested by several scholars (e.g. Chung, 2007; Gillmor, 2004; Vobic, 2011), indicating that the potential of the Internet for increased interaction between audiences and journalists have not been acted upon by the latter part mentioned here. While early studies mostly identified *shovelware*, suggesting a minimum of

adaptation to the new medium at the hands of journalists (e.g. Riley, 1998), more recent scholarly efforts have suggested that these cautious tendencies might be subject to incremental change (e.g. Engebretsen, 2006; Frisk, 2008; Karlsson, 2011), perhaps a result of the influx of social media services like the one under scrutiny here.

On the audience side of things, results are largely reminiscent of what has been discussed above. While notable exceptions are available (e.g. Bruns, 2010; Deuze, 2006), most research suggests a lack of interest in taking part in the journalistic context. For example, Hujanen and Pietikainen (2004) employed a mixed-methods approach in their study on young Finns and their perception and use of interactivity in the online news context. Finding rather low levels of such use, the authors suggested that this result might be due to the fact that respondents saw the news as “untouchable” - a completed commodity prepared by professionals, in limited need of modifications at the hands of the amateur audience (see also Keen, 2008). In Sweden, comparable results of mostly indifference at the hands of the audience were reported by Bergström (2008). Similarly, Larsson (2011) reported low levels of use of interactive features among online newspaper audiences – although certain groups of audience members tended to be more vigorous in taking part in the opportunities offered.

As such, while most previous researchers have concluded that interactivity appears to be ‘counterintuitive with the principles of traditional journalistic culture’ (Domingo, 2008, p. 698), recent developments appear to have yet again raised the hopes of the Internet’s capacity to transform the journalist-audience relationship. One such development is the launch of Twitter.

Twitter

Presumably exceeded in popularity only by Facebook, Twitter is often pointed to ‘as the world’s second most important social media platform’ (Bruns, 2011, p. 2). As a microblog, the service

allows for 'short comments usually delivered to a network of associates' (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009, p. 2170). Such messages can contain up to 140 characters, disseminated to a network of followers. In comparison with other, similar, social media services, the act of "following" is not necessarily reciprocal – it is possible to follow any number of users, without necessarily being followed back.

As with nearly all innovations in communication technology throughout history (e.g. Winston, 1998), Twitter use has been fashioned in novel ways, most likely unforeseen by the creators of the service. Employing the typology suggested by Kwak et al (2010), we can broadly distinguish between three different Twitter practices. First, a *singleton* is classified as an undirected message, where no specific recipient is suggested. Second, directed messages can be facilitated by using the @ character. Such @ *messages* indicate that they are intended or supposedly relevant for a specified user. Third, *Retweets* refer to the practice of redistributing a tweet previously sent by another user. Moreover, the presence of *hashtags* indicate thematic content in the tweet. By using the # sign in conjunction with thematic abbreviations (e.g. #hashtagexample), Twitter users can link their messages together to enable coherent, threaded thematic lists (Farhi, 2009, p. 29).

For scholars interested in Twitter, the presence of a specific hashtag suggests that certain tweets would be especially interesting for specific research purposes. For example, Larsson and Moe (2012) studied Twitter use during the 2010 Swedish parliamentary election, focusing on tweets tagged correspondingly. Similarly, Bruns and Burgess (2011) focused on the #ausvotes hashtag for their study of the 2010 Australian federal election. Indeed, Gaffney (2010, p. 2) has suggested that hashtags allows researchers to 'identify exact communication transmissions [...] of interest'.

Journalistic Twitter use

Moving beyond political uses of the service, another realm of research into Twitter practice deals with how journalists and audiences have appropriated it. Indeed, Twitter has enjoyed

considerable interest in media coverage (e.g. Arceneaux & Weiss, 2010), and a number of recent studies have focused on scrutinizing the uses of Twitter among media professionals.

To begin with, researchers have pointed to Twitter as an interesting tool for citizen journalists. (e.g. Murthy, 2011). Such citizen reporting has mostly been focused on current events or “newsflashes”, reporting the news *in medias res*. Notable examples of this practice include Twitter users covering terror attacks like the 2008 Mumbai bomb blasts or accidents like the 2009 crash of a US airways flight into the Hudson River.

Twitter use has also been studied within more traditional journalistic institutions. As a leeway between the aforementioned practices of citizen reporting and more traditional notions of what journalism entails, Hermida (2010a, 2010b) has suggested that Twitter use could be understood as supporting practices of *ambient journalism*. This indicates an implied shift of the relationship between journalists and audiences, given that Twitter is a ‘broad, asynchronous, lightweight and always-on’ system that enable ‘citizens to maintain a mental model of news and events around them’ (Hermida, 2010b, p. 297). For journalists, this would entail harnessing the somewhat volatile nature of the Twitter service to alert them regarding ‘trends or issues hovering under the news radar’ (Hermida, 2010b, p. 302).

Providing what could perhaps be described as a more applied approach to the journalistic uses of Twitter, Lasorsa et al (2011) distinguished between “elite” (national, major newspapers or broadcasters) and “non-elite” (regional or minor newspapers or broadcasters) journalists and their uses of Twitter. Specifically, the authors content analyzed 22 428 tweets sent by journalists. Inspired by Singer’s influential study on the blogging practices of journalists (Singer, 2005), the authors focused on determining ‘the extent to which microblogging may be changing journalistic norms or practices’ (Lasorsa, et al., 2011, p. 2). Results indicated that journalists on Twitter exhibited some norm-changing behavior (such as discussing their personal opinions) but refrained from others (such as providing accountability and transparency regarding their work).

Moreover, differences regarding these and other use patterns identified by the authors were also found between journalists working within “elite” and “non-elite” media outlets, with the former being more open to novel and perhaps non-traditional ways of approaching the Twitter platform.

As such, while developments regarding online journalism have certainly gone beyond the early days of shovelware, it appears that news media professionals are still struggling to appropriate the various digital opportunities available. Indeed, while ‘j-tweeters’ (Lasorsa, et al., 2011) certainly exist, the patterns made by their communication with their respective audience need to be assessed in order to more succinctly estimate the role of Twitter in these relationships. While studies on journalistic uses of Twitter exist, rather few studies assess journalist-audience interactions on the platform at hand. The present study, then, makes a contribution to the growing body of work by gauging practices of audience and journalist Twitter use in conjunction with a current affairs talk show: *Hübinette*.

The Hübinette talk show

Featuring former anchor person and news journalist Karin Hübinette as its host and the namesake of the show, the *Hübinette* talk show premiered on Swedish public service television on Tuesday, September 6th, 2011, during the late prime time slot (between 9.30 and 10 PM) on Swedish Public Service Television. Following this premiere episode, the first season of the show ran for seven consecutive Tuesdays, making for a total of eight episodes in the series. As such, the final episode of the show was aired on the evening of October 25th. The show drew on rather recognizable television genre formatting, featuring the host interviewing a series of different guests, running the gamut from actors and reality TV-stars to politicians.

In her study of the online policies and practices of public service broadcasters in the UK, the US, Sweden and Norway, Enli (2008) concluded that ‘[...] participation, facilitated by digital

technology, is a key strategy for public broadcasters' (p. 117). While the employment of certain Internet services can be viewed as somewhat 'problematic in relation to core public service broadcasting principles' (Moe, 2008, p. 234), the staff working on the *Hübinette* talk show took to the Internet and to social media with what appeared to be enthusiasm and vigor. A Facebook page dedicated to the show was launched on August 28th (<http://www.facebook.com/hubinettetalkshow>), and the host began using her Twitter account (<http://www.twitter.com/KarinHubinette>) for purposes relating to the show at the same time. As such, the editorial crew behind the show as well as the host made clear efforts to provide an online experience for their broadcast viewers. Taken together, this made the *Hübinette* show a particularly interesting case to study in order to assess the relationships that emerge between journalists and audience members in an online platform such as Twitter.

Method

While research looking into the diverse uses of Twitter is certainly growing, a number of different alternatives for collection and analysis of tweets are available for perusal and possible use. The following two sections detail the means of data collection and analysis employed in the study at hand.

Data collection

As pointed out earlier, Twitter users can include hashtags in their messages so as to indicate specific thematic content. As the official web site for the *Hübinette* show suggested the use of the hashtag #hubinette when tweeting about the show, data collection was performed accordingly. Specifically, all tweets including the specified hashtag were archived by means of the YourTwrapperKeeper service, 'the preferred tool for capturing #hashtag or keyword tweets in recent times' (Bruns, 2011, p. 10). As for the case at hand, data collection was undertaken taking the aforementioned schedule of the show into account. Specifically, archiving of tweets carrying

the #hubinette hashtag commenced on August 29th, 2011, and was terminated on October 26th the same year. This time period allowed for the creation of a comprehensive archive of all tweets sent during the first season of the *Hübinette* talk show. YourTwrapperKeeper allows for collection not only of the contents of Twitter messages, but also provides a variety of meta-data pertaining to the collected sample. For example, user name of sender, user name of recipient (for @ messages), whether or not the message was retweeted and time stamps can be scrutinized for each individual tweet (TwrapperKeeper, 2010). In total, 2314 tweets were collected during the aforementioned time period. The specific modes of analysis employed for the collected data are detailed in the following section.

Data analysis

As previously mentioned, we can discern between three different practices for Twitter users – sending singletons, @ messages and retweeting messages originally sent by others. In order to examine how these practices were played in the case at hand, two modes of analysis were utilized. First, the practice of sending singletons was assessed by means of a time line graph covering the entire time period. Furthermore, in order to pinpoint the top users of such undirected messages, descriptive statistics were produced using the SPSS software package. Second, the practices of sending @ messages and retweets were gauged by means of social network maps created with the open source graph visualization software Gephi (e.g. Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009; Bruns, 2011). Guided by the approach suggested by Larsson and Moe (2012), such visualizations can help in identifying the key users for the two specified practices. In order to find out more about the identified users, their respective Twitter profile pages were visited.

Results

As previously mentioned, the *Hübinette* talk show premiered on September 6th and ran weekly until the season finale, aired on October 25th. Figure 1 contains a time line graph depicting the longitudinal distribution of tweets during the specified time period.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

The distribution in figure 1 is characterized by a number of “spikes” in the time line, suggesting an increase of tweets at those particular moment. Each such increase corresponds to the actual air date and time for each of the eight episodes of the first season. The first spike occurs on September 6th, the day of the premiere, and it is arguably the largest of all eight increases visible in figure 1. This indicates that while each of the episodes managed to gather some interest from the Twittersphere, the premiere episode emerged as the most popular one in terms of tweets sent.

While the overview presented in figure 1 provides us with a visual means of grasping the extent Twitter use during the examined time period, it fails to deliver more specific information regarding how the practices of sending singletons, @ messages and retweets were employed during the first season of *Hübinette*. Table 1 presents the distribution of tweets by type in the collected data.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

While the majority of the tweets (N=1514, 65,4 %) were undirected “singleton” messages, a little more than a fifth of all tweets (N=513, 22,2 %) were retweets, indicating that the potential to redistribute the messages sent by other was acted upon to some extent. Finally, the practice of sending @ messages emerged as the least popular in the collected data (N=287, 12,4 %). As such,

the conversational possibilities of employing the @ sign were not, to any larger degree, taken into practice by the users of the #*hubinette* hashtag.

While table 1 provides us with an overview regarding the relative frequencies of how the Twitter service was used in the context at hand, it does not allow us to discern how these diverse uses were fashioned in a more detailed manner. For those purposes, other modes of analysis are required. Focusing first on the practice of sending singletons, table 2 identifies the top ten users in this regard.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

As shown in table 2, four out of the ten users identified in table 2 present themselves as journalists on their respective Twitter profile pages. Moreover, two users were clearly affiliated with the *Hubinette* talk show. First, as the name implies, KarinHubinette is the account operated by the host of the show. KarinHubinette accounts for the majority of all singleton tweets sent, with 187 such identified tweets (about 8 % out of the total 2314 collected tweets). Second, erkstam belongs to an IT professional who worked on the editorial staff with responsibilities for social media.

In total, the ten most active singleton users account for 293 such messages – 19.4 per cent out of the total 1514 identified singleton tweets. As such, about 80 per cent of singleton tweets were sent by less arduous users – in fact, out of 745 users that engaged in sending singleton messages, 672 (90 %) sent 3 or fewer messages. As such, the results presented in table 2 are indeed focused on the top users of the singleton practice.

As mentioned earlier, social network analysis was employed in order to more closely gauge the practices of @ messaging and retweeting. Figure 2 features a network graph depicting the relationship between the top users of @ messages.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Each node identified in figure 2 represents an identified Twitter user. The shade of the node is determined by the relative number of @ messages sent – the darker the shade of the node, the more @ messages were sent by the corresponding user. Conversely, the size of the node serves as representation of the number of @ messages received by each user – the larger the node, the more messages were sent to that particular user. The lines connecting the nodes indicates the nature of @ messaging – a curved line between two users suggests a reciprocal relationship between the users, meaning that at least one exchange of the message type at hand has taken place. Contrariwise, a straight line indicates a less than equal relationship between the two nodes, implying that one user has contacted the other, but not received a reply. The lines also provide an indication as to the intensity of the communication – the thicker the lines, the more messages were sent between the two users.

With these interpretative guidelines in mind, we can discern three main tendencies in figure 2. First, the largest and darkest node identified in the figure arguably belongs to KarinHubinette. As previously mentioned, this account is operated by the show's host, and as such it's activity and popularity should perhaps not come as a surprise.

Second, the majority of the other nodes appear rather small and have light shades – at least in comparison with the node signifying KarinHubinette. In combination with the curved lines connecting the aforementioned account with the many smaller, lighter nodes, the conclusion can be drawn that @ message conversations using the #hubinette hashtag did not apparently last for

long. Taking the guidelines for interpretation described above into account, the depiction in figure 1 suggests short conversations between KarinHubinette and a number of other users. Third, while the majority of users besides KarinHubinette appear to have received and sent rather few @ messages, a few of the nodes visible in figure 2 suggest dissimilar practices. For example, erkstam (IT professional affiliated with the show) is depicted in the lower portion of the figure and boasts a small number of conversation partners as made visible by the curved lines connecting the nodes in question. The user Britt_W (pseudonymous) can be seen far left and has apparently tried to send @ messages to the show on numerous occasions, given the characteristic of the line connecting the two specific nodes.

Next, the practice of retweeting is analyzed using a similar graph to the one presented in figure 2.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

The graph in figure 3 is interpreted similarly to one previously presented in figure 2. Specifically, the size of the node here represents how often the corresponding Twitter user was retweeted – the bigger the node, the more often the users messages were redistributed by means of the retweet function. The shades of the nodes represent the retweeting activity by each user – the darker the shade, the more active the corresponding user was at redistributing the tweets sent by others.

Given these guidelines for interpretation, we can first pinpoint KarinHubinette as the most central actor in the network depicted in figure 3. As the node corresponding to this particular user appears as comparably large and dark, the host account appear to have been very active in retweeting messages and also to have enjoyed having her messages being retweeted by other users.

Second, besides KarinHubinette, most nodes in figure 3 appear comparably small and lighter in shade. As such, while the shifting shades would indicate some variation with regards to the sending of retweets, most users would appear as rather passive when it comes to the practice at hand, employing retweets and being the subject of retweets in a limited manner.

Third, while most users identified in figure 3 seem rather passive, some users do indeed show use patterns that tend to break this characterization. To the left of the figure, two small, dark nodes can be discerned – Annoula64 (pseudonymous, appears to be related with the Pirate Party) and obsiris (pseudonymous). Both users reveal similar patterns of comparably heavy retweeting, but they do not appear to be retweeted themselves. Furthermore, just to the right of the cluster surrounding KarinHubinette, a lighter, larger node corresponding to emanuelkarlsten is visible. This would indicate a certain amount of popularity in the network, as the tweets sent by elites tend to be retweeted more often. Similar patterns are also seen in the upper, middle part of figure 3, where the node corresponding to user steffesundstrom (musician) appear as larger than most of the other nodes, but also slightly darker than the aforementioned emanuelkarlsten.

In sum, the analysis presented above has shown that while the uses of the #hubinette hashtag were at least somewhat diverse, most top users appeared to have followed similar use patterns. These results are further elaborated on in the final section of the paper.

Discussion

Twitter is often characterized as an 'interesting novelty' (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009, p. 10), suggesting a passing phase, a "flickering flame" of a medium. Indeed, new communication technologies tend to come and go, sometimes replacing, sometimes complementing their respective predecessors. While it is too early to say anything for certain regarding the faith of Twitter, the results presented here, while difficult to generalize from, can perhaps shed some light

on the popularity of the service within a wider journalistic context. Novelty it is – also, it seems, in the specific case at hand.

As the timeline graph presented in figure 1 suggested, Twitter activity for the #hubinette hashtag was clearly dependent on the airtime of the show at hand. Furthermore, the number of tweets including the specified hashtag decreased significantly following the premiere episode, indicating a loss of interest in tweeting about the show. Indeed, comparable timelines have been reported by previous research. For example, Larsson and Moe (2012) studied Twitter use during the 2010 Swedish general election and found a clear relationship between mediatized events (such as televised Q & A sessions with politicians or political debates). Similar results were also reported by Bruns and Burgess (2011) in their study of Twitter use during the 2010 Australian federal election. Also, interest in partaking in the Twitter backchannel appeared to have been largest during the first episode of *Hiibinette*, with none of the following episodes coming close to reaching the number of tweets sent during the premiere airing. While interest remained for the remainder of the series, this result would again seem to support what could be called a novelty effect (e.g. Enli, 2005).

As such, the present study would seem to corroborate the suggested novelty of Twitter with regards to journalist-audience relationships. As Twitter activity was clearly related to broadcasting timing it can clearly be described as “reactive” in a structural sense – meaning that what we can see in the analysis presented in figure 1 clearly indicates a dependency of Twitter activity on the broadcasting of the show at hand. Indeed, empirical findings like these should be taken into account especially when considering some of the hopes and beliefs regarding the potential of the Internet for providing ever-present contact between viewer and broadcaster that have been put forward. While patterns of ambient journalism (Hermida 2010a, 2010b), suggesting perpetual contact with journalists and audiences, could indeed be identified in the results, the overall picture is one of traditional practices on behalf of both groups.

As for @ messaging, this practice has been heralded as providing a potential outlet for conversation on the Twitter platform. Figure 2 detailed the patterns of such conversational practices for the top users of the #hubinette hashtag. As previously noted, the node corresponding to the show's host, KarinHubinette, was central in the figure. Indeed, while other actors were also identified as deviating from the norm, the host's account is clearly the most important one here. Specifically, the rate at which KarinHubinette seemed to have replied to most of the @ messages sent to her should be noted. While the timeline presented in figure 1 could be said to provide findings hinting towards a rather traditional means of employing social media in the online journalistic context, the depiction in figure 2 shows the host of *Hübinette* talk show as a very active user of Twitter, taking her time to answer the messages sent to her. However, these conversations between the host and her audience appear not to have lasted for too long. Given the diminutive size of most of nodes connected to KarinHubinette, we can conclude that these interactions were mostly of the "question-answer" variety. Lengthier exchanges would have rendered these nodes larger in size and darker in shade. As such, the potential for conversation on the Twitter platform was not employed to any larger degree. The patterns discerned can perhaps be likened to what Beyer et al (2007) labeled 'small talk' – short, reciprocal exchanges between participants. However, such short bursts of communication between journalists and audience members could also be interpreted as a means from the show's producer to provide a form of (or an attempt at) accountability.

Retweeting entails the redistribution of tweets sent by others. As shown in figure 3, we yet again see KarinHubinette as central in the graph. While her corresponding node is arguably the largest, it has a darker shade, indicating that her retweeting activity was somewhat well rounded. Not only did she enjoy popularity in the network, the host of the show also made frequent use of the retweet function on her own. This can be compared to the user emanuelkarlsten (identified as a

journalist on his Twitter profile page) who appears rather uninterested in redistributing the messages sent by others (as determined by the lighter shade of the node). As such, what we are seeing here are two journalists employing rather different practices to the Twitter platform. Inspired by the classification scheme derived by Larsson and Moe (2012) we can thus describe KarinHubinette as a 'networker' – i.e. someone who not only enjoys a 'significant standing in the network' (Larsson & Moe, 2012, p. 740) but who also contributes to raise popularity of others by retweeting their messages. Employing the same heuristic, emanuelkarlsten emerges as an elite Twitter user – characterized by larger nodes with lighter shades whose 'messages tend to be frequently retweeted' (Larsson & Moe, 2012, p. 740).

While different practices regarding Twitter use can indeed be discerned, we should note that no matter the use patterns, most of the key users identified through the analyses presented in this paper are journalists. Thus, these findings further corroborate the dominant role of journalists – also in the online realm. The potential for journalist-audience interaction on Twitter was discussed earlier. However, this potential will probably remain latent if the audience is not further involved.

As most audience members in the online media context appear largely uninterested in participating and communicating with journalists (Larsson, 2011), audience Twitter activity might take on other forms, as the distribution of different types of Tweets provided in table one shows. While audience members made sure to include the correct hashtag for the show, they did not necessarily engage in lengthy discussions using the platform. As direct communication using the @ sign does not appear to be a very popular practice, other practices like the redistribution of messages emerge as more relevant to audience members. Indeed, as the shades of the nodes in figure three suggest, the significance of a "long tail" produced by many viewers retweeting a few messages each should not be underestimated (e.g. Purcell et al, 2010).

In sum, this study finds 'the extent to which microblogging may be changing journalistic norms or practices' (Lasorsa, et al., 2011, p. 2) to be limited. While exceptions were found, most journalist-audience interactions tend to be of more traditional varieties. However, given the relative novelty of the service studied, this could be interpreted as initial attempts at Twitter use on behalf of journalists and audiences alike. This should be kept in mind when performing future research on the topic at hand. Further suggestions for such endeavors are provided below.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

While this paper has provided novel empirical insights into the use of Twitter in a journalistic context, it does have limitations that should be duly pointed out. These limitations, along with suggestions for future research efforts on the topic under scrutiny, are discussed in this final section of the paper.

First, while the use of hashtags for delimitory purposes appears valid, such an approach also means that the data collection process misses out on tweets of potential relevance that do not carry the hashtag under scrutiny. In other words, tweets were most likely sent that discussed the *Hübinette* talk show, but that did not include the hashtag. In essence, this means that while the present analysis of 2314 tweets carrying the #hubinette hashtag is probably representative of the Twitter activity pertaining to the show, we cannot be certain that the selection is exhaustive.

Second, Twitter use was previously discussed as an interesting novelty. Here today, gone tomorrow – while its popularity appear to be growing, it is not entirely unfeasible to imagine another version or another service taking the coveted place of Twitter in coming years. As such, researchers interested in the fickle, seemingly ever-changeable online environment must take these somewhat unsteady characteristics into account and attempt to study the behavioral patterns of Internet users rather than the specific services those users take part in (as suggested by Hermida, 2010b, p. 304). A focus on behavioral patterns, such as the one featured in this paper, would probably make for easier comparison with studies on future online media.

Third, as this paper has focused on the structural, overarching aspects of Twitter use during the first season of the *Höbinnen* talk show, the contents of the collected Tweets have not been dealt with. While we can discern clear structures and patterns of use, more qualitative aspects of the collected data is arguably beyond the scope of the paper at hand. With this in mind, future research projects are urged to focus on more qualitative or mixed methods analyses of the types of data that can be gathered with a service like YourTwrapperKeeper – perhaps by making use of some software package for efficient qualitative analysis of large-scale data sets. Such analyses of journalist-audience relations on Twitter might be able to provide us with more detailed insights as to why these patterns emerge, building on the more quantitative approach utilized in this paper. Finally, regarding issues of generalizability, while the study presented here presented a novel approach for data collection and analysis, the focus was placed on one specific show, in one specific country. These circumstances would limit our possibilities to make any grand conclusions from the data presented. However, the show did make specific efforts to establish a presence on a variety of social media platforms (such as Twitter), and data was collected for a longitudinal, overarching study of the entire season. Nevertheless, the current paper could essentially be conceptualized as a case study. As such, issues of generalizability from the findings presented here should be treated with great care. Perhaps future research on the same topic can test if the results from this study holds true also in other contexts. In closing, the suggestion is thus made that comparative research efforts can help us in advancing our knowledge on how journalists and their audiences took to Twitter.

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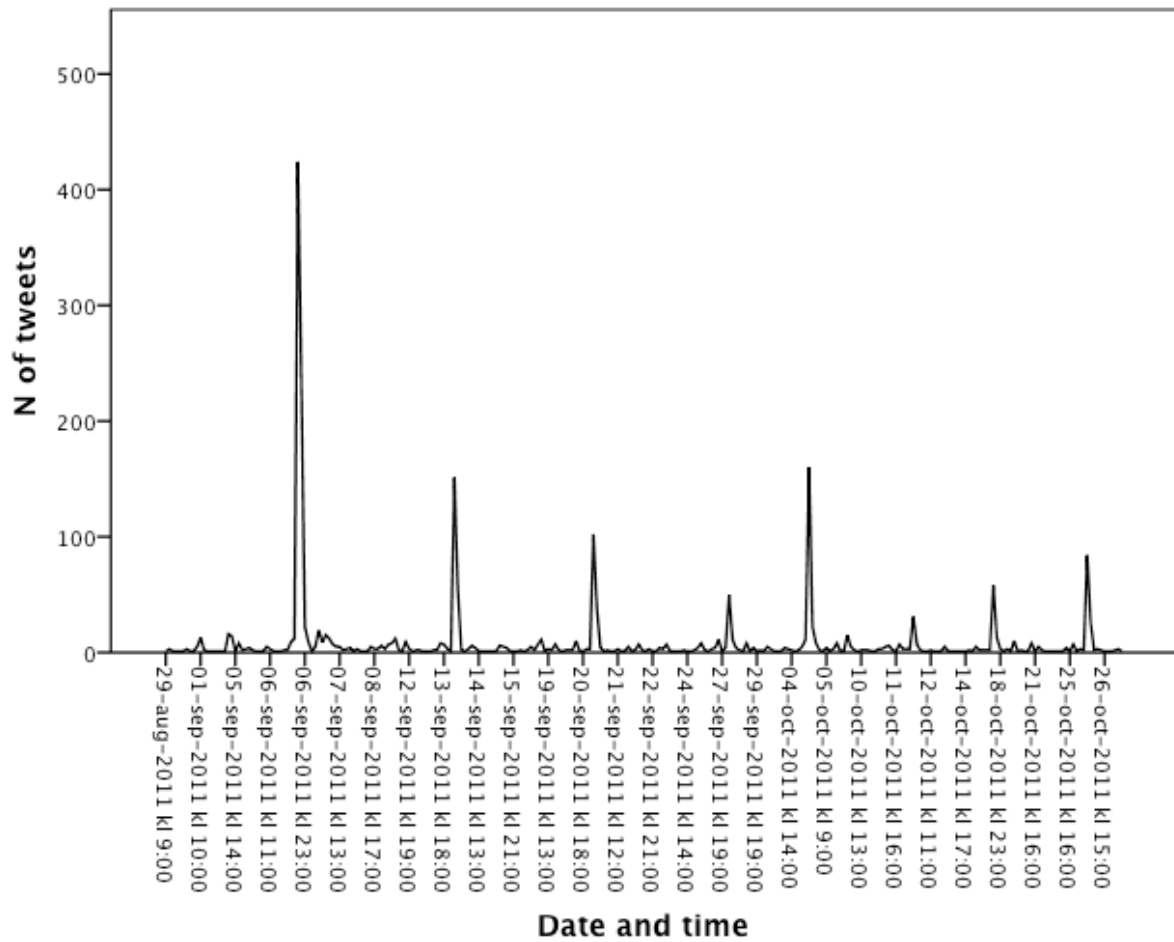


Figure 1. Longitudinal distribution of collected tweets.

Type of tweet	N	%
Singleton	1514	65,4
RT	513	22,2
@	287	12,4
Total	2314	100

Table 1. Distribution of tweets by type.

Twitter ID	N	Twitter profile
KarinHubinette	187	Journalist, affiliated with show
LokaMims	18	Pseudonymous
erkstam	14	IT professional, affiliated with show
Maggan_e	13	Student
dreadnallen	12	IT professional
Evlan	11	Journalist
emanuelkarlsten	10	Journalist
UlfBjereld	10	Academic
Karlrombo	9	Musician
nicklasjohanss (redirects to NicklasKihlberg)	9	Journalist

Table 2. Ten most active Singleton tweeters.

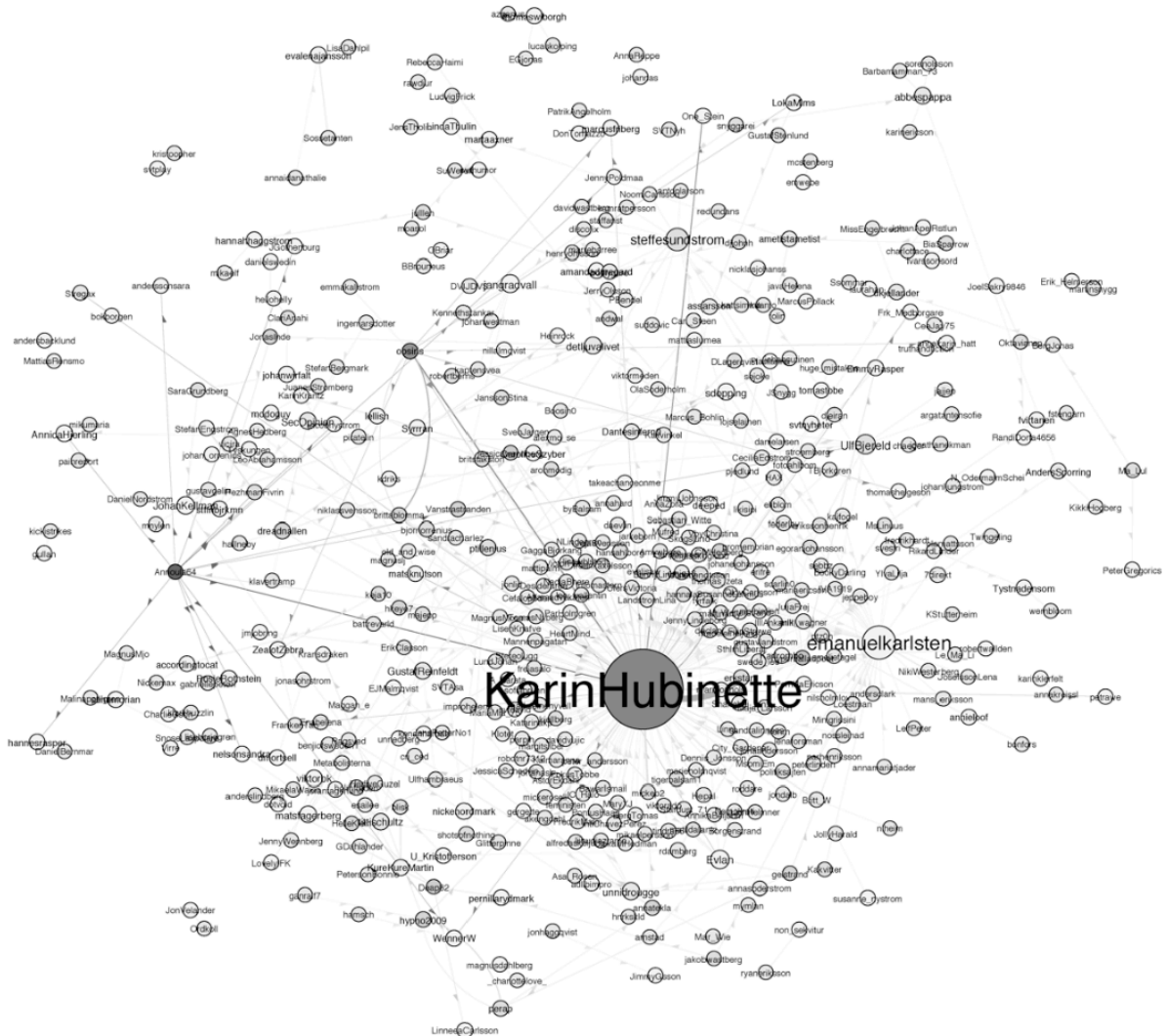


Figure 3. Top RT networks.

Degree range: 40 >, graph constructed using the Force Atlas layout in Gephi.