

## **Social Media Research in Communication and Mass Media Journals: A Bibliometric Analysis (2004-2013)**

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Facebook began in 2004 and was followed by Twitter in 2006. Less than a decade later the number of users on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites has skyrocketed. According to Facebook's own statistics, Facebook now has about 180 million active users in the United States and 1 billion active users worldwide. A recent *GlobalWebIndex* social media study estimates that Facebook's number of monthly active users at 693 million. According to this report, Facebook ranks first as the most used social media platform. The same study also finds that Twitter ranked third with 288 million active users worldwide.

With the rapid adoption of social media by individuals worldwide, communication researchers have taken a scholarly interest in social media use. Especially in the past few years communication and mass media journals have begun publishing research on social media. At this juncture what is needed is an overview of this rapidly expanding social media research in order to better understand what we have learned and which directions social media research should take in the future. However, recent overview articles are lacking. One article labeled as an literature review lacked a comprehensive and systematic approach (Perez-Latre, F., Blanco, I., & Sanchez, C., 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to build upon these limited reviews of social media research and to help answer further questions about the current state of social media research within the communication and mass media study. As social media researchers, who are we? What do we study? And where are we going? What follows is an attempt to synthesize the communication-related social media research with descriptive statistics by means of a comprehensive and systematic bibliometric analysis.

### **Literature Review of Relevant Bibliometrics Research**

Pritchard (1969) coined the term *bibliometrics* and defined it as "the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication" (p. 348). Bibliometrics "sheds light on the processes of written communication and of the nature and course of development of a discipline (insofar as this is displayed through written communication), by means of counting and analyzing the various facets of written communication" (p. 348). There are three main variables studied in bibliometrics, producers (e.g., authors, institutions and nations), artifacts (e.g., articles, journals and books), and concepts (e.g., keywords and words in title) (Borgman, 1990). Bibliometric researchers can answer questions such as who are the most influential/important producers, artifacts and concepts within an area of study. Bibliometric researchers can also answer questions about how producers, artifacts and concepts are linked through networks. Bibliometric researchers