Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER

ATINER's Conference Paper Series
MED2013-0401

Influence of the Blogosphere on Media Agenda: The Case of Swiss French Journalists Covering International Events

Katarina Stanoevska-Slabeva
Associate Professor
Institute for Media and Communication Management, University of St. Gallen
Switzerland

Vittoria Sacco
Ph.D. candidate
Academy of Journalism and Media, University of Neuchâtel
Switzerland

Yoann Schenker
Journalist at l'Agefi
Switzerland

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

Influence of the Blogosphere on Media Agenda: The Case of Swiss French Journalists Covering International Events

Katarina Stanoevska-Slabeva
Associate Professor
Institute for Media and Communication Management, University of St. Gallen
Switzerland

Vittoria Sacco
Ph.D. candidate
Academy of Journalism and Media, University of Neuchâtel
Switzerland

Yoann Schenker
Journalist at l'Agefi
Switzerland

Abstract

When bloggers are analogous to reporters, some of their working principles can challenge traditional professional standards such as conversation with the audience, transparency in the reporting process or even participation in news production. In other word, the blogosphere has strengthened the belief that the Internet is transforming journalistic practices. In order to contribute to the debate on the influences of weblogs and social media on journalism, this paper focuses on a preliminary understanding of key relationship between Swiss French media covering international news events and the blogosphere. Blogs and social media seem to play a greater role in international news events than in other form of reportage: (1) they are complementary, (2) they add value, (3) they can be a source of information, (4) they report on events that are not covered by the mainstream media and (5) they revive information of past/forgotten conflicts. However, the quality of sources has a determinant role in the use of the blogosphere among journalists. The study also offers suggestions on how journalistic values and practices influence Swiss French media's choices of coverage of international news events. Main factors quoted by respondents were lack of time and space and the concept of mimicry and proxemics. Conclusions support the idea that new generations of journalists are willing to establish opportunities for blogs to be integrated into mainstream media routines.

Corresponding Author:

Introduction

Blogs appear to have an increasing role as primary sources for reporting on conflicts and events which are not covered by mainstream media. Today, blogs seem to be surrounding journalism. The media are adding blogs in their online content, journalists are running blogs, and an array of amateurs are keeping blogs updated, some of which are similar to news journalism (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008).

The best examples of blogs usages are the contexts of wars and conflicts such as Afghanistan and Iraq War turning 'Warblogging' into a recognized genre (Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Matheson & Allan, 2007). Some soldiers were writing blogs that were later used by the media, and civilians participation in the middle of conflicts also acted as of source of information (Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2006; Campbell & Gibson, 2009). This is the case of 'Baghdad blogger' Salam Pax. Through the story of his daily life, he related information and evidence that western journalists simply were not able to communicate (Kaye & Johnson, 2010). Research on Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution' evinced that bloggers provided a rich source of information which was not accessible to traditional media (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007). More recent studies on Arab bloggers emphasized their potential to affect public opinion in the course of political instability (Etling, 2009; Hamdy, 2009). For instance and according to Fahmy (2010), the Egyptian blogosphere played a key role in reporting uncovered events during the Arab Spring.

With the aim to gain insight into the impact of the blogosphere on the agenda-setting of Swiss French media which cover international news events, this paper first of all explores literature on media agenda, gatekeeping practices and the relationship between media, blog and public agenda. It then focuses on interviews performed with French Swiss journalists who cover international news events. The analysis of data identified key elements that affect Swiss French media choices of international news coverage and the relationship between Swiss French journalists and the blogosphere. Further studies and limitation are also presented.

Theoretical Background

Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting theories are based on the work of Lippman (1922) who stated that the media already have the ability to influence public perception of the audience. Indeed, McCombs and Shaw (1972) were the first to refer to this process as 'agenda–setting'. They highlighted a strong correlation between media coverage and topics that audiences found to be relevant. Subsequent researchers established strong inter-media agenda-setting effects between elite to less elite traditional mass media (Reese & Danielian, 1989), newspapers coverage to television news broadcasts (Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, & Lennon, 1998; Roberts & McCombs, 1994) and newspapers coverage to wire

services (Lim, 2006). Several variables have been identified that might influence agenda-setting. For instance, McCombs (2004) observed that personal experience, information–seeking behavior, and style of coverage are relevant factors in the agenda–setting process. The nature of the event can also impact the relationship between media agenda and public agenda. Abstract issues are harder to transmit to the audience than concrete issues (Yagade & Dozier, 1990). Media find easiest to set the agenda in relation to more intense events (MacKuen, Coombs, & Miller, 1981) and with shorter time-frame issues (Brosius & Kepplinger, 1990). Wanta and Hu (1994) highlighted that the delay between the media agenda and the public agenda varied according to the type of media.

Dearing and Rogers (1996, p. 49) reviewed 92 empirical agenda-setting cross-sectional hierarchy and longitudinal studies. They observed that about two thirds of them 'confirmed this media agenda public agenda relationship.' However, two major criticisms of this relationship need to be highlighted. Primarily, cross-sectional methods, in which data on the public agenda are gathered at a single point in time, are not sufficiently authoritative to evince causality (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Scheufele, 2000). Secondly, agenda-setting researches regularly forgot cases in which people have direct experiences with real-world indicators and events. Some scholars claim that agenda setting would affect people who are personally involved in a given topic less, even if empirical findings disagree (Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, 1993; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981).

McCombs & Shaw (1993) noted that the most recent phase of studies has shifted towards the question 'Who sets the media agenda?' rather than 'Who sets the public agenda and under what conditions?.' They developed a second level (effect) of the agenda-setting process, containing the concepts of frame, by which media have the power to tell the public what to think of a subject. Instead, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) comprised media routines, organizational sociology and ideology, all in addition to individual differences among journalists. Breed's (1955) classic theory of *news* diffusion questioning who sets the media agenda can also be quoted and has been extended with new research on the role of public relations (Turk, 1986) and on *gatekeeping* journalism whose standpoint changed by the theory of agenda-setting (Becker, McCombs, & McLeod, 1975; Whitney & Becker, 1982).

Gatekeeping Theory

The theory of selection of news or gatekeeping is rooted in work of American psychologist Lewin (1947). White (1950) was the first to apply Lewin's theory to media field. He concluded the following: firstly, the selection criteria depend mainly on factors that are subjective. Secondly, the decision not to report an event is linked either to the fact that it is deemed uninteresting or that it has already undergone previous treatment by other media. Thirdly, some news is not selected due to lack of space. Thus for White, the editor is considered the gatekeeper of the newspaper. On the contrary, Gieber (1956) suggested that the organizational environment, such as routine or stress due to delays,

surrounding the selection process is equally if not more important than the individual judgment. Instead, McNelly (1959) highlighted that there are several gatekeepers and multiple stages of selection. At each step, the news is transformed and adapted to local broadcast. Bass (1969) enriched the theory of gatekeeping by explaining that the focus of White on the editor is not relevant because he is not the key decision-maker. According to Bass, McNelly's model has also shortcomings, failing to differentiate functions and roles of workers in the newsroom. For Bass, there are two levels in the news decision making process: the first is the collection of the information and the second is its treatment.

Recently, studies have preferred to explore gatekeeping concepts on televisions' newsrooms (Berkowitz, 1990; Harmon, 1989) and on websites (Beard & Olsen, 1999; Singer, 2001) rather than on newspapers' newsrooms. Latest research continues to expand previous models by taking new technologies into consideration. Bennett (2004) proposed a model that identifies four key factors influencing the news' content:

- The journalist's own judgment;
- The organization of the collection process that establishes the relationship between journalists and their sources;
- Economic constraints of news production;
- And the information technology which defines the boundaries of time and space in the collection process.

The relationship between mainstream media and the blogosphere

Investigating the 2004 U.S. Presidential election, Lee (2007) showed that political blogs had had a similar impact to that of the mainstream media. Likewise, Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun & Jeong (2007) described the relationship between weblogs and traditional journalism as complementary. Other researchers supported the complex, symbiotic relationship between mainstream media coverage and political blogs, influencing one another (Wallsten, 2007). Cornfield et al. (2005) noted a correlation of .78 for traditional media-to-blog effect compare with a correlation of .68 for blog-to-traditional media effect. Evidence has shown that traditional mass media's depends on top, political bloggers (Farrell & Drezner, 2008; Meraz, 2008).

According to Drezner and Farrell (2004), traditional media maintains links with the principal blogosphere for four reasons:

- In order to enhance blogs written by popular bloggers;
- For links that bloggers can offer since many of them are former journalists;
- For the competence and expertise of some bloggers in specific topics;
- And because bloggers are free to formulate their opinions and reactions.

The study by Campbell and Gibson (2009) which is based on the key components of agenda-setting theories, suggests that the blogosphere assumes three different roles which influence the process of traditional media news production. First of all, the blogosphere is originator (i.e. initiator) of news. In this case, the blog is used as the principal source of information. It seems clear

that the blogosphere plays this role in certain limited circumstances, such as when traditional media treatment is compromised in one way or another. This can be due to the suddenness or location of the event, or the difficulty and danger in visiting certain places. Secondly, the blogosphere is a resuscitator as part of major political scandals. Thirdly and finally, the blogosphere can also act as a re-framer. It is through the comments and analyses contained in the blogs where topics are not only revived or revisited, but enriched to trigger new debates and even encourage interpretations of an existing problem. The content provided by the blogosphere tends to offer a supplement rather than replace traditional media.

Research questions & Methodology

The aim of our study was to explore the influence of the blogosphere on the agenda-setting of Swiss French media which cover international news events. In particular, it focused in finding out if recognized treatments of blogs in literature can be observed with Swiss journalists as well. The following research questions were thus developed to gain insight into the use of the blogosphere by Swiss journalists covering international news:

RQ1: How did journalists gather their information when they have to cover international news events?

RQ2: How did journalists report conflict in term of sources and information gathering?

RQ3: How did journalists use blog and social media in their everyday job?

RQ4: How did journalists view bloggers?

Profile of respondents & Procedure

To be consistent with the research problem, respondents were seven Swiss French journalists covering international news events. The sample consists of women and men between the ages of 33 and 55 years old from the *RTS* radio (3), the television *TSR* (1) and l'*Express*, Neuchâtel's principal newspaper (3). In order to have a broader view, it was essential to interview journalists representing the three main traditional media: print, radio and television. Data collected from interviewees with different backgrounds will contribute to obtaining an overview of the issue, identifying patterns as well as enhancing the quality of interviews supporting the cross-check of findings (Diefenbach, 2009). The interviews were held in Neuchâtel, Lausanne and Geneva. They were recorded with a digital tape and then transcribed. The average duration of interviews was approximately 50 minutes. Interviews were conducted anonymously, allowing greater freedom of expression to the interviewees. All respondents signed an agreement form to participate in the study. It is important to note that respondents were not aware of the specific research problem in order to avoid certain biases inherent in qualitative interviews. The questions were semi-structured around a list of selected open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and

interviewees (Arksey & Knight, 1999; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen as it is best suited for such studies, satisfying reliability of findings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Weston et al., 2001).

Interview guide

An interview guide was developed through the theoretical underpinnings explained in previous sections. All themes, which are five in number, contained the following guideline questions (Giannelloni and Vernette, 2001):

- Portrait

This makes it possible to trust the subject before introducing a more concrete phase.

- Research and information gathering in the work of international journalists;

Journalists describe how they proceed in the production of news, in what kind of sources they rely on and how they check them.

- The processing and information retrieval in the coverage of conflicts;

This section uses the examples of blogs cited in the introduction and inputs from the researches of Drezner and Farrell (2004) to move the discussion forwards. Both the question of agenda-setting which favors a specific conflict over others, and the question of covering forgotten conflicts were addressed at this stage.

- The use of the blogosphere and new media in journalism;

The different practices and habits of each respondent with these new tools are underlined.

- The perception of bloggers.

This phase was trickier, since it touches on more emotional aspects. It is through this last phase that the most practical assumptions have been issued.

Results

The results collected reflect the interest and even passion that journalists have for their work. For some, be a journalist was a childhood dream: 'It is a profession that has fascinated me since I was little – Being a reporter was my teenage dream.'

Participants explain that meeting different worlds contribute to their interest in journalism. 'Meeting people and situations that are not open to everyone fascinates me.' Others evoke democratic considerations related to the role of journalist. 'In a democracy, everyone should be as informed as possible and it is our role.'

To explain the process of news production, participants started by differentiating working tasks in newsrooms from the ones on the field. In newsrooms for any kind of medium the primary source of information seems to be agencies: 'We use content from the agencies or other information channels with which we have agreements.' On the ground, journalistic work is different:

'On the ground we make our own content, our own interviews. – On the field, it is you who become the source of information, the producer of the news.'

Selection criteria depend on subjective factors outlined in White's thesis (1950). But as defined in Gieber (1956), the impact of the organizational environment surrounding the selection process is also influential. Indeed, as advocated by Lewin (1947), colleagues and newsrooms are considered filters or parts of the process: 'There is a pre-selection of the topic. We must engage the public. For this, we must first interest our colleagues.'

According to participants, it is rare that correspondents travel to a place of conflict because of the danger they face or because of cost constraints. In these cases, agencies and other media are the primary sources of information. As seen previously, almost all journalists entrust agencies; this trust is given also to correspondents: 'The best source is our correspondents. We believe them!'

A majority of participants felt that the blogosphere is of greater importance in international journalism:

> *'During the Revolution in Tunisia, it was almost all about social networks and blogs in particular. When information and journalists were locked by the Tunisian government, social networks were almost the unique source of information. But it's the same for all the conflicts; social networks have a very important role. Their job is to diffuse and amplify events.'*
> *'Blogs are especially useful for international. For example, for the conflict in Syria, we contacted a blogger who was a teacher in a Persian University.'*

Many subjects appear to believe that the blogosphere and social media are useful tools in their journalistic goals and in different circumstances. However, the quality of the information contained in the blogosphere is generally viewed negatively by all the interviewees. 'When you come to a blog you have to be careful. I remember a scam where a Parisian blogger was passing for a Tunisian!' A context of conflict behavior requires vigilance vis-à-vis of information content and sources. The risk of manipulation is very high:

> '*We have to be very* careful in order not to be manipulated in conflict zones. We see with Syria. There is a war of images, words, on the part of both parties. We must cross-check information to tell whether they are credible.'
> '*But* the blogger can manipulate us, it may be entered under a fake name, he may be manipulated by a party ... So this is something to be taken with a pinch of salt.'

Verification of information within international journalism is often difficult. This turns out to be even more the case when it comes to conflict. Syria was a recurring example given by respondents.

> *'In international journalism, verifying a source is more difficult than for national events. In Switzerland, you can go to the website of the Confederation to check information. It is not possible to do this for Libya for example.'*

Interviewees were asked to explain the reasons that brought journalists to choose to deal with a conflict over another. It must be emphasized that this part often aroused a sense of unease among respondents. A rational criterion returned several times from reporters: 'Well, let's say cynically that there is this rule of death per kilometer.'

Mimicry also appears to be an explanatory reason for such behavior:

> 'In case of conflicts, when other media speak about a subject we feel obliged to treat *it* as well.'
> '*Then* the media self-feed. As Syria is on the front page of media, it continues to stay under the spotlights.'

The fact that there are local journalists also has a significant impact:

> '*In the Middle East,* there are so many journalists on the spot. If there is an explosion all media will know! It will not be the case in many places. And newspapers coverage of an area influences other media in their choice of coverage.'

Many participants discussed the concept of proxemics (McCombs, 2004; Yagade & Dozier, 1990), the public having the natural tendency to focus on what is close to them as opposed to what is more distant. 'There's always a journalistic reflex research of proximity. So the Greek crisis will make it easier one page compare with a massacre in Mali or in another African country.' Furthermore, as advocated by McNelly's (1959), the news undergoes a transformation to suit local distribution. 'If the Swiss auditor thinks – I have nothing to do with that – well it's that you have failed.'

Interviewees were asked to what extent bloggers could address different topics or topics forgotten by traditional media (Campbell & Gibson, 2009). 'I always thought we had a million stories around us that we do not know. This is where the importance of the work of bloggers emerges.' The constraints of time and space (Bennett, 2004; White, 1950) only very rarely allow a return to a forgotten conflict:

> '*I think their* role is also to revive topics that are not covered by the mainstream media because there are time constraints in place.'
> '*We realize* that it is our responsibility to cover as much as we can, but rather on the reactivity than *on the* retrospective.'

Almost all respondents trust these new tools in their work, but use them at different degrees:

> 'I make a kind of intelligence via Twitter. I subscribe for different events. The last time it was for finding people concerned with Mali, Twitter suggests me some blogs and the site of Young African.'

A significant number of subjects emphasize that the blogosphere is often a subjective source of information (Drezner & Farrell, 2004):'Blogs can be a particularly important source of opinion that I could include in a subject. – It is a source of information as others, but it remains often public opinions.'

Some journalists believe that the work of bloggers can be interesting when they take on the role of witnesses. Sometimes they also work as an alert for traditional media (Campbell & Gibson, 2009): 'I saw it first on Twitter that a Turkish plane had been shot down by the Syrian army. – During the Arab Spring, it was the first time that Internet users alerted us to something that was happening.'

Interviewees sometimes also seek for expert insights provided by some blogs (Drezner & Farrell, 2004): 'Major newspapers include blogs on their websites for some comments of experts. – There are some who are experts. These are people that I will follow.'

Journalists explained that they proceed in the same manner as when they have to deal with other sources; they will perform verification. In addition, some criteria used to define the quality or not of the information from the blogosphere are introduced:

> 'The way the blog is written may play a role. As usually, I attempt to crosscheck the sources. Are other people speaking about the same event? I can also have the help of a partner to find out if it deems plausible.'
> 'In principle bloggers are not required to verify the content. Bloggers give often their own view. But if I see that it rest too much on an ideology I will skip it.'

Journalists were asked to comment on the impact of the blogosphere on editorial choices. According to the journalists, the direct impact of this new media is still a relatively rare phenomenon. However, a reporter says that the reading of a micro-blog allowed him to make an agenda:

> 'In principle it does not happen often. But during the Tunisian Revolution, choosing a topic could sometimes ground from an info contained in a blog, but that was corroborated with other sources.'
> 'In my newsroom we still rarely share blogs content. In international, we cannot check information and publish a subject just because we read it on a blog and we like it. In any case, it is very difficult to do an article on a single source.'

> *'Well typically for events in Quebec, it was Twitter which pointed out some relevant blogs. I was alerted to what was happening there. I then cross-checked and I suggested the subject be published.'*

Some of them have divided bloggers into several categories:

> 'For me, there are so many different profiles of bloggers *that* it becomes difficult to assign them a specific role. It is a citizen so he can say what he wants.'
>
> '*The pure* blogger is a witness. Then there are bloggers of a certain caliber, which begin to open pages and do some analysis, to compare opinions, as sociologists and academics.'

Their work is seen by some as a supplement which enriches the democratic debate:

> 'I see their work as a supplement with different ideas and opinions often more radical.'
>
> '*More generally* it is an enrichment of thoughts. It shows that the journalist has partially disappeared; it is not *the* only *one who* express himself and who is authoritative.'

For respondents, the role of bloggers would be positive for democracy but not without creating a filter, which would act as firewall and bar the road to wild communication: 'I have nothing against this kind of citizen journalism, but there must be a channel which can control the info. Otherwise it becomes like Wikileaks.'

For the participants, a citizen journalist is not the equal of a professional journalist. This is partly because blogging requires no training and no technical work ethic and policies:

> 'There are no rules for bloggers, *besides they* are not paid. But if there are people who make journalistic information, *I* want to say then *they* become a journalist.'
>
> 'Unlike bloggers, we must explain to the listener and not say what we think of a subject.'
>
> '*But it is extremely* necessary to have traditional media that make verification and objective work with real journalists who attended training.'
>
> 'Journalism is not protected. But, to be qualified journalist you must be part of a newsroom. This implies that our information is controlled by others and we have some credibility from our peers.'

According to the journalists interviewed, bloggers must therefore be taken into consideration. But then they represent a threat to professional journalists? All participants were unanimous: 'No no no ... Instead, they help us to do our

work. – They are complementary. - It is an added value.' So for some, bloggers are complementary, others even mention the term symbiosis (Reese, et al., 2007; Wallsten, 2007). It is clear that the journalists interviewed seem confident of the supremacy of their media and their profession:

> 'People will seek information on the Internet, but when they want to have a reliable info *they rely on* traditional media.'
> 'Bloggers are part of the chain but in the end it is always journalist*s who* filter and control what is distributed. It is not necessarily always *doing well*, but I do not think that bloggers *are the one that* can solve the problem.'

What is the future of journalism in the blogosphere, particularly for international reporting? For respondents, they will anyway consider this new player:

> 'I think that the uses of these new tools will increase. Especially with the new generation who used these tools and realize their importance*, particularly in* the context of international where it is difficult to find people who are on the ground.'
> 'What we see is that most serious blogs are quickly hosted by mainstream media. This is the case with the Washington Post *since* there is verification*,* there is a trust given by journalists to bloggers. This is a model that should continue. I think blogs that resist are those managing *to* prove their info.'

The generation gap between journalists had an impact on patterns of use of these new tools. According to them, the blogosphere should take more magnitude in the future, thanks to the younger generation of journalists:

> 'There is a generational shift in my opinion. For me, the new generations of journalists will take these new media *and make them* play an important role in their work.'
> 'There is an evolution in journalism. For the younger generation*, I* note that it is almost natural to go on social media. Here five years ago, there were journalists who had an assistant to type their text on the computer! But it is normal that *things* evolve.'

Discussion and Conclusion

This study highlights the common habits of Swiss French media for reporting international news events. Sources used by journalists are primarily from agencies and other media. In other terms, the media self-feed themselves. According to the sample of journalists interviewed, these sources are apparently never questioned since they are assumed to be trustworthy. But

when information come from another circuit, cross-check of sources is indispensable. The reasons for media choosing to deal with one conflict over another also emphasize the closed system in which they operate. Regardless of the media in which journalists' exercise, lack of time and space explain why it is almost impossible to return to a forgotten subject. The concepts of mimicry and proxemics can also elucidate the choice of coverage by mainstream media.

The journalists interviewed believe that the blogosphere is often a subjective source of information. It is often used as a witnessed source and as an alert. With these findings we confirm what was noted in the literature, the expertise offered by some bloggers is also appreciated and sought after by journalists. According to the respondents, the blogosphere plays a greater role in international journalism, corroborating with Campbell & Gibson (2009) and Drezner and Farrel (2004) theories. The journalists interviewed reveal that the blogosphere provides useful material in some specific cases (i.e. Syria). In these cases, the closed system of media undoubtedly opens up to give way to other channels of information including blogs and social media. Their role in reviving the democratic process has also been mentioned by respondents. However, the quality of sources appears to be an important factor defining the relations between the two spheres.

To conclude, the study emphasizes that journalists do not consider bloggers to be a threat to their profession. The work of bloggers is perceived as being different from that of journalists. Respondents highlight the fact that bloggers do not follow any training and are not subject to any professional rules. Even if the participants seem to agree that blogs are better able to deal with different subjects, they find their impact still negligible. As already suggested by Gallo (2004), blogs will not substitute traditional media; rather they will be incorporated into the ever-evolving channels of complementary media accessible to journalists and to the audience. It is likely that blogs will follow the pattern of prior communication technologies (i.e. radio) which first destabilized rooted journalistic practices and then become part of the mainstream media ecosystem. Thus, the work of journalists does not change with these new sources. Certainly, information flows faster and the opportunities to integrate in the reportage all the available voices are numerous, but the principles to cross-check and verify a source are still the same. While most of the findings match existing ones a new aspect would be that when discussing the future of journalism in the blogosphere, interviewees appear to believe that these tools will have a greater importance in the future, especially for their work as journalists abroad and in certain circumstances such as when covering conflicts. Only in this particular case does the blogosphere seem to assume the role of initiator as a primary source of information. Finally, the notion of generation has been mentioned several times in interviews. Thanks to young journalists, it is possible to hypothesize that the importance attached to the blogosphere will grow in the future. Unlike their older colleagues, they seem more curious and ready to use these new technologies in their everyday work.

Limitation and Further Research

It is important to note that this study is the first step of scientific research process. A quantitative study should be conducted further to be able to accept or refute these hypotheses in order to infer the results for the entire population of Swiss journalists. It would also be interesting to extend the research by incorporating Swiss German and Italian media, in order to have a representative view of the use of the blogosphere by all Swiss journalists that cover international news events.

References

Anderson, C. (2006). *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling More for Less*. Hyperion.

Arksey, H. & P. Knight (1999). *Interviewing for social scientists: An introductory resource with examples*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Bass, A.Z. (1969). 'Refining the "gatekeeping" concept: a UN radio case study.' *Journalism Quarterly* 46: 69–72.

Beard, F. & R.L. Olsen (1999). 'Webmasters as mass media gatekeepers: a qualitative exploratory study.' *Internet Research* 9(3): 200-211.

Becker, L.B., M.E. McCombs, & J.M. McLeod (1975). 'The development of political cognitions.' In: S.H. Chaffee(ed.), *Political communication: issues and strategies for research.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Behr, R.L. & S. Iyengar (1985). 'Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda.' *Public opinion quarterly* 49(1): 38-57.

Bennett, W.L. (2004). 'Gatekeeping and press-government relations: A multigated model of news construction.' *Handbook of political communication research:* 283-314.

Berkowitz, D. (1990). 'Refining the gatekeeping metaphor for local television news.' *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 34(1): 55-68.

Breed, W. (1955). 'Newspaper "opinion leaders" and processes of standardization.' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 32(3): 277-328.

Brosius, H.B. & H.M. Kepplinger (1990). 'The agenda-setting function of television news static and dynamic views.' *Communication research* 17(2): 183-211.

Cammaerts, B. & N. Carpentier (2006). 'The Internet and the Second Iraqi War: Extending participation and challenging mainstream journalism?' *Researching media, democracy and participation*: 159-171.

Campbell, V. & R. Gibson (2009). 'News blogs, mainstream News and News agends'. In: S. Tunney & G. Monaghan (Eds.), *Web Journalism: A New Form of Citizenship.* Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.

Cornfield, M., J. Carson, A. Kalis & E. Simon (2005). 'Buzz, Blogs and Beyond: the Internet and the National Discourse in the Fall of 2004.' *Pew Internet & American Life Project, 16.*

Dearing, J.W. & E.M. Rogers (1996). *Agenda-setting*. Vol. 6. Sage Publications, Inc.

DiCicco-Bloom, B. & B.F. Crabtree (2006). 'The qualitative research interview.' *Medical Education* 40(4): 314-321.

Diefenbach, T. (2009). 'Are case studies more than sophisticated storytelling? Methodological problems of qualitative empirical research mainly based on semi-structured interviews.' *Quality & Quantity* 43(6): 875-894.

Domingo, D. & A. Heinonen (2008). 'Weblogs and journalism'. *Nordicom Review 1*: 3-15.

Drezner, D. & H. Farrell (2004). *The power and politics of blogs*. American Political Science Association.

Etling, B. (2009). *Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere: Politics, Culture, and Dissent*. Internet & Democracy Project, Berkman Center for Internet & Society.

Fahmy, N.A.S. (2010). 'Revealing the "agenda-cutting" through Egyptian blogs: An empirical study.' Paper presented at the 11th International Symposium on Online Journalism, in Austin, Texas (U.S.).

Farrell, H. & D.W. Drezner (2008). 'The power and politics of blogs'. *Public Choice,* 134(1): 15-30.

Gallo, J. (2004). 'Weblog journalism: Between infiltration and integration.' In S.A. Laura, J. Gurak, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff & J. Reyman (Ed.), *Into the blogosphere: Rhetoric, community, and culture of weblogs.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Giannelloni, J.L. & E.Vernette (2001). *Etudes de marché*. Lavoisier.

Gieber, W. (1956). 'Across the desk: A study of 16 telegraph editors.' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 33(4): 423-432.

Hamdy, N. (2009). 'Arab citizen journalism in action: Challenging mainstream media, authorities and media laws.' *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 6(1): 92-112.

Harmon, M.D. (1989). 'Mr. Gates goes electronic: The what and why questions in local TV news.' *Journalism Quarterly* 66(4): 857-863.

Kahn, R. & D. Kellner (2004). 'New media and Internet activism: From the battle of Seattle to blogging.' *New Media & Society* 6(1): 87-95.

Kaye, B.K. & T.J. Johnson (2010). 'Weblogs as a source of information about the 2003 Iraq War.' *Media* 3(1-4): 291-301.

Kovach, B. & T. Rosenstiel (2007). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect*. Three Rivers Pr.

Kulikova, S.V. & D.D. Perlmutter (2007). 'Blogging down the dictator? The Kyrgyz revolution and samizdat websites.' *International Communication Gazette, 69*(1), 29-50.

Lee, J.K. (2007). 'The effect of the Internet on homogeneity of the media agenda: A test of the fragmentation thesis.' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84(4): 745-760.

Lewin, K. (1947). 'Frontiers in group dynamics.' *Human relations* 1(2): 143-153.

Lim, J. (2006). 'A cross-lagged analysis of agenda setting among online news media.' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 83(2): 298-312.

Lindlof, T.R. & B.C. Taylor (2010). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Lopez-Escobar, E., J.P. Llamas, M. McCombs & F.R. Lennon (1998). 'Two levels of agenda setting among advertising and news in the 1995 Spanish elections.' *Political Communication* 15(2): 225-238.

MacKuen, M.B., S.L. Coombs & W.E. Miller (1981). *More than news: Media power in public affairs*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Matheson, D. & S. Allan (2007). 'Truth in a war zone: the role of warblogs in Iraq.' In S. Maltby & R. Keeble (Eds.), *Communicating war: Memory, Military, and the Media*. Arima: University of Canterbury.

McCombs, M.E. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Polity Pr.

McCombs, M.E. & D.L. Shaw (1993). 'The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas.' *Journal of Communication* 43(2): 58-67.

McNelly, J.T. (1959). 'Intermediary communicators in the international flow of news.' *Journalism Quarterly* 36(1): 23-26.

Meraz, S. (2008). 'The blogosphere's gender gap.' *Women, men, and news: divided and disconnected in the news media landscape*, 142-166.

Reese, S.D. & L. Danielian (1989). 'Intermedia influence and the drug issue: Converging on cocaine.' *Communication campaigns about drugs: Government, media, and the public* 5: 29-46.

Reese, S.D., L. Rutigliano, K. Hyun & J. Jeong (2007). 'Mapping the blogosphere Professional and citizen-based media in the global news arena.' *Journalism* 8(3): 235-261.

Roberts, M. & M. McCombs (1994). 'Agenda setting and political advertising: Origins of the news agenda.' *Political Communication* 11(3): 249-262.

Scheufele, D.A. (2000). 'Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: Another look at cognitive effects of political communication.' *Mass Communication & Society* 3(2-3): 297-316.

Shoemaker, P.J. & S.D. Reese (1991). *Mediating the message: Theories of influence on mass media content*. New York: Longman.

Singer, J.B. (2001). 'The metro wide web: Changes in newspaper's gatekeeping role online.' *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 78(1): 65-80.

Turk, J.V.S. (1986). 'Public relations' influence on the news.' *Newspaper Research Journal* 7(4): 15-27.

Wallsten, K. (2007). 'Agenda setting and the blogosphere: An analysis of the relationship between mainstream media and political blogs.' *Review of Policy Research* 24(6): 567-587.

Wanta, W. & Y.W. Hu (1994). 'Time-lag differences in the agenda-setting process: An examination of five news media.' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 6(3): 225-240.

Watt, J.H., M. Mazza & L. Snyder (1993). 'Agenda-setting effects of television news coverage and the effects decay curve.' *Communication research* 20(3): 408-435.

Weaver, D.H., D.A. Graber, M.E. McCombs & C.H. Eyal (1981). *Media agenda-setting in a presidential election: Issues, images, and interest*. New York: Praeger.

Weston, C., T. Gandell, J. Beauchamp, L. McAlpine, C. Wiseman & C. Beauchamp (2001). 'Analyzing interview data: The development and evolution of a coding system.' *Qualitative Sociology* 24(3): 381-400.

White, D.M. (1950). 'The "gate keeper": A study in the selection of news.' *Journalism Quarterly* 27: 383–390.

Whitney, D.C. & L.B. Becker (1982). '" Keeping the Gates" for Gatekeepers: The Effects of Wire News.' *Journalism Quarterly* 59(1): 60-65.

Yagade, A. & D.M. Dozier (1990). 'The Media Agenda-Setting Effect of Concrete versus Abstract Issues.' *Journalism Quarterly* 67(1): 3-10.