ARTÍCULOS

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TELEVISION: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW BASED ON THE *WEB OF SCIENCE*

Medios sociales y televisión: revisión bibliográfica a partir de la *Web of Science*

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Abstract

One of the most important trends in current television research has to do with the increasing impact of social media on viewing and consumption. This article reviews the literature on social media and television included in the *Web of Science* database from 2005 to 2013 in order to find the main research questions guiding academic research within media studies. The topics investigated included the theoretical approach and definition of social television, the central role of *Twitter* as the main social tool for second-screen activities, the prominence of "reality TV" as the most social genre on television, and new mainstream forms of television fandom. The conclusion of this article reflects on possible limitations of these studies and new paths of research.

Keywords

Social television; Social media; *Twitter*; Audiences; Review; *Web of Science*.

Resumen

Una de las principales tendencias en la investigación actual sobre televisión se centra en el creciente papel de los medios sociales en el consumo televisivo. Este artículo revisa la bibliografía encontrada sobre medios sociales y televisión en la base de datos bibliográfica *Web of Science* desde 2005 a 2013. El objetivo es resaltar las cuestiones de investigación que están liderando el estudio tales como el debate sobre la definición de televisión social, el papel central de *Twitter* como principal herramienta social para la realización de actividades de "segunda pantalla", los formatos de tele-realidad como los más comentados en las redes sociales, junto con otras formas de expresión del fenómeno fan. Las conclusiones de este artículo reflexionan sobre posibles limitaciones de estos análisis y subraya nuevas líneas de investigación.

Palabras clave

Televisión social; Medios sociales; *Twitter*; Audiencias; Revisión; *Web of Science*.

1. Introduction

Television watching has always been social (**Lull**, 1980). However, the impact of new technologies on viewing has radically changed how audiences respond to TV programs. Since the 90's, the permeation of the internet and other new digital communication technologies has provoked deep changes in the so-called legacy media, including transformations in television consumption and production patterns (**Owen**, 1999; **Cesar**; **Chorianopoulos**; **Jensen**, 2008; **Hamaguchi** *et al.*, 2012; **Noguera** *et al.*, 2014). In this new context, where television converges with the internet, new challenges must be addressed not only by the industry but also by researchers. A new kind of advanced television sets which allow non-physical-group TV watching, present information and online communication, as well as support recommendations of TV shows and channels has been developed under the generic label of 'Social television' (**Gross**; **Fetter**; **Paul-Stueve**, 2008). Along with the creation of new television systems, social networks such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* play a relevant role in making television a more pleasurable experience. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of papers by scholars studying the role of the audience and the strategies employed by television in this volatile marketplace. This article analyzes the methods, limitations, and conclusions of these studies in the social television field and highlights the main themes represented in the most important database on academic publications: the *Web of Science*. This review seeks to determine how scholars in Social Sciences, Media and Communication Studies, and other closely related disciplines, such as Psychology or Sociology, are studying the possible relationships and influences of social media on current television consumption.

> Along with the creation of new television systems, social networks such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* play a relevant role in making television a more pleasurable experience

2. Methodology

This literature review covers articles from 2005 to 2013 that deal with both television broadcasting and social media (specifically social networking sites). In order to produce the highest quality list, only articles and conference papers indexed in the *Web of Science* (*WoS*) core collection were selected. These articles were retrieved by conducting multiple searches for items that included the topic 'social television' as well as the word 'television' and other terms related to social media and web 2.0. These terms were chosen following the same structure outlined in **Gold** *et al.* (2011) combining global labels such as 'social media' or 'social network', and other specific features and services such as 'Facebook'. These search terms were employed to locate articles dealing with the wider concept of 'social media' and with

Table 1. Search terms employed to find articles in *WoS* core collection

Topic = 'Social television'
Topic = 'Social media' AND 'Television'
Topic = 'Social network*' AND 'Television'
Topic = 'Online communities' AND 'Television'
Topic = 'Blogs' AND 'Television'
Topic = 'Facebook' AND 'Television'
Topic = 'Twitter' AND 'Television'

the most popular services of web 2.0 such as blogs and social networking sites (table 1).

Initially 173 articles were retrieved using the search terms. Their abstracts were manually reviewed and articles were removed that did not specifically deal with the television viewer's use of social media and the relationship between it and television. This left out of the sample several articles that mainly focused on one of these two elements but tangentially mentioned the other (e. g. **Lieberman**; **Koetzle**; **Sakiyama**, 2013; **Fogel**; **Krausz**, 2013; **Wong**; **Gupta**, 2011, to name a few); articles in which both elements were tangentially mentioned but the focus was a different topic altogether (as **Protudjer** *et al*., 2012 or **McNeil**; **Brna**; **Gordon**, 2012); or articles that were restricted to technical issues (such as **Montpetit**; **Médard**, 2012). After removing these articles, 39 remained and comprised the corpus of this study. The 39 articles were processed manually using content analysis to test the following hypotheses:

H1. The number of articles about social media and television is growing.

H2. Most of the research about social media and television is published mainly by Communication Studies journals.

H3. Research on social media and television is mostly empirical, not theoretical.

H4. Most of the research about social media and television uses quantitative methods instead of qualitative or mixed methods.

Besides this quantitative and descriptive analysis, our review was also guided by the following exploratory research question and sub-questions:

RQ1: What are the main areas of interest in the research on social media and television?

RQ1.1 What are the research methods being used in these studies?

RQ1.2 What are the limitations of these studies, so far?

RQ1.3 What are the main conclusions in these studies?

Following other systematic reviews (**Schleidgen** *et al*., 2013; **Dyer**; **Das-Nair**, 2012) a thematic analysis was used to extract the key issues studied in each article and to identify the aspects mentioned in the sub-questions. This analysis allowed us to identify the most relevant issues regarding social media and television as well as the main approaches and the issues that still remain unknown and unstudied by researchers. Quantitative approaches to the topics were used and global data will be presented. Predominant research topics on social television will be explained more in-depth through a qualitative approach based on a thematic analysis on the selected papers.

> Fandom is much more than regular viewing and engagement with a television show

3. Quantitative results

The total number of papers published about social television has been growing since 2006 (see figure 1). The concept of Social TV peaked in 2008, although it is still a relevant topic of study. Fandom shows a stable interest among researchers
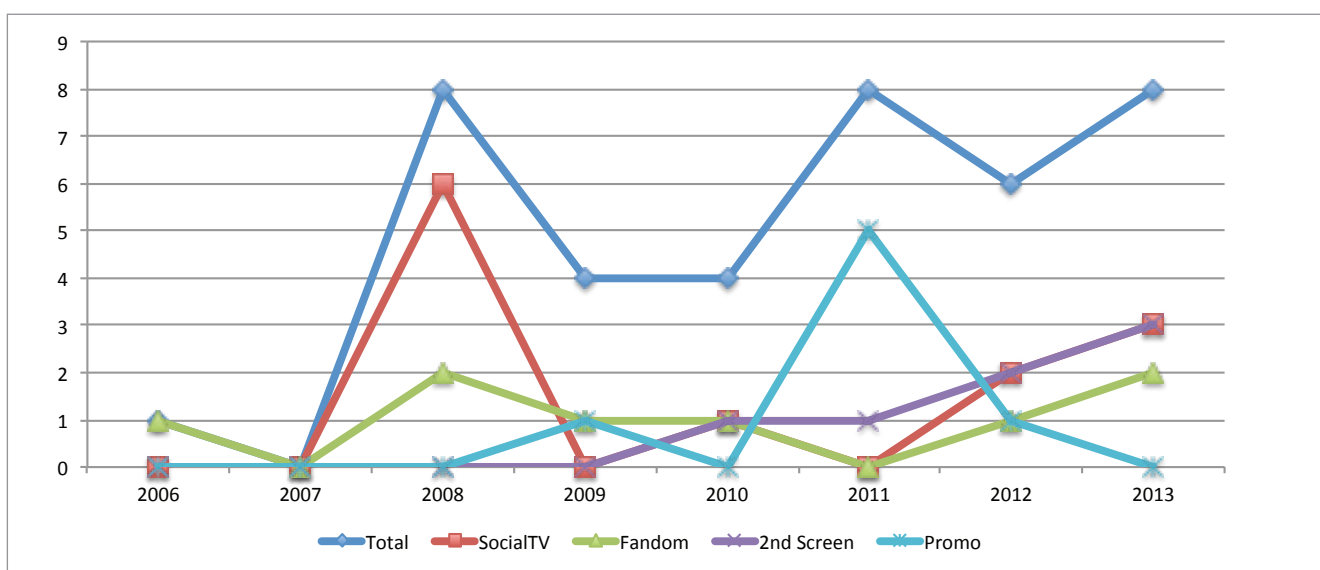

Figure 1. Number of papers published per year and by topic

Table 2. Number and percentage of papers classified in *WoS* research areas by topic

Social TV			Fandom			Second screen			Promo		
	n	%		n	%		n	%		n	%
Computer Science	8	66,7	Communication	3	37,5	Communication	3	42,9	Communication	5	71,4
Engineering	7	58,3	Asian Studies	1	12,5	Sociology	2	28,6	Business & Economics	3	42,6
Telecommunications	3	25,0	Cultural Studies	1	12,5	Computer Science	1	14,3	Computer Science	1	14,3
Communication	1	8,33	Film, Radio & Television	1	12,5	Engineering	1	14,3	Education & Educational Research	1	14,3
Information Science & Library Science	1	8,33	Humanities	1	12,5	Film, Radio & Television	1	14,3	Film Radio & Television	1	14,3
Psychology	1	8,33	Literature	1	12,5	Government & Law	1	14,3			
Social Issues	1	8,33	Multidisciplinary	1	12,5	Sport Sciences	1	14,3			
Social Sciences-Other Topics	1	8,33				Telecommunications	1	14,3			

since 2006. Fandom is much more than regular viewing and engagement with a television show. It is a framework of taste, an identity and the sense of belonging to a particular community: those who consume and deeply get involved with a specific cultural product. The study of second-screen activities shows a steady increase since 2009.

According to the *WoS* classification of the journals' research areas, the most interest in social television comes from Communication Studies, followed by Computer Sciences and Engineering (see figure 2). Slight differences exist between the disciplines and popularity of the four predominant topics; Computer Science and Engineering journals have published the most about social TV, while Communication journals published the most about second-screen activities (see table 2).

Most of the research on social television has used quantitative methods (surveys, content analysis) more frequently than qualitative tools (discourse analysis, in-depth inter-

views, focus groups, etc.). Only seven papers included a theoretical approach to the study. Few papers combine both quantitative and qualitative perspectives or follow a mixed methodology such as network analysis (see figure 3).

Regarding specific topics, articles about the use of social media as a second-screen and a promotional and marketing tool do prefer a quantitative approach; however, articles about social television and fandom show a tendency towards a theoretical and qualitative focus (see figure 3).

4. Qualitative results

4.1. Social television: making technology more social than ever

Current research about new television systems which include social media features has dealt mainly with the way users interact in this new environment (**Harboe** *et al.*, 2008; **Metcalf** *et al.*, 2008) and the perceived usefulness of these devices (**Shin**, 2013).

For **Chorianopoulos** and **Lekakos** (2008, p. 115) social television is an easy-to-use audiovisual system that gets viewers to communicate with each other by employing synchronous or asynchronous interpersonal communication modalities. **Pagani** and **Mirabello** define social television as:

"an emerging new technology medium that supports and integrates social interaction, recommendations, ratings, reviews, and interactive participation among viewers via text chat, audio, or even videoconferencing" (2011, p. 43).

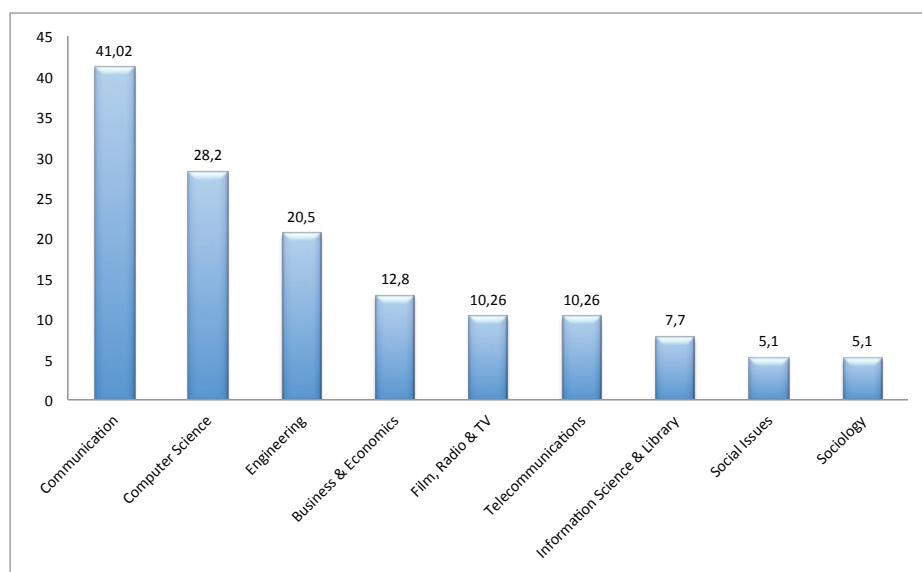According to these studies, social television is seen as an

Figure 2. Percentage of research areas of the *Web of Science* on social television. (Note: only areas where more than one paper was published are included)

adequate medium to provide distraction during commercial breaks and other slow parts of a show, but above all is seen as a tool to keep in contact with relatives and other loved ones (**Harboe** *et al.*, 2008). Not surprisingly, sociability is one of the most valued features of these platforms (**Metcalf** *et al.*, 2008, **Shin**, 2013). **Shin** (2013) concludes that users are mainly attracted to social television because of the social aspects.

Network operators, such as cable television, are investigating multiplatform architecture to deliver a social media television experience to viewers. As explained by **Carlucci** (2010), social television explores the contributions of television, web-personal computer, and mobile components to the overall experience.

Figure 3. Number of papers per methodology and by main topic of research.

The hybridizing of television and computer offers new possibilities to enhance the enjoyment of viewing while forging greater affinity between group members based on shared viewing experiences. One of the first articles published on this issue was related to one specific group: the elderly. **Sokoler** and **Sánchez-Svensson** (2008) reported on an early experience with the design of a social television system for senior citizens that used the concept of "presence remote" making it possible for elderly people to notice others and be noticed by peers within their local neighborhood as they watched television. Another more recent article by **Mu** *et al.* (2013) proposed a web-based video storytelling system for members of a large community to edit, broadcast, and report their own stories, similar to what a professional television broadcaster does.

> " Above all social television is seen as a tool to keep in contact with relatives and other loved ones (**Harboe** *et al.*, 2008) "

4.2. The role of social media in social television

Social television researchers have focused much of their attention on social media as a second screen where the television consumption experience is expanded. Social conversation and interaction, implying television consumption, does not only take place in specific television systems, but also through conventional social media and social networking sites. **Diakopoulos** and **Shamma** (2010) explained the transformation of media events into "social video experiences" through a case study of conversation on *Twitter* about the first U.S. presidential television debate in 2008 between
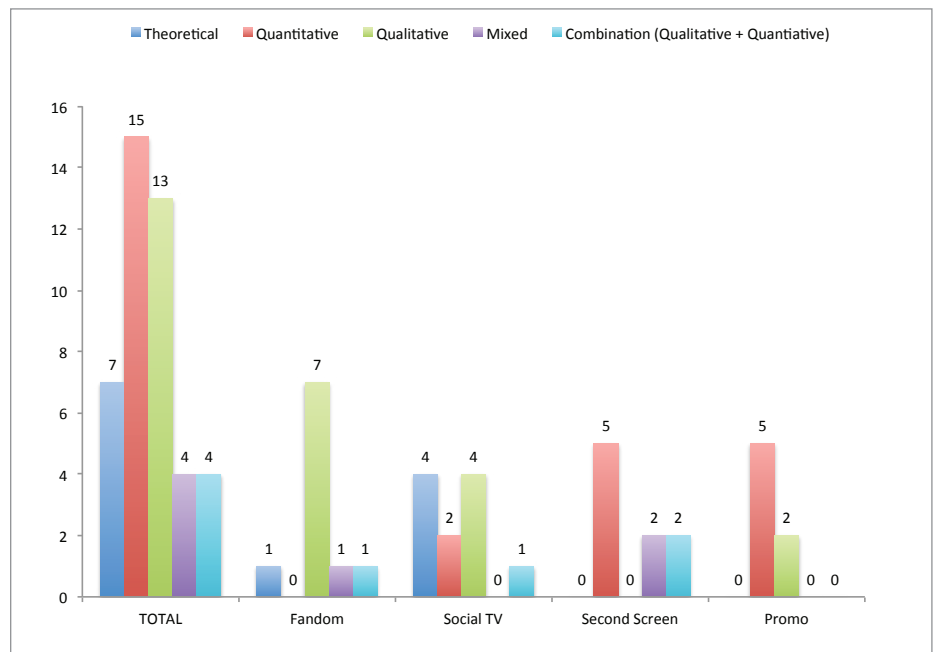
Barack Obama and John McCain. **Highfield**, **Harrington** and **Bruns** (2013) also explored *Twitter* as a backchannel of a *Eurovision* contest in Australia. Regarding methodology, the methods more frequently applied for analyzing and tracking the conversation on social media are discourse and content analysis (**Norman**, 2012; **Anstead**; **O'Loughlin**, 2011) and data analysis of social network maps (**Larsson**, 2013), level of interaction between users (**Larsson**, 2013; **Anstead**; **O'Loughlin**, 2011), frequency of messages (**Anstead**; **O'Loughlin**, 2011) or type of device used to tweet (**Lochrie**; **Coulton**, 2012). Other authors claim to employ complementary methods like virtual ethnographic techniques (**Norman**, 2012).

> " A social television system for senior citizens used the concept of 'presence remote' making it possible for elderly people to notice others and be noticed by peers within their local neighborhood as they watched television "

These studies have found how the confluence of social media and television has established a new television consumption logic where the "viewer can use social media to publish and learn new information, and engage in discussion" (**Anstead**; **O'Loughlin**, 2011: p, 457). Social media has turned into a channel which "may offer a forum for public commentary on and symbolic resistance" to certain issues (**Norman**, 2012: p. 316). Future studies should investigate to what extent social media comments about television programs reinforce or undermine the dominant discourses in traditional media.

4.3. Relationship between social television and reality TV

The correlation between reality television consumption and the use of social media has been tested through various studies (**Stefanone**; **Lackaff**, 2009; **Stefanone**; **Lackaff**; **Rosen**, 2010). According to these studies reality television consumption is positively related to: time spent in social networking site profiles, the number of connections a user has on social networking sites, the proportion of users' connections in online social networks who they have never met face-to-face, and the tendency to share their photographs on social networking sites (**Stefanone**; **Lackaff**; **Rosen**, 2010). Yet, this correlation does not imply causation between exposure to reality television and the use of social media. As the authors of these studies remark, these studies do not consider other factors such as personality (voyeuristic trends, for instance) or different preferences toward subgenres of reality television (**Stefanone**; **Lackaff**; **Rosen**, 2010).

> Future studies should investigate to what extent social media comments about TV programs reinforce or undermine the dominant discourses in traditional media

4.4. Social networks as a promotional tool for TV content

Scientific literature shows how social networks have not only changed television consumption patterns but they have also affected the way in which television channels promote their content through these new tools as they seek a higher level of engagement from their audience. **Greer** and **Ferguson** (2011) conducted a study focused on *Twitter* users to determine what these viewers-followers liked the most about their favorite sites and their motivations for following local television on microblogging networks. Their study concluded that *Twitter* could be useful to understand the preferences of the audiences. Nevertheless, not all the viewers of a show use social networks actively.

The use of second-screen strategies via the internet increases audience involvement and contributes to the success of television shows. **Ytreberg** (2009) concluded that the international success of formats such as *Pop (American) Idol* and *Big Brother* at the beginning of the millennium could partly be attributed to the rise of a working formula for combining broadcasting with digital platforms. **Pagani** and **Mirabello** (2011), through an online sample of 814 European and American users, remarked that participation and interaction in TV web sites such as *Veetle TV* or *Loom TV* are boosted by the richness of applications and content offered to users. **Campbell** (2011) carried out a case study focused on *iVillage*, an online community aimed at women that is part of the *NBC Group*; the article presents how consumers in this community get actively involved in promoting corporate brands through their user-generated content.

4.5. New expressions on TV fandom as a mainstream activity

Social television has changed the way fandom feels and expresses itself through new media. Fandom is still a self-awareness and self-determination of fans as fans. But one of the new characteristics is the "mainstreaming of fandom", quite different from the previous understanding of the term based on cult status and unique elite. **Leora Hadas** and **Limor Shifman** studied the fan-producer relationship with a case study of the TV series *Doctor Who*, a cult series revived by a fan turned producer. This case study demonstrates how fans do not present resistance to the mainstream. In their view, fandom must acknowledge that even if web 2.0 platforms make it easy for fans to get organized and express their opinions, their position is no more privileged than it has ever been (2013).

> The use of second-screen strategies via the internet increases audience involvement and contributes to the success of television shows

5. Conclusions

This review highlights the increasing importance of social television within high-profile academic research, especially within communication and computer science fields. The main conclusions highlight how viewers are attracted to social television because of its social aspects (connection to their peers, conversation, and second-screen activities). This review also found a lack of studies about the routines and habits of television viewers on social platforms other than *Twitter*. New studies should explore how and why television viewers comment and interact with others through instant messaging services such as *Telegram*, *Line*, or *Whatsapp*. Regarding methods, very few studies employed user-centered methodologies, such as surveys or focus groups, or in-depth interviews. Social television research should combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explain the motivations and reasons which drive users to comment, who users expect to read their comments, and what kind of information they expect to find on social media. Also, studies should expand and cover more cases and scenarios. Most papers analyzed are reduced to comments on a unique case (one show) and one cultural scenario (users from only one country). A cross-cultural approach on social television should be undertaken, along with a wider perspective of the phenomenon taking into account the multiplatform consumption of television within a transmedia scenario.

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