New York City’s Ethnic Media in the Digital Age

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December 2016
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Acknowledgements

This report was supported through a grant made to the University at Albany, State University of New York by the Center for Community and Ethnic Media (http://ccem.journalism.cuny.edu/).

The Principal Investigator wishes to thank CUNY Graduate School of Journalism students Kizzy Cox and Bianca Flowers for their help with reaching out to ethnic media producers during the first phase of this project for the purposes of recruiting participants into the survey.

Recommended Citation

No doubt the impact of the Internet on the media industry over the past two decades has been profound. Media organizations, industry experts, academics, and policymakers continue to try to make sense of and adapt to the changing landscape. In this context, researchers, policymakers, ethnic community and media advocates have suggested that ethnic media — that is, media created for (and generally by) immigrants, ethnic minority and linguistic minority groups, and indigenous populations — have been unable or have found it less necessary to adapt to the new industry realities. However, there is a paucity of data on what ethnic media organizations are actually doing in the digital age. This study was designed to help address this dearth of information.

The urgency of filling this gap in the literature is accentuated by research showing that, even in the digital age, ethnic media serve critical information needs (frequently referred to by policymakers as CINs) of millions of individuals and families across the United States. These are needs for information, among other things, regarding job and educational opportunities, health issues (e.g., changes in insurance policies), emergency preparedness, and of course politics and civic affairs (Friedland, Napoli, Ognyanova, Weil, & Wilson, 2012). As much of this information is migrating online, for ethnic media to continue to effectively fill the CINs that their audiences and, increasingly, government agencies (e.g., County and State Departments of Health, State Departments of Consumer Protection, the U.S. Census Bureau) depend on them for, they too must get (or remain) ahead of the technological innovation curve.

The research project we report on here unfolded in New York City—the largest media market and one of the most ethnically diverse urban centers in the country—and was designed to document how ethnic media were responding to challenges of the digital age; specifically, how they incorporated the Web, social media, and apps into their everyday professional and organizational practices. The larger objective is for findings from this project to inform efforts that will help ethnic media organizations develop technological capacity and their initiatives to adapt to the new media landscape. Success at this level is important for ethnic media to continue to serve the CINs of segments of American society that continue to be disproportionately affected by communication inequalities and other social disparities.

Some of the key findings from this multistage study, which involved a survey of 103 ethnic media producers and follow-up, semi-structured interviews with a subsample of 20 producers are presented, in brief, below.

**How the Internet Helps (or Can Help) Ethnic Media Organizations Get Ahead?**

- Asked about how helpful the Internet is or could be for accomplishing an array of organizational goals, ethnic media producers said that the Internet is or could be “very helpful” for: (a) reaching out to new audiences (65%), (b) distributing content to their main audiences (63%), (c) making sure audience members know how to get in touch with the media organization (58%), (d) getting suggestions for stories by the audience (57%), (e) making it easier for members of the organization to work together (55%), (f) getting feedback from audience members about stories produced (55%), and (g) competing against other media that targeted the same audiences as they do (50%).
While these goals were also identified in the interviews, producers spoke about additional motivations for using the Internet and specifically for making an effort to develop a presence on the Web. The most common among these was to promote their organization’s brand; that is to say several producers saw having a website as an indicator of professionalism, which they expected would be appreciated by advertisers.

Additionally, several producers recognized that the Internet presented them with new challenges, from a competition perspective, as they are now forced to compete directly with media produced outside their local market (i.e., beyond New York and frequently beyond the U.S.), but also that being online affords them new opportunities for growth. For example, they can now expand into new markets and reach new audiences across one or multiple countries (one producer indicated, for instance, that Japanese ethnic media in New York can be appealing to individuals in Japan who are considering doing business in New York, moving or just visiting the city). Additionally, the Internet allowed them to rely on media production sources (writers, photographers, layout artists) in markets outside the U.S., where labor was typically cheaper.

Most Ethnic Media on the Web, 1 in 3 Experimenting with Apps

Nine out of 10 of the media that participated in the survey (90%) said that they had a website, while another 7% indicated that they had one in the past.

Ethnic media producers whose organizations had a website (either at the time the survey was administered or in the past) indicated that their organizations used the website mainly: (a) to post stories as text (72%), photos (69%), and videos (45%), (b) for the audience to find information necessary, such as an e-mail address, to communicate with members of the organization (41%), and (c) for audience members to offer feedback on content by posting public comments (39%). Few producers indicated their organizations used their websites to stream content, host blogs, archive and disseminate podcasts, and facilitate audience members setting up RSS feeds.

We also asked ethnic media organizations about their experience with applications (apps). About 1 in 3 organizations indicated that they had an app at the time of the survey (29%), 7% said they had one in the past and 57% reported that they never had an app.

A quarter of the ethnic media that completed the survey for this project said they had full-time staff that managed the organization’s website, another quarter had part-time staff that did this, while one in five organizations relied on volunteers. Another 24% said that they had no one in particular who managed their website. The interviews, however, provided a richer understanding of the variety of website management practices that producers employed.

Strategies for Developing an Audience Base on the Web and Offline

Most producers shared an interest in developing their online audience base and expressed their concern about maintaining or growing their audience offline. Producers spoke about several of the strategies they employed to accomplish these goals. These included: (a) selectively publishing online content available offline, (b) posting “teasers” for stories published off the Web, (c) organizing contests to drive audience to their website, (d) developing their capacity for multimedia storytelling (e.g., produce content that can be distributed in print and via video).
Social Media Used for Wide Array of Goals, but Seen by Many Mainly as Branding Tools

- Just over 8 out of 10 of the ethnic media organizations (82%) that participated in the survey reported having an account on social networking sites (social media). Another 5% indicated they did not have an account on social media currently but did so in the past, and 11% said they never owned social media accounts. Most ethnic media producers interviewed indicated that they thought social media were shaping the media industry in significant ways, for better or worse.

- On average, the ethnic media organizations that participated in the survey reported having accounts on three different social media. The most popular social media ethnic media reported using included Facebook (69%), Twitter (52%), YouTube (34%), Google+ (23%), LinkedIn (21%), and Instagram (10%).

- The top organizational goal that producers said the Internet could help them accomplish was reaching out to new audiences or expanding their audience base. When asked the same question in the survey regarding social media, the goal that most producers mentioned was “building up their organization’s brand” (46% indicated this goal was “very important”). This was followed by “learning about their audience,” “interacting with their audience,” and “attracting potential advertisers.”

- Interviews revealed an even larger list of goals for which producers relied on individual and combinations of social media platforms, including: (a) staying on top of the news and finding leads for stories, (b) reporting on major news events (e.g., events taking place in an intended audience’s country of origin), (c) coordinating work teams within the U.S. and across borders, (d) promoting their content and their organization, and (e) developing new revenue streams (through the monetization of their audience base on social media).

- In addition to general trends regarding social media popularity, producers identified four more important factors that shaped what social media they used and how: (a) the popularity of specific social media platforms in the country or countries of origin of their audience members, (b) the demographics of their target audience, (c) the type of content they produced (e.g., political news versus travel or fashion-related stories), and (d) their perceptions regarding the mission of particular social media organizations.

What Determines Ethnic Media Producers’ Intentions to Adopt and Use Social Media?

Survey data analyses indicated that the extent to which ethnic media producers believed that social media were helpful for accomplishing their goals (performance expectancy) and the extent to which they thought it was easy to use these communication technologies (effort expectancy) were two key factors that influenced positively their intentions to adopt social media for work (as well as actually using them). Two additional factors that emerged as significant predictors of producers’ intentions to use social media were communication in their organizations about new communication technologies and social media, as well as their perceptions about whether they were ahead or behind the curve compared to mainstream media when it came to adoption and use of social media. Specifically, producers who were more likely to report that their organizations were doing better with respect to incorporating social media into their everyday professional practices were more likely to also report that they intended to adopt and used social media. Communication about technology in the organization had a positive, indirect effect on producers’ intentions to use social media, by first influencing producers’ perceptions regarding the usefulness of these technologies. These findings can guide future efforts to encourage adoption of social media in ethnic media newsrooms.
Constraints to Making the Most of the Internet

Of the ethnic media that reported not having a website or not using social media in the survey, the most common reasons given by producers included lack of staff and financial resources. These constraints were also cited in interviews as reasons why ethnic media organizations are not doing as much as they would like to be doing online. Other constraints were mentioned as well, including:

- The notion that no online ventures are profitable
- Limited digital literacy among ethnic media producers
- Perceptions that their audience lacked interest in consuming media online
- Lack of interest among owners and upper management in investing to develop a strong Internet presence
- Lack of younger staff members
- Competition from mainstream media based in ethnic media audiences’ country (or countries) of origin, which is made possible through and is fueled by technological innovation.

Instrumental Support from Younger Family Members as an Enabling Factor

Most ethnic media organizations are small in size, which frequently means lack of sufficient human and financial resources to make the most of new communication technologies. At the same time, though, many of these smaller organizations resemble family businesses and several producers interviewed spoke about how having their children get involved in their media organization’s operations had helped them gain a better understanding of the Internet and related applications and services, but also innovate.

The Continued Importance of E-mail, E-newsletters, and “E-papers”

At a time when a lot of thought, financial resources, and hours of work are devoted to figuring out how to best use social media and apps in the newsroom, ethnic media producers stressed how much they continued to rely on e-mail, e-newsletters, and e-papers (versions of their print products encoded in a PDF and made available on the Web to be read on computer screens, tablets, smartphones, and e-readers) to coordinate news production, but also to distribute their content to their audiences.

Keeping on Top of the Competition’s Responses to Technological Innovation

Interestingly, when asked questions about how their competitors were trying to strengthen their position in their market, a large number of producers indicated that they did not know. In fact, 22% of the producers said they did not know if competitors were trying to create and promote new content. Additionally, more than 1 in 4 of the producers surveyed indicated that they did not know if competitors were investing in technology to help them produce new content and if competitors were making an effort to adopt technology and use it to engage audiences.
INTRODUCTION

The Internet and related information and communication technologies have turned the media industry on its ear. They have challenged and in many ways fundamentally changed the way that media interact with their audiences, the modes of media production and competition, as well as established business models. In recent years, mainstream media have tried and tested a variety of approaches to effectively respond to these challenges and changes, with varying levels of success.

Our media landscape, though, is not made up of mainstream media alone. In fact, ethnic media – that is media created for (and generally by) immigrants, ethnic minority and linguistic minority groups, and indigenous populations – have been growing in size, audience, and visibility worldwide, as well as in the United States (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). A 2009 study indicated that nearly 60 million Americans regularly get their news and other information from ethnically targeted television, radio, newspapers, and websites; that figure was 16 percent lower just four years earlier (Allen, 2009). In 2012 and 2013, two directories of ethnic media across the United States included a total of over 3,000 such media organizations (Center for Community and Ethnic Media, 2013; New America Media, 2012). These data suggest that increased demographic diversity in the United States is attended by increased diversity in the media landscape.

As demographic diversity increases across the U.S. and ethnic media become more prevalent in our media environments, there is a felt need to know more about how ethnic media producers are addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities associated with Internet adoption and the emergence of new communication technologies. The reason is simple, although not readily acknowledged by media producers and other media market stakeholders, as well as policymakers.

Research has documented and continues to show the many ways in which communication and social inequalities are intertwined and how together they affect individuals’, families’, and communities’ ability to get ahead in the digital age. Immigrant and ethnic communities are disproportionately affected by these inequalities. As critical information regarding, for instance, public health emergencies, job- and education-related opportunities, but also important services (e.g., municipal, tax-related) migrate online and are no longer available offline, these inequalities may grow. It has been argued that ethnic media serve ethnic communities’ critical information needs (CINs) and are in a position to help eliminate communication inequalities, because their audiences see them as credible and trusted information sources (Friedland, Napoli, Ognyanova, Weil, & Wilson, 2012; Matsaganis et al., 2011). Ethnic media’s ability to contribute in this direction, though, in the digital age depends on whether they themselves are on top of technological innovations shaping the media industry today (Katz, Matsaganis, & Ball-Rokeach, 2012; Matsaganis & Katz, 2016).

Several ethnic media experts, academics and professionals, have indicated that ethnic media organizations are lagging behind mainstream media with respect to Internet adoption and the use of related technologies to produce and distribute content, communicate with their audiences, and develop new revenue streams. Some have argued that this is because ethnic media organizations tend to be smaller, local operations, and often are non-profit entities. As
such, they frequently lack the technological know-how, the human and financial resources necessary to create and maintain online content (Katz et al., 2012; Federal Communications Commission, 2010). From a different perspective, others suggest that ethnic media may be protected from the challenges created by the Internet (e.g., cannibalization of offline content, new sources of competition), mainly for two reasons:

- Because ethnic media often serve lower-income immigrant and ethnic minority communities that are disproportionately likely to be under-connected to broadband (Katz et al., 2012); and
- Because ethnic media are well-positioned in niche and local markets to provide valuable content, for which other media (traditional and new) cannot provide substitutes. This is true especially for ethnic media that are in tune with socio-demographic shifts in the communities they serve and are responsive to differences across generations in terms of media tastes (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

That said, there is a lack of research to adequately support the hypotheses that ethnic media continue to lag behind mainstream media in Internet adoption rates, as well as either of the abovementioned lines of reasoning for why non-adoption of new communication technologies is less consequential for ethnic media. Moreover, while it is clear that some of the largest ethnic media in the U.S. (e.g., Univisión, Sing Tao Daily) have been on the Web for a few years, it has been argued that the recent economic crisis forced ethnic media (of all sizes) across the U.S. to innovate (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). In several cases this has meant that producers ended their offline business and migrated to the Internet. The impact that this sort of forced innovation has had on these media, however, remains unclear.

Finally, recent policy-oriented work has suggested that ethnic media organizations can act as intermediaries to explain broadband to their audiences in culturally tailored, locally relevant ways. These media can also help what the FCC has referred to in the National Broadband Plan as “anchor institutions” (e.g., schools, public libraries, and community technology centers) expand their capabilities to provide broadband access and related skills training to community members (Matsaganis et al., 2011; Katz et al., 2012). However, there is a need for more data to answer the questions of if, how, and under what conditions ethnic media can play these important roles and contribute not only to further diffusion of broadband, but also to social inclusion. These realities suggest that research on how ethnic media organizations are using the Internet is sorely needed.

The research project we report on here focused on New York City, which is the biggest media market and one of the most ethnically diverse urban centers in the country. The research team endeavored to document how ethnic media were responding to challenges of the digital age. Specifically, researchers focused on how ethnic media incorporated the Web, social media, and apps into their everyday professional and organizational practices. The hope is that findings from this project will guide efforts to help ethnic media organizations develop technological capacity and adapt to the new media landscape. Doing so is crucial for ethnic media to continue to serve the CINs of segments of American society that are disproportionately affected by communication and other social inequalities.
This study focused primarily on ethnic media organizations and producers serving immigrant communities across New York City. The main reason for this choice was that immigrant and ethnic minority media are likely to differ in how they orientate towards the Internet. Ethnic minority media (such as African American and Native American media) are likely to not have to worry, for instance, about competition from media based in a country other than the U.S., to which their audience members have ties. Also, ethnic media serving immigrant communities (of older and younger generations) are likely to have different missions compared to ethnic media serving minority populations (again, such as African American and indigenous populations). For example, the former face challenges related to migration, settlement, and orientation in U.S. society, that are not shared by long-established minority communities (Adoni, Caspi, & Cohen, 2006; Bailey, Georgiou, & Harindranath, 2007; Elias, 2008).

A multipronged research strategy was employed to investigate if, what, and how ethnic media organizations in New York City are using new communication technologies, as well as examine determinants of and barriers to technology adoption. In Phase 1, the research team conducted a survey of ethnic media producers across the larger New York City area. In Phase 2, research team members followed up and interviewed, in person (and in few instances by phone) a subsample of producers who completed the survey, so as to gain further insight and to elaborate on the patterns that emerged from the analysis of the survey data.

**Phase 1: Survey of Ethnic Media Producers**

All ethnic media organizations that fit the description mentioned above and that were included in the 2014 version of the directory produced by the Center for Community and Ethnic Media were eligible to participate in the survey (made available online through the platform Qualtrics). An invitation to participate in the survey was sent via e-mail to 270 New York City-based ethnic media organizations. Multiple e-mail messages distributed to ethnic media organizations by the research team were followed up by phone calls to individual producers by one of CCEM’s Co-Directors and student research assistants both from the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and from the Department of Communication at University at Albany, SUNY. The research team and CCEM discussed and agreed to offer ethnic media producers access to two workshops offered by the CCEM, as an incentive for participating in the survey. By the end of the study a total of 103 ethnic media organizations had completed the survey. (*Additional details about the characteristics of these media are provided in Part 1 of the Findings reported below.*)

The survey was designed to gauge ethnic media organizations’ level of Internet use, goals sought through the use of Internet-related communication technologies (including those available via mobile devices), barriers to and factors that enabled adoption of communication technologies, producers’ attitudes towards and beliefs about the Internet, as well as their understanding of their audience, market dynamics and competition.
Phase 2: Interviews with Ethnic Media Producers

Over the summer and early fall of 2015, and after the completion of Phase 1 of the study, the research team re-contacted a subset of ethnic media producers who had previously completed the survey to conduct semi-structured interviews to gain further insight into their level of engagement with new communication technologies. Additionally, the team reached out to a small number of producers who had not completed the survey, in order to explore whether these producers and the organizations they represented were qualitatively different from those who did participate in Phase 1. The total sample of producers interviewed was 20.

Interviews were conducted in person (with the exception of two completed over the telephone) and lasted an average of 48 minutes each. Table 1 below reflects the types of media that participated in this phase of the study. Interviews were recorded, transcribed in their entirety and research team members, working in pairs, read and coded every interview for key themes. NVivo, a software package designed to assist with the analysis of qualitative data, but also MS Word and MS Excel were used to organize findings. Team members shared and discussed their findings in pairs and with the whole research team, in order to identify larger issues and themes emerging from the data, and to resolve differences in opinion regarding the interpretation of particular segments of interviews.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed the project’s data collection protocols, in presenting findings from the interviews, the research team has provided general identifiers and does not disclose the identity of the individuals interviewed and of the organizations they represented.

Table 1: Ethnic Media that Participated in Phase 2 of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type (Newspapers and Magazines)</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Copy Format Only</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Online Only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Copy Format and Online</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type (Radio)</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the Air Only:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Online Only:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the Air and Online:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type (Television)</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the Air or Cable Only:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Online Only:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the Air or Cable and Online:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the pages that follow, we summarize our findings from the analyses of data collected from both the first phase (survey) and the second phase (interviews) of the project. We present the findings thematically and therefore, wherever possible, we draw on both our survey and interview data. Although the majority of quotes included in each part of the report are representative of dominant themes in the data on particular topics, we have also included certain quotes that helped us identify ethnic media that approached and used new communication technologies in unique and possibly innovative ways.

In *Part 1*, based on the survey data, we describe the characteristics of the media organizations and the producers who participated in the study, but also the characteristics of the audiences of these media relying on the information shared by the ethnic media producers.

In *Part 2* the focus is on ethnic media producers’ evaluation of their efforts to stay on top of technological innovation, the ways in which they have incorporated the Web into their everyday professional practices, their motivations for, and, of course, the constrains they have faced in doing so.

*Part 3* emphasizes more narrowly on ethnic media producers' experiences with social media, the goals producers have striven to achieve through the use of social media, the factors that account for social media adoption and use in ethnic media organizations, as well as the constraints producers and organizations have confronted as they have endeavored to incorporate social media into the everyday professional practices.

In the final part of the report and informed by the research project’s findings, we provide *recommendations* that we hope will facilitate ethnic media organizations’ efforts to innovate and successfully adapt to the new media landscape.
Part I: Profile of Participant Organizations and their Audiences

Characteristics of Ethnic Media Organizations & the Producers Who Participated in the Study

Organizations’ Age

- Half of the 103 organizations that took part in the study had been in operation between 6 and 20 years, while another 40% more than 20 years.

Organizations’ Staff

- Additionally, nearly 3 out of 4 of the organizations (74%) had no more than 9 staff members. Another 11% reported having between 10 and 19 members on staff. On average, NYC ethnic media organizations indicated that they employed slightly more women than men (50%-60% women compared to 40%-50% men).

Sources of Financial Support

- Just under three quarters of the participant organizations (72%) reported an annual budget of up to $349,000 (44% indicated their annual budget was under $150,000). Another 13% reported a budget between $350,000 and $549,000.
- Most ethnic media organizations (44%) indicated that they were supported by revenue generated through advertising. Figure 1 below shows what other sources of financial support ethnic media producers reported as being essential.

Figure 1. How ethnic media support themselves.
Ethnic Media by Platform and Their Content

a. Print media

A total of 86 media that completed the survey indicated that they produced a newsletter, newspaper, or magazine. Figures 2, 3, and 4 capture the frequency of publication, reported circulation, as well as whether the print media that participated in the study reported having their circulations audited or not.

Figure 2. Frequency of publication (% of print media that participated in the study)

Figure 3. Circulation reported (% of print media)

Figure 4. Circulation audited or not (% of print media)
b. Radio

Figure 5 shows how frequently participating ethnic media that reported producing radio programming broadcast content. None of these 14 media reported having their ratings monitored on a regular basis.

![Figure 5. Frequency of broadcast (% of media that produced radio content)](image)

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c. Television

Figure 6 shows how frequently participating ethnic media broadcast content for television. Only one of these 19 media that indicated they produced content for television also reported having its ratings monitored on a regular basis.

![Figure 6. Frequency of broadcast (% media that produced TV content)](image)
Demographic Characteristics of Producers Who Participated in the Study

The average age of the ethnic media producers who participated in the study was 52 years, two thirds were male, 9 out of 10 reported having completed a four-year college program or having earned a graduate degree, 82% said they spoke English fluently and 92% indicated that they also spoke fluently the language most of their audience members spoke. The median household income that producers reported was between $70,000 and $79,999.

Audience Characteristics of NYC Ethnic Media that Participated in the Study

Together all the ethnic media organizations that participated in the survey reported serving populations of people who were either born in or traced their ancestry to over 30 different countries. We asked participant ethnic media producers to identify the countries in which their audience members were born and the countries in which their audience traced their ancestry, as for several ethnic media at least part of their target audience may have been born in the United States (as would be the case, for example, with media produced for second generation Mexican-origin residents of New York City). Figure 7 (below) shows the variety of countries and origins producers identified.

In addition, we asked producers whether the parents of their primary target audience were born in the U.S.; 82% answered “no,” indicating that for most of the ethnic media that participated in the study, their primary audience was made up of first and second generation immigrant populations. Finally, when asked to describe their audiences, 41% of the media indicated their target audience spoke a language other than English at home, while another 32% said their target audience comprised individuals who spoke English and some other language at home equally.

Ethnic media that participated in the study indicated efforts to appeal to a wide array of age groups, although the most commonly mentioned target age group was 30-49, followed by 50-64, 18-29, and 65 or older. That said, with respect to age, over half (51%) of the producers reported targeting either three or four different age groups.

With respect to income, overall, ethnic media producers said that most of their target audience had a household income between $20,000 and $99,999. Additionally, they reported that most of their target audience had a high school diploma or had achieved a higher level of education.
Figure 7. Where the majority of ethnic media’s audience was born and to what country it traces its ancestry (according to the ethnic media producers)
Ethnic Media Organizations and Technology Adoption: Ahead or Behind the Curve?

Ethnic producers generally rated their organizations well with respect to accepting and using new communication technologies, with 35% of them indicating that their organization was “fairly good” in this respect, another 30% rating their organization as “very good” and another 27% as “quite good.” Only 6% rated their organization as “not good at all.”

A quarter (26%) of the ethnic media organizations in the study said that they thought their organization was ahead of the curve with respect to how much they used new communication and information technologies compared to other ethnic media that served the same audiences as they did. Over half of the participants (58%) said that their organization was doing about average in terms of using the Internet and social media, while another 11% said they felt that their organization was behind the curve.

When asked to compare themselves to mainstream media, ethnic media producers assessed their level of use of new communication technologies less favorably: 44% indicated that they were behind the curve, another 37% said they were doing about average, and only 9% indicated that they were ahead of the curve.

Keeping on Top of the Competition’s Responses to Technological Innovation

Approximately one third of the producers reported that their competition was trying to lower their prices (29%), to promote new content (36%), and to adopt technology that would help them engage audiences (33%). Another 24% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that competitors were investing in technology to produce new content.

It is noteworthy, however, that when asked questions about how their competitors were trying to strengthen their position in their market, many of the producers indicated that they did not know. In fact, 30% of producers indicated that they did not know if their competition was trying to lower the price of their offerings and 22% said they did not know if competitors were trying to produce and promote new content. Moreover, 28% and 30% of the producers, respectively, indicated that they did not know if competitors were investing in technology to help them produce new content, and if competitors were making an effort to adopt technology to engage audiences.

Presence on the Web and Use of Apps

Nine out of 10 of the media that participated in the survey (90%) said that they had a website, while another 7% indicated that they had one in the past.

Additionally, about 1 in 3 organizations indicated that they had an application (app) at the time of the survey (29%), 7% said they had one in the past and 57% reported that they never had an app.
Pursuing Organizational Goals and the Role of the Internet

As asked about how helpful the Internet is or could be for accomplishing an array of organizational goals, ethnic media producers said that the Internet is or could be "very helpful" for: (a) reaching out to new audiences (65%), (b) distributing content to their main audiences (63%), (c) making sure audience members know how to get in touch with the media organization (58%), (d) getting suggestions for stories by the audience (57%), (e) making it easier for members of the organization to work together (55%), (f) getting feedback from audience members about stories produced (55%), and (g) competing against other media that targeted the same audiences as they do (50%).

While these goals were also identified in the interviews, in our one-on-one conversations, producers spoke about additional motivations for using the Internet and specifically for making an effort to develop a presence on the Web. The quotes below speak to ways in which the Internet was seen as important for the actual production and distribution of media content, but also to the fact that producers saw being online as necessary from a branding perspective. Moreover, several producers recognized that the Internet presented them with new challenges, from a competition point of view, as being online forced them to compete directly with media produced outside their local market (i.e., beyond New York and frequently beyond the U.S.). However, they also identified ways in which being online presented them with new opportunities for growth. For example, ethnic media can now expand into new markets and reach new audiences across one or multiple countries (e.g., as indicated in one of the quotes below, Japanese ethnic media in New York can be appealing to Japanese audiences in Japan).

Figure 8. The Internet and achieving organizational goals (scores represent % of producers)
The Internet as Critical for Content Production and Distribution

Interviewer: “Today is Wednesday, so today is your printing day. For the radio, how do you develop the programs? Do you have people that produce specific programs over the course of the week?”
Producer: “I have somebody in India. It’s South Asian Radio. She’s preparing the programs and links and then she puts them on the FTP, and then I have somebody in Karachi in Pakistan. He’s making his programming and puts it on the FTP.”

Interviewer: “Okay, I see. And with your magazine?”
Producer: “I have an office in India. I have an office in Pakistan and here is my office, too. So basically I control all that and we print here in New York. But I’ll just pay for making the pages in Pakistan.”

— Interview with producer of print media and radio programming for South Asian-origin audiences

“I didn’t want to do streaming all the time, too, because not everyone has Internet all the time, or phone, apps, nothing. So, I spoke with everyone, like the radio people. I just wanted to record my voice; invite guests; play music. I knew how to do these things. That’s no problem for me. I needed a website, and I wanted to have that package so when you click, you can play that…. Then, finally I found podcasts. So, I said, ‘Okay. Let’s do it.’ So, that’s the beginning. I started it, and everybody loved it. YouTube was not popular then. Facebook wasn’t there. Twitter was not there. My listeners from back home, when they left the United States or were living in another part of the world, were missing that FM radio, because FM radio was on the rise back home. Everybody used to listen to it on the radio. So, they were missing their voice; music; interviews. So, many people told me, ‘You mesmerize. You brought that Nepali-ness here.’ I thought that was cool. So, that was the beginning. It’s a weekly. I make a lot of shows – at least five different type of categories of shows.”

— Producer of radio programming for Nepali-origin audiences

A Presence Online is Necessary for Branding

“I think there is a realization now that there is no money to be made on the net. But at the same time, your product has to have a certain profile, and your product has to have a certain – it has to be talked about in the media, and you can’t go to your advertiser and [have them] say, ‘Oh, does he already have a website?’ So now we use the Internet only to show ourselves as a modern media organization.”

— Producer of radio programming for South Asian-origin audiences

“And our business model was always focusing on the print. The reason why I have a website is because every publication has to be on the Internet, and you have to be there, you have to be able to connect to people, you have to be able to tell people.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

The Internet Brings More Competition, But Also Opportunities for Growth

“People don’t need a paper newspaper to the same extent that they needed this five, ten years ago. This is the main source of information for everyone. We don’t have our own app; however, we are present online. Creating an app would be the next priority for our management. But we’ve changed a lot. I started in 1991, so simple information from Poland was scarce. Even after Communism collapsed in 1989, it was difficult to get useful information from Poland. There was access through newswires, but that was it. There was no Internet. Right now, we are living in an era of immediate information. That raises lots of questions about our existence as newspapers…. [There’s] a lot of competition. There are two other newspapers in New York in Polish. Lots of websites.”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences
“We don’t only cover the business material. There is a possibility that we can grow more. That’s what we believe. And at the same time, we wanted to get more readers from Japan, too. Because the people from Japan, they’re also interested in New York. They wanted to come here and have a business, of course, for the trip, too… Like, they do overseas travel a lot. So we wanted to spread the story from New York to Japan.”

— Producer of newspaper for Japanese-origin audiences

“Because when people look – search for Indian news or other such, they Google ‘South Asia.’ But some of our original content and some of the content about the community, the Indian community here, will be of some interest to Indians living in India also. So they may be accessing our website.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“Being online makes the paper exposed to a much wider audience. The readership is 10, 20 times as much as it was before. But we have less money for doing it. And also we have some additional contributors; I have not even met them. These are people who have stumbled on the paper on the web and they can write. And I decided, I said, hey, I like this. I have two guys in Africa, for example. One is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The other one is in Benin. And they saw the paper and they say: hey, we like this one.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

**Developing Content for the Web**

Ethnic media producers whose organizations had a website (either at the time the survey was administered or in the past) indicated that their organizations used the website mainly: (a) to post stories as text (72%), photos (69%), and videos (45%), (b) for the audience to find information necessary, such as an e-mail address, to communicate with members of the organization (41%), and (c) for audience members to offer feedback on content by posting public comments (39%). Few producers indicated their organizations used their websites to stream content, host blogs, archive and disseminate podcasts, and facilitate audience members setting up RSS feeds.

**How Much Original Content Ethnic Media Organizations Produce**

Between one quarter and one third of ethnic media producers serving NYC communities (30%) reported that 75% or more of the content that they produced was original and produced by their staff members. One quarter said between 50% and 75% of their content was produced by their staff and was original. Another 30% indicated that over 25% but not more than 50% of their content was original and produced by staff, while 16% said that no more than 25% of their content fell into this category.

**Content On and Off the Internet**

Since the early days of online media ventures, media producers have expressed concern that their online ventures would cannibalize their offline media products. Therefore different media organizations make different decisions regarding if and how much to differentiate their online and offline content. When asked in the context of the survey, nearly 65% of New York City ethnic media producers indicated that all or most of their online content could also be found offline (36% indicated that only some or none of their online content could also be found offline).
Smartphone- and Tablet-Specific Version of website

- Half of the ethnic media organizations surveyed and that had a website indicated that they produced a specific version for users who accessed their site from a smartphone or tablet.
- However, 8% of the producers indicated that they did not know whether they produced a smartphone- or tablet-friendly version.
- Two thirds (69%) of the producers working for ethnic media with a website said that their site was somewhat (46%) or very user friendly (23%); 10% said their site was not user friendly at all when accessed via a smartphone or tablet, and another 22% said they did not know.

Website Management

The combination of survey and interview data revealed a diverse set of approaches that ethnic media producers take to managing their presence on the Web.

A quarter of the ethnic media that completed the survey for this project said they had full-time staff that managed the organization's website, another quarter had part-time staff that did this, while one in five organizations relied on volunteers. Another 24% said that they had no one in particular who managed their website.

The interviews, however, provided a better understanding of website management practices. For instance, several media indicated that they had passed on the responsibility for the development of a website to a third party under an agreement that allowed them to keep up to half the proceeds from revenue made from the online venture. Additionally, in one case, a producer of a publication for Indian-origin audiences shared that his organization had outsourced the maintenance and updating of part of their website to a news service based in India. That news service provided the publication most of its content about news from India.

“The online edition needs maintenance. If not daily, at least weekly. I knew a young married couple. They offered to maintain this for free just to help me out. I also made a financial deal with them in case their website and design generated publicity and income. Then, we would split it in half.... Not from the print. I send them the material I want to put online. I’m not putting everything that’s in the paper online. Basically, just editorials. The writers that write for me and the paper have to be online as well. Also, some news, but not the whole paper.... They do everything they want. I said, ‘Go ahead and do whatever you want.’ No, I don’t give orders. This is a free press. I said, ‘You guys do whatever you want online.’ So, they have 100 percent freedom in posting editorials for the online edition”

— Producer of a publication for Romanian-origin audiences

“Our original content must go on the web; that is obvious. And we have an arrangement with the news agency, IANS. They are actually maintaining our website, so they automatically upload news which will be of more interest to Indians living in America. There, they upload it on the website, our website. And our own original stories, which we – most – all our original stories, we also send to them, and they upload on the website.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

On a day-to-day basis, several ethnic media producers indicated that it was not uncommon for everyone in the newsroom to contribute to the website; that, in fact, everyone was expected to consider whether their stories were appropriate for the Web and subsequently upload them to the website.
“Because we have a very small staff, everyone is responsible for putting their own stories online. I type my story, the paper goes to the printing shop and then it’s my decision whether to put this story up immediately or wait a couple of hours…. Yes. It’s a mutual decision. It’s a small [news]room, so we talk about which stories should be put up first and then the sequence of all the stories…”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

Producers spoke about other media that they looked to for ideas about how to develop their own websites. In the survey but also in interviews, as in the case below, *The New York Times* was mentioned most often (followed by *The Huffington Post*).

“I just tried to look at how successful publications do [it] and mirrored that. The New York Times, *New York Magazine*; those are the two major ones.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

**Strategies for Developing an Audience Base on the Web and Beyond**

Most producers shared an interest in developing their online audience base and, unsurprisingly, those with media ventures that were not already on the Web indicated concern about maintaining their audience offline. Producers spoke about several strategies they employed to accomplish these goals and to direct audience members from one platform to the other.

**Selectively Publishing Online Content Available Offline**

“When people go online to read the news, they just read the news; they don’t pay attention to the advertisements. We survive on advertisements. My boss sees the circulation dropping. So, we slow down. This whole section is full [of ads], but only part of them [are also] on the Web. If you really want to know what is going on you still need to buy the paper. Just part of the news [is] on the web.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

**Posting “Teasers” for Stories Published Off the Web**

“Sometimes we blog stories for our subscribers. For four or five hours, people can only see the headline and then they have to wait for the service, but we don’t do it on a regular basis. We are trying to do it for very big stories…. It’s a small organization, so we are improvising.”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

**Organizing Contests to Drive Audience to the Website**

“We’ll also do contests and things like that we promote on the newspaper, and they make people go to the website in order to fill out a form, or just something in order to win for something…. And usually, when we do contests and things like that, these people have to fill out a form, and one of the questions that we ask them is that ‘What kind of a content they would like to see on the website, on the paper?’ And we try to pay attention to that.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences
Multimedia Storytelling

Producers talked about the need to produce stories using multiple media, both in order to be able to offer a richer experience to their audience but also to reach audience members who may have different levels of access to and familiarity with technology.

“So I’ve been with the organization for a little over a year now. Before the paper was printed only. It was printed on paper and the readership was mostly – I want to say people mid-40s, a lot of – particularly men. Once the paper transitioned to online, I feel like [the organization’s leadership] didn’t really have a grasp. I think it’s a generational thing on really how to take full advantage of it [i.e., the Internet]. So my first year was all about really trying to introduce multimedia elements to the website to try to be able to tell stories in a different way. So not only with text, but with images, with sound slides, with video.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

“Let’s take the first – you create quantities of content. Let’s say we each videotape this interview. It’s part video and it’s part audio. The guys in Africa and Tanzania where there’s no or limited broadband – or even in rural America – they may not be able to access video. But some can access video and access it at different bit rates. So the idea would be to create work where some people can access it as a video file and others can access it as a low resolution audio file and others can access it as a high resolution audio…. And there’s also a transcript, which we haven’t been doing, because this – so there are multiple access points to one content.”

— Producer of radio programming for audiences of African origin

The Continued Importance of E-mail, E-newsletters, and E-papers in the Era of Apps and Social Media

At a time when a lot of thought, financial resources, and hours of work are devoted to figuring out how to best use social media and apps in the newsroom, ethnic media producers stress how much they continue to rely on e-mail, e-newsletters, and e-papers not only to coordinate news production but also to distribute their content to their audiences.

E-mail & E-Newsletters

“Emails, emails, always emails. Personally, all my work, the secret is I don’t even sit here mostly. I work from home. So my work is always on the computer, mainly by email. For an interview, sometimes, I do phone interviews if it’s to be reproduced as key wording. If it’s to be just summarized in a story, then emails, because email makes our journalists’ job easier.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“In 2005, e-mail was still very big. Cell phones were not that common. I forget about smart phones. So what we did is, at that time, we said, okay, what is the primary method where people consume news? And it started coming that e-mail is coming out, and Facebook was not big, those days… So we designed a template. I went to this new marketing software. We subscribed to Constant Contact, MailChimp, because initially we started e-mailing to our own in-house list of 5,000 e-mails. Then we also thought, okay, what if somebody’s not interested in reading only? We started incorporating our video feed in that, initially, which will link to our YouTube channel. So if someone is interested in a trailer – in the South Asian community, cricket is big, politics is big, and Bollywood is big. So, instead of the boring newspaper front page, what if there is Salman Khan or Shahrukh Khan or some Bollywood beauty? If she is there, people pay attention. And they say, ‘Okay, I can watch a video.’ So many people are telling me that they get to know about
a movie from newsletter. What that gave us, it gave us another avenue for revenue which we never thought of: Movie marketing.” — Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

E-Papers

Several ethnic print media in New York City continue to publish what they refer to as “e-papers.” Frequently these look like a digital copy of their physical editions encoded into a PDF, which subsequently is made available online and can be accessed through a computer, a smartphone, a tablet, or an e-reader. Although several producers talked about the significance of e-papers for their organization, the majority of producers who shared their experience with e-papers served South Asian-origin audiences. Producers spoke about the various ways in which they have attempted to promote their e-papers, but also how these products have affected their revenues.

“I think within the Indian American publications here, we were the first to have a full-fledged website. We’ve always had a digital – what’s it called? [An] E-paper. [We’ve had an] e-paper from the very beginning, which we also started to circulate [via] whatever lists we could get, mailing lists…. And that we continue and that remains the focus to keep increasing that list to whom the e-paper goes, because the print will always be limited, because of course every copy you print costs maybe 25 cents or 50 cents or whatever. So increasing the print run is not a good idea. So we see more revenue coming in from the digital.” — Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“In 2005, we started an e-paper. We used to put a .pdf on our website, and we used to give access to anyone who wanted to download it. And then, we started sending a weekly newsletter, which is pretty strong right now. I would say, on and off, we average close to half a million e-mails, off and on. It goes worldwide. I can say, we effectively reach a lot of other countries as well. Including India, as well…. Yet from time to time, we do accept sponsorship of the e-paper. And, as I say, this paper is much bigger online and through our newsletter than it is in the print form. And the way I look at it, if I look eight years back and I look eight years ahead, I wouldn’t be surprised in the next two, three years the physical format is gone. Because now the iPad generation is taking over, the iPhone generation is taking over, and what they are used to – they were five years old when iPad was launched. Or maybe they were born, or maybe they were ten years, so they want everything – we are on iPad, you just have to click.” — Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“[Our competitor] has social media and an e-paper. But we know that they don’t earn money. Because they have the e-paper people don’t buy the physical paper…. First couple years it is free. And later on they subscribe. When people go online to read the news, they just read the news they don’t pay attention to the advertisements. We survive on advertisements. My boss sees their circulation is dropping. So, we slow down.” — Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

Apps

Among our survey participants, approximately 1 in 3 ethnic media had an app for their audience to use. Another 7% indicated that they had one in the past. In interviews, many producers shared that they wanted their media organization to have an app, but, in most cases, they were also quick to point out that they lacked the human and financial resources to develop and maintain an app. That said, there were also producers who did not see the development of an
app as essential. In fact, they saw apps just as another way to build up the image of the media organization, in order to appeal to advertisers.

“I think an app would be a good way for us to get some revenue in the future because I do believe that there is money to be made online. We just have to be strategic about how we go about it. And I think that people would pay for content if it’s presented in an easy, accessible and pretty [way]. I think people would pay for an app if they just download it one time. Or even pay $0.99 a month or something, if the information’s coming directly to them conveniently.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

“It changes a lot. People don’t need [a] paper newspaper to the same extent that they needed this five, ten years ago. This is the main source of information for everyone. We don’t have our own app; however, we are present online. Creating an app would be the next priority for our management…. It’s a question of finances. As I understand it, upper management doesn’t have the resources to invest in mobiles at this very moment.”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

“Developing a news app is about] embellishments, merely to fool the advertisers into believing they are a professional company.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

**Online Metrics**

**Website Metrics**

Just under half (48%) of the ethnic media organizations with a website that participated in the survey indicated that they had no more than 20,000 unique visitors on their site every month. Another 16% indicated that they did not know how many visitors they had per month. Relatedly, 44% said they had no more than 20,000 page views per month and 1 in 5 producers said they did not know how many page views they received.

**Other Online Metrics to Which Ethnic Media Organizations Pay Attention**

Beyond the number of unique website visitors and page views, producers indicated that among the variety of available online audience metrics, they most heavily weigh (in order of importance): (a) feedback they receive from their audience via e-mail, (b) the number of people who open e-mails they send them, (c) the number of comments they get from audience members on stories they publish on their website, (d) the number of Facebook “likes,” (e) the number of comments they receive in response to Facebook posts, and (f) the number of times stories they publish on Facebook get “shared.”
Figure 9. What feedback and metrics ethnic media producers who participated in the survey cared about most.

Constraints to (and Enabling Factors for) Making the Most of the Internet

Of the few ethnic media that reported not having a website in the survey, the most common reasons given by producers included concern over not having enough staff to maintain a website and not having the financial resources to build and maintain a website. These constraints were also cited in interviews as reasons why ethnic media organizations are not doing as much as they would like to be doing on and with the Internet. Other constraints were mentioned as well, though, and are discussed below.

Online Ventures Not Profitable

Several newspaper producers cited examples of other publications who saw their circulations drop when they launched their online versions to justify their organization’s hesitance to develop a stronger presence online. Others suggested that their audiences may actually not be ready yet to give up the physical copies of newspapers and magazines completely, while a few producers admitted that figuring out how to charge readers for content they access online has been a struggle.

“Yes, this is our struggle, in part. I told you that the other newspaper tried to establish the digital and the subscription is dropping. So we slowed down ourselves because my boss is scared to lose the same thing. So, we also believe that sooner or later, maybe [in] 10 or 20 years, the newspaper is going to disappear. We know that. Now, we are just still doing both [online and offline], because we still earn a lot of money [from our offline edition]. For example, we are paid twice a week, but every year we have a bonus worth two weeks to two months [of pay].”

— Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences
“I don't know of any publication in English, in Spanish, or Chinese making money – [I mean a] publication making money on the Internet.” — Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

“Some tried to put it online but they discovered online is not the real thing. If you have it online, you still have to have access to a place where people can see, they visualize the paper. And the people want to see a physical paper. A paper paper. ... We went to it by 2005. That's when we started to have the paper online. And we decided for the readers to give it to them free, like big companies do. They give it free so that's what we did. And I thought that maybe – but we did give it to them free and let them get used to the paper. Maybe at a certain time down the road, we'll start charging them. But I still have not be able to do it because it means I have to revamp the whole system so I can start charging them and I can’t do it. I don’t have the means to do it yet. But I have the benefit, also; that being online makes the paper exposed to a much wider audience. The readership is 10, 20 times as much as it was before. But we have less money for doing it.” — Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

Limited Knowledge of the Internet among Producers

When asked to rate the expertise of their colleagues regarding the Internet, 20% of the ethnic media producers who participated in the survey indicated that the members of their organization were experts, while another 60% indicated that their colleagues had high levels of knowledge (i.e., they gave a score of 5 or 6 out of 7).

Despite this, though, in interviews, several producers were quick to point out that media professionals do not know a whole lot about how to make the most of the Internet and to supplement revenue from their non-Internet-based media ventures.

“The Internet is very important, but in many ways, people don’t know what to do on the Internet, or how the Internet functions, and they’re investing a lot of money, but they don’t know what to do. What I do is I sell advertising for the print – the newspaper, right? And I also sell – that’s probably 90 per cent of my income. And then, the other 10 per cent or so is coming from the Internet. But a lot of people don’t want to invest in the Internet; they don’t even understand the concept.” — Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

Perceptions about Audience’s Online Engagement

Some producers also indicated that they thought their audience lacked interest in consuming media online (as indicated in the quote below). In combination with what they saw as the absence of a successful business model for media on the Internet made several producers skeptical about investing more in their online ventures.

“And to tell you the truth, the Latino community doesn’t look for that new technology, yet. And that probably applies to the Anglo community, too. And that's also the same for a daily newspaper like El Diario, or La Prensa. They also said that 90 per cent of their income comes from print, and they were really heavily invested in the new technology on the Internet, but they shared a few months ago that they are going back to the paper. Of course, the business model is not there to make money on the Internet.” — Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences
Lack of Interest by Owners/Management

Additionally, some producers expressed concern that in cases of ethnic media that are owned by individuals whose primary job and source of income is not tied to the success of the media organization, innovation occurs more slowly (or not at all).

“There is no effort made to adapt…. You have to also remember one more thing: [in] most of these ethnic media communities, the owners have other professions. So where they make their money and their wealth, is in a different site. This [media production] is a hobby. When such is the case, there is no need for it to change, to make it better, or find new ways of doing business, or expanding it, or growing it.”

— Producer of newspaper for Indian-origin audiences

The Role of Competition across Borders Fueled by Technological Innovation

As discussed earlier, several of the producers interviewed spoke about the ways in which they leveraged their connections to media production resources (writers, layout designers and copy-editors, photographers) in other countries. A few also talked about the potential they saw in reaching audiences in other markets beyond New York (within or beyond the U.S.), thanks to the Internet. However, several producers interviewed also indicated that they were quite aware of the fact that the Internet and technological innovation, more broadly speaking, has changed competition among media. Many ethnic media producers have realized that in the Internet age covering news happening in the country (or countries) of origin of their audience is not as necessary as it was even just two or three decades ago. In most cases today audiences can readily access news stories produced by major media organizations based in South Korea, or India, or Russia, for example, either on the Web or on television, thanks to satellite technology. As a result of how technological innovation has and continues to shape media competition, ethnic media producers are forced to think very carefully not only about what content will give them a competitive edge, but, as indicated in the quote below, what kind of a distribution channel (e.g., television, radio, print) will allow them to fill unmet audience needs.

“We have some channel [that] came from the motherland and we could not compete with the nicer broadcasting. They were trying to get every business they could have. So we quit the radio, we quit the television. So I went to the newspaper again because it was print media. Yeah, the competition was strong in the television industry…. This is also from the channels produced in Pakistan and no channels are produced here.”

— Producer of radio programming and a newspaper for Pakistani-origin audiences

Instrumental Support from Younger Family Members as an Enabling Factor

The majority of ethnic media organizations are small in size. Hence, they frequently do not have sufficient human and financial resources to take full advantage of new communication technologies. At the same time, though, many of these smaller organizations are also family businesses. Several producers interviewed spoke about how having their children get involved in their media organization’s operations had helped them gain a better understanding of the Internet and related applications and services, but also innovate.

“Then my son, he’s helping me. He makes some programming, he put in FTP from here and then I’ll do three then make some nice song where in Karachi and they put it on FTP, radio.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences
“My children, they always teach me how to use the phone, how to use the technology and most of the time I get tired but they keep doing it. They keep teaching me and pushing me to adopt those new technologies. Sooner or later I’m adapting it. At this moment, maybe I’m not fully aware of the knowledge and the wisdom of the technology but I’m adapting. Something is happening, I use a lot of time to read and watch but they use that time on listening.”

— Producer of radio programming and a newspaper for Pakistani-origin audiences

“So [this website] is just for the newspaper. The [other] website, we are aiming it as a global platform. The South Asians can gather together. It could be like a social media experiment, as well. I’m waiting for my son to be 18 next year, and take it over if he wants to come into ethnic media.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences
Part III: Ethnic Media Producers’ Experiences with Social Media and the Factors that Shape their Use

Over 8 out of 10 of the ethnic media organizations (82%) that participated in the survey reported having an account on social networking sites (social media). Another 5% indicated they did not have an account on social media currently but did so in the past, and 11% said they never owned social media accounts. In interviews, the majority of ethnic media producers said that they though social media have had and will continue to have a significant impact on the media industry, both for better or worse. The quote below, from the interview with an editor of an organization serving South Asian-origin audiences underscores the influence that many ethnic media producers believe social media are having on the media industry as a whole.

"Without social media, no news organization these days can survive. We have, within our organization, we have probably four pages [on Facebook]. We have a sister publication, and a newspaper as well. Then we also are on YouTube. My main focus, again, even on YouTube, even in the paper, is to win the social organizations and community organizations. We promote them a lot…. the economic downturn may not have hit us that hard. What is hitting us is social media. Like social media, like right now Facebook is so strong that even the likes of the New York Times, and Washington Post, they all are trying to find a home within Facebook or Twitter, or YouTube. You cannot survive without that.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

Organizational Goals and Social Media

The top organizational goal that producers said the Internet could help them accomplish was reaching out to new audiences or expanding their audience base. However, when asked the same question about social media, the goal that most producers was “building up their organization’s brand” (46% indicated this goal was “very important”). This was followed by “learning about their audience,” “interacting with their audience,” and “attracting potential advertisers.” Figure 10 below reflects how ethnic media producers rated each of the ten goals they were asked about in the survey.

Our follow up interviews provided further insights into the array of goals that ethnic media producers sought to accomplish via social media. Ethnic media producers showed awareness of the ways in which social media are shaping everyday practices in media newsrooms and most exhibited a keen interest in the ways they could leverage new communication technologies to better achieve a variety of goals.

In line with the survey findings, promoting new media content and their organization’s “brand” were two goals that ethnic media producers discussed at length. They also talked about how they employed social media to (a) stay on top of developing news and find leads for stories, (b) to cover major events and breaking news, (c) to coordinate work-related tasks with colleagues within the country and across borders, (d) to interact with their audience, but also (e) as a way to generate revenue. The quotes below illustrate these practices.
Figure 10. How important ethnic media producers who participated in the survey thought social media were for accomplishing organizational goals (scores represent % of producers)

**Staying on Top of the News and Finding Leads for Stories**

“Well, two days ago, my reporter checked on Facebook and found out this was a lady who fell and went to the hospital. She asked if she should follow-up. So we use social media.”

— Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

“Nowadays, social media are playing a very positive role in the media also. If you go on the social media, you get a lot of leads. I mean every time you visit some site, social media site, you get some lead for example. If something [is] happening somewhere, people put it on Facebook so you get the lead.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“I don’t remember, but sometimes after one story, we get ‘Did you hear about this story? It happened in another town.’ Then, we follow up. I don’t recall any particular story, but it does happen often.”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

**Employing Social Media to Cover Major News Events**

“Mostly, we use a Skype. Also, they call us and we give [our] opinion with Skype. And Skype is very helpful for us to [share] the live discussion and live participation of the community. In the last election, we covered the whole election with Skype, from Dhaka, Bangladesh. They called us on Skype, and we shot all the voting process over here, the people “spinning” the election and then giving their opinion. Skype is very helpful. Every day, we [use] Skype for reporting.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences
Coordinating Work Teams within the Country and Across Borders

“Mainly we use email, and it seems to work pretty well, and when I need to call [contributing editors], they’re always available. We also use Facebook to discuss things that we want to do, or information that we want to provide to one another.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

“Sometimes, if you go for the telephone, and you don’t get that connection, sometimes people are busy. But Facebook, [works] every time. I use Facebook for my communication with Bangladesh. I even use Facebook for my writers, those who contribute over here. And not only that, I am connected through the Facebook with all the news media. Then when I work, I open the Facebook, I see all the news updates from media like the L.A. Times, The New York Times, and even [from media] back [in] Bangladesh…. Facebook is really helping.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“I put the articles on Facebook on a private conversation. I put pictures and articles there, and we are friends on Facebook. I use it pretty often.”

— Producer of newspaper for Romanian-origin audiences

Promoting Content, but also Building the Organization’s Brand

“When we go to events, we are asked to use our cell phones to make short movies, just for the background, for the news that is read on the TV, and also to put on YouTube. We use Facebook, of course, to promote our content. Twitter, to a lesser extent, but Facebook is the main one we are trying to promote [our content].”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

“In fact, I principally use Facebook…. I posted on Facebook. It got shared a lot. It got shared by a small number of people then it grew. And then I sort of neglected Twitter. I just went back to it recently. This is important. I got republished by Philippine papers [in the Philippines]. And also by certain sites here… like Feet in Two Worlds, like New America Media. So they would republish some of my stories. So I had a wider reach because of that. That really helped a lot. So in my advertising packet, I say that when you are featured in [magazine’s name], there is a chance that you might get picked up by this or that publication.”

— Producer of an online-only magazine for Filipino-origin audiences

“Well, Facebook we use three different ways. So first, every time we publish an article, we put it on there. And actually a lot of our direct hits come from Facebook referrals. So sharing is our biggest friend. It’s really important for us to be able to be constantly updating our Facebook…. And then Twitter, we have a lot of followers on Twitter and we actually don’t post as much on Twitter as we do on Facebook, but I find it’s a good conversation starter for a lot of things.”

— Producer of an online-only newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

“No, we are producing the videos, and we are trying to promote them on our social media. Just to get more readers and people interested in the webpage, basically. We are on Facebook; we have also Twitter and Instagram. I think those are the main ones that we have. I know that we’re also on Google Plus, and there’s another one that I don’t remember because we don’t use as much. But we try to upload, to post on a regular basis on Facebook and Twitter as well…. I know that the uploading there is constant. And yeah, when we go to events or places we also like to use Instagram to post pictures and things like that.”

— Producer of newspaper for Latino audiences

“Instagram is kind of different… It’s more like sharing with people interesting images that they can like, and that’s it. So, what we try to do, then, is we go to an event or if there’s something
happening that day that it’s important, I don’t know, Mother’s Day or something, we post something on Instagram. For instance, recently we were at the Central American parade that happened on Long Island so we took photos of that and there’s something nice and colorful, we upload that on Twitter. And we let people know that we’re there.”

― Producer of newspaper for Latino audiences

“Social media right now is so popular in any industry. Companies all want to use social media to view their brand, and I think that’s the third benefit. For all the users to view their brand and to have this image because through the posts you post, people can know more about your organization. If people who don’t know say, ‘I never heard of [name of organization], but I saw my friend post a link,’ it’s very easy for other people to get to know about your organization. So, I think social media is a great way, a great tool, to expand your influence and also build your brand image.”

― Producer of radio programming for Chinese-origin audiences

“[Developing a news app is about] embellishments, merely to fool the advertiser into believing they are a professional company.”

― Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

Using Multiple Social Media and Apps to Promote the Organization

“Actually, in China, there’s some app that is a radio app that you can put your radio show onto that app and then you can share the link within your WeChat or something. So, I’m planning to do that on that radio app and link to the WeChat account, so it’s a two-way link to have more people engaged. Right now I feel like mobile is the key to reach more people…. And WeChat also has this great feature where you can see the statistics. So, you can see how many people subscribe to your account and their activity. Also, their demographic, where they’re from. So, I think that’s also a great feature. Using this radio app, I can also see how many people listen to it, how many downloads.”

― Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

“They’re both helping each other. On the radio side you see the link of the newspaper and on the newspaper side, you see the link of the radio, and I have another one very interesting thing, I have a food magazine.”

― Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“I started putting my shows on the Sound Cloud. And, Sound Cloud is very easy for me to stream the shows. I don’t have to pay for the hosting. Then, anybody who has the Sound Cloud app on their phone can listen to our shows easily. Then, from Sound Cloud, it’s already connected with many other social media – Facebook, Twitter. So, when I post on Sound Cloud, it automatically goes to the Sound Cloud community; it goes to Facebook; Twitter, and all of those.”

― Producer of radio programming for Nepali-origin audiences

Engaging with the Audience and the Ethnic Community Served

“Well, for me, as an active user of social media, I think for any organization, especially for an industry, it’s very important for them to do two-way communication. Because really when they do the broadcasting, it’s one-way communication. So, the audience receives information that the radio station suddenly has feedback from the audience. And I think social media is a good platform for the company to talk with their audience.”

― Producer of radio programming for Chinese-origin audiences

“There is an active account on Facebook for myself and for the paper as well. I don’t pay too much attention to it. Facebook is for socializing. Sometimes when I have some Romanian
community activities, like concerts or conferences, I announce them on Facebook. All my friends are able to find out that there is an event and what time it is.”

— Producer of newspaper for Romanian-origin audiences

“Well, to engage the community. For example, I produce a television program in Spanish every Thursday. It’s live. So, we will advertise it today on Twitter, ‘Watch Punto de Vista at 8 PM.’ And we announce who our guest is.”

— Producer of a community-based television network that also serves local ethnic communities

“We try to use more the accounts or the social media that we see that people are responding better to. In our case, that seems to be Facebook. A lot of people, we see the interaction, although right now it’s still pretty basic. They just put likes or something like that. But we’ve seen more interaction in Facebook than in other social media. And what we like also is that, for instance, in Facebook, people can give us feedback, they can leave comments. So, we get to know a little bit more about the people who are reading us or who are following us. And in that sense, we can also produce content for them because we know what they want to see.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

“We react to [comments on Facebook], but we don’t collect them. Some comments are an inspiration for the next story or follow-up or to do something more for the community. Some are them are simply crazy. You know how the Internet is.”

— Producer of newspaper for Polish-origin audiences

Growing the Organization’s Audience Base

“Singers come from Japan to have their big live sing here. And then that’s when we interview them. Then of course we do post information on Twitter and Facebook. But then their fans try to follow them, and then they happen to reach us. Now we have one more reason for them to see our paper at same time.”

— Producer of newspaper for Japanese-origin audiences

Developing New Revenue Streams

“Also we use [Facebook] for promotional purposes. So that’s one of our [most valuable] resources. So let’s say you’re having an event. You have packages where we’ll have a featured post for the week and that would be $30.00. Or we’ll do social media promotion for you for a month and that will be $50.00.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

Patterns of Use of Social Media and Factors that Shape Them

Ethnic media organizations that participated in the survey reported having accounts on an average of three different social media. The most popular social media that producers indicated they used included Facebook (69%), Twitter (52%), YouTube (34%), Google+ (23%), LinkedIn (21%), and Instagram (10%).

The interviews with producers provided further support for the foregoing findings, but also a more nuanced understanding of how and why ethnic media producers choose to use specific social media in their everyday professional lives. Most acknowledged that general trends regarding social media popularity informed their decisions. Moreover, their choices were influenced by (a) what social media were used most in the country or countries of origin of their audience members, (b) the demographics of their target audience, (c) the type of content they
produced, and (d) their perceptions regarding the intentions or mission of particular social media organizations. The quotes below illustrate how these factors shaped social media use among ethnic media producers who participated in the study.

**Popularity of Social Media in the Audience’s Country of Origin**

“Last year or this year, WeChat dominated. Every function has been covered, like [for example, the functions of] Twitter and you can buy stuff using WeChat. You can pay somebody for stuff with WeChat…. In one app. So, a lot of people are using WeChat, and I’m thinking WeChat is the trend for social media use, and we have to do that. I’m planning to open WeChat for my show, so people who can’t listen to the radio or use the computer can listen to my show through their phone. Because right now the phones are more popular because people can use them anywhere.”

— Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

*Practically [we use] any social media you can go on: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. Then, of course, the website, as well. Instagram – we are there – yes, we do and we do have some proprietary pictures we do put in there. And there are some Indian social media sites, as well. We go there, as well…. Primarily, I personally believe that Facebook is the 900-pound gorilla in the room. If you do not address Facebook, your social media plans are [going] nowhere. Facebook and YouTube. These are primarily two dominant social media platforms. There are ten others. There’s another experimentation going on with WhatsApp, which was recently acquired by Facebook. What we did –we have a [media organization’s name] group on WhatsApp. Selectively, we send it to people, and if they want to, they can join the group or report it as spam. Because the focus is coming to mobile. But we are not sending the whole paper on it. We are sending the front page and the link to the website, so that they click and they go to the website.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

**Demographics of Target Audience**

“Facebook, yes people do ‘like’ a lot of our posts. People do share a lot of our posts. Then we try to go through it. We try to analyze the data like, what is the age percentile? And so far predominantly it has been a mature audience. An audience which I would say is 25 or 30 years plus up to 70. They seem to be the ones who are liking it, reading it. And that, actually confirms the research that there are more baby boomers, or the older generation, beyond plus 30 or 40 who are joining Facebook more. And the younger generation is leaving it. We are trying to compensate that with Instagram and WhatsApp.”

— Producer of newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

**Type of Content Produced**

“Because the person who did my website suggested let’s go on Pinterest because we have a lot of stories on fashion and food, and those are huge on Pinterest. I said, ‘Okay.’ He made a decision for me…. The paper was covering New York Fashion Week. He’s like, ‘You have a lot of pictures on fashion. I think this is best on Pinterest.’”

— Producer of an online-only magazine for Filipino-origin audiences
Concerns Tied to the Perceived Mission of Particular Social Media Organizations

“Twitter seems to have more impact when it comes to media than Facebook. I think it's probably because Facebook is constantly changing their algorithms. They're constantly manipulating it in such a way to benefit them. It appears to me that Twitter is mostly trying to reach as many people as possible. It appears that they're not blocking that. Facebook appears to be manipulating that more so they can make money for their reasons.”

— Producer of radio programming for audiences of African origin

Managing Social Media Presence and Activity

Among the ethnic media organizations with social media accounts, one third of them (33%) indicated that they posted something on social media several times a week. Another 46% said that they posted on social media about once a day or several times a week.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1. Frequency of posting on social media (figures represent % of ethnic media that participated in Phase 1 of the study)**

When asked about how many of the comments that audience members posted on social media about their organization or stories they had produced they responded to, 23% of the ethnic media producers indicated that they responded to all of them, 33% said that they replied to most of them, and another 29% said they replied to some of them. Only 8% indicated that they did not respond to any of them, while another 8% indicated that they did not know what their organization did. Additionally, 46% of ethnic media producers said that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the opinions and comments audience members shared with them on their organization’s website or via social media impacted what stories they covered and did not cover.

Moreover, a quarter of ethnic media have full-time staff that manage the organization’s social media activities, another quarter has part-time staff that does this, while one in five organizations relies on volunteers. Another 24% said that they had no one in particular who managed their social media accounts. As indicated by the quotes below, the variety of
approaches to managing social media indicated by the survey data was also reflected in the interviews with ethnic media producers in New York.

“We have a communication person. Tomorrow I’m meeting with her to make sure that we keep up.”

— Producer of a community-based television network that also serves local ethnic communities

“I used to be in charge of the social media, Facebook. We share the account, so not only I have the right to do it.”

— Producer of radio programming for Chinese-origin audiences

“Three, four people do [manage the social media accounts]. It’s a small company, so we always talk. So when we share something, like you say, ‘Okay, why don’t we do this and this?’ And then we just do it.”

— Producer of newspaper for Japanese-origin audiences

“Well, we have a Facebook page. I think that three or four people have access to that, including me. So, if I see it appropriate, I can reply [to people’s comments]. It doesn’t matter. Any of us can do it.”

— Producer of newspaper for Latino audiences

“Editor: I have Facebook, but it is my own. But [media organization’s name] has Facebook and they post the stories and get feedback from people on them.
Interviewer: Do you encourage your reporters to have a Facebook page for work?
Editor: We don’t have any regulations on that. Some are more active and some are not.”

— Producer of newspaper for Chinese-origin audiences

**Constraints to (and Enabling Factors for) Adopting and Using Social Media**

Ethnic media that indicated not using social media in the survey, cited not having enough staff and not having adequate financial resources. Additionally, some mentioned their staff did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to use social media effectively. That said, our interviews showed very clearly that, even among ethnic media organizations that had a presence on social media, lack of human and financial resources, and time, hampered their ability to do as much as they would have liked to with social media. Still, other constraints emerged in these interviews, too, including lack of younger staff members, lack of technology-related knowledge, perceptions regarding the target audience’s interest in and knowledge around social media, as well as new sources of competition that ethnic media face because of the Internet. All of these constraints are reflected in the quotes below.

**Limited Time**

“There are thousands of people reading and making comments. I don’t have to get into it because there is no physical time to do it. Sometimes on my Facebook account I make comments. Say I write three or four columns with a question. I wait for answers. Then, I read them. There is no physical time to go through them.”

— Producer of newspaper for Romanian-origin audiences


**Lack of Human Resources**

Although sheer lack of staff was a factor that hindered social media use according to several producers interviewed, in a couple of cases producers also indicated, directly or indirectly, that it was also the absence of younger staff members that shaped their organization’s use of social media.

“No, [I don’t use social media] because I don’t have anybody to service it for me. I would have to be there all the time. I can’t. Mind you, I receive 200 emails every day.”

— Producer of newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

“I would say, there used to be a young person, but she left. Right now, I’m the only young person in our radio station…. I would say around ten [people make up our staff]. Ten, more or less. Because we have a lot of part-time [staff], so if you’re talking about full-time, I guess, seven, eight or ten. And their ages are mostly older than 30, so 40 and up. I think I might be one of the few who are within the younger age range. So, I’m more active in social media. Earlier, I introduced a lot of social media knowledge to my boss who’s in charge of the radio station. So, now she’s more familiar with Facebook usage. She can post more on her own…. If our organization had a WeChat account itself, and of course, [if] we had people to maintain it. I think that’s a challenge because we don’t have enough staff. We don’t have enough people, especially technology specialists to work on this.”

— Producer of radio programming for Chinese-origin audiences

**Lack Financial Resources (Limited Advertising Base)**

Producers were quick to talk about lack of financial resources made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to use social media as much as they would have liked to. Moreover, though, in some of our interviews, producers pointed out that they had had a difficult time generating revenue that could support their online ventures (including their activities on and through social media), because frequently small businesses owned by members of the ethnic community they served were not interested in advertising in ethnic media online.

“There were advertisers who were solely dependent on ethnic media to promote their products. Now, suddenly that [capability is] also available on social media. If I have a Facebook profile with 5,000 fans, I don’t need a newspaper …. So the advertisers have a lot more avenues, now, to reach [consumers] – without the ethnic press. So it hit hard both on the content side, like there were maybe less people interested in reading your content, and also on the revenue side, where there’s less availability of advertising. But also, as I stressed, this is more true for the news media, which didn’t adapt. I won’t say we adapted 100 percent with the social media, but we did adapt pretty strongly.”

— Producer of a newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“Yes, I think it mostly was down to the resources. It’s a small setup, small organization, that the budgets are small, so we are not able to, say, keep one person only looking after social media.”

— Producer of a newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

“I’m the only one who runs the paper, okay? So psychologically I’m hampered by… money and people. So my worry is that even if I wanted to upgrade maybe my website – I have all these bells and whistles. I have a lot of features. One, I may not have the resources to finance it and two, if something goes wrong I wouldn’t know where to go. So not unless I hire a webmaster or something, which I cannot afford.”

- 40 -
“But there are other Filipino mom and pop stores like restaurants, they wanted a print presence because they want something that they can post on their wall.”

— Producer of an online-only magazine for Filipino-origin audiences

Knowledge and Experience

Although several producers highlighted lack of knowledge around social media among their staff members as a reason for not using these media more, interviews revealed considerable interest in developing expertise and an interest in experimenting with social media to accomplish organizational goals.

“[T]o be honest with you, although Twitter has been around for a long time, now, we’re still trying to get to use it. I know that we have many conversations about this with our team about Twitter, and a need to use it more. But I guess that many of us are not very familiar with it.... I know that we were discussing, for example, using Twitter to live tweet events where we are covering or something. But sometimes it seems like a challenge to us because we have to pay attention, and we have to [take] notes, and we have to do videos and now we have to do Twitter. So, we’re still working on Twitter. I know that we uploading things and everything, but I know that we can do more with that. And that’s what we’re trying to figure it out now.”

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

“I’m still trying to figure out how to take advantage of [social media]. Some ideas that have come to my head [include] maybe trying to take a post, someone’s comment and featuring it on the site like the comment of the week. I’m not really sure yet, though, because it’s not always consistent. I don’t want to start something and say every week we’re going to have a comment of the week, but then the quality of the comments isn’t consistent. So I’m not really sure what to do with that feedback yet.”

— Producer of an online-only newspaper for Haitian-origin audiences

“[I] created a Facebook page.... And we don’t really have a lot of followers. It’s about 1,500. After four years that’s really very small, okay? And because I found out I’m doing it all wrong anyway. I’m learning.... Because I would post my links to the different sites until I read somewhere don’t do it that way. Just focus on your sites because you are drawing people into the different sites. Concentrate on your own site. So I’ve been doing that over the last five months and it’s really been very helpful. So I post – in fact, I would post on my personal wall and I avoided doing that because the people who like it, I cannot bring them to my site. So now I stopped posting on my personal wall and I just post everything on the [media organization’s] page. And if people want to share it on their wall, that’s fine. At least the root is there. So if people like it and then I will link, asking them to like the page, so something like that. But I learned it along the way. I didn’t know those things.”

— Producer of an online-only magazine for Filipino-origin audiences

Perceptions about the Ethnic Community’s Experience with Social Media

Although this theme did not emerge frequently, interview accounts pointed to the potential of ethnic community norms as a factor that could affect how and how much ethnic media can use social media to accomplish their goals. Additional comparative research, across ethnic communities and the media that serve them, could provide further insight regarding this finding.

“Now, for Latinos to make comments, after they read a story, it’s still very, very difficult to get comments from the Latino community. Let’s say when you write something about a politician, you get some comments. Or if you write something about entertainment, or sports. But it’s still too difficult to get Latinos to write about civic engagement, or civic participation, or community events;
it’s very, very difficult…. Because maybe they have not connected to the system very well yet because, maybe they don’t like to comment on strong issues because they don’t feel like they have the right information; a lot of issues, right?"

— Producer of a newspaper for Latino audiences

Importance of Ethnic Media for Certain Types of Information Being Challenged by the Internet

Although few ethnic media producers showed particular concern about what their competitors were doing online and with respect to social media (the first quote below is indicative of this), several producers were keenly aware of how the Internet and social media, more specifically, have and continue to shape their relationship to their audience members, as the importance of ethnic media as sources of certain kinds of information is challenged by new information sources available to their audiences online.

“These days, my listeners are coming down because of all those technologies…. The listeners get their messages on Facebook and Twitter. They don’t really wait for my shows to happen. Last week I talked about TPS – Temporary Protective Status for Nepali immigrants. Because of the earthquake, some people cannot go back to their country. So, I invited our immigration lawyers to talk about it. So, now there are a lot of other online portals that are doing that. So, they don’t wait for my interview to listen. I used to be the only [source]. And they waited for my shows to listen. Now, we have a lot of lawyers, and they have a lot of new portals.”

— Producer of radio programming for Nepali-origin audiences

“A lot of news which the community used to acquire only from these ethnic newspapers. Sometimes [they would] buy the newspaper or subscribe to it, and get the news. That news is now suddenly available to them at the click of a button, or a finger swipe on the cell phone. Let’s say, somebody gets up in the morning, Saturday, Sunday, goes to the temple, picks up their copy of the newspaper, and comes home and reads the newspaper. It was easy for you to take out all the newspapers that were available there, bring them home and read them. Now, suddenly, before you start your day, most of the information from back home and also the local community is available right on the computer, or your cell phone. So, if somebody didn’t adapt [to this], that hit ethnic media pretty hard.

— Producer of a newspaper for South Asian-origin audiences

Looking Ahead:
What Determines Ethnic Media Producers’ Intentions towards and Use of Social Media?

A well-developed literature on organizations and what accounts for whether their members adopt and use new communication technologies suggests that there are a few key determinants, including: (a) individuals’ attitudes towards technology, (b) the extent to which individuals believe a new technology will help them do their job better and obtain their goals (performance expectancy), (b) how easy they think it will be to use a new kind of technology (effort expectancy), and (c) the extent to which they believe that important others in their lives feel they should use the new technology (social influence) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). This literature informed this first attempt to provide insight into what determines ethnic media producers’ intentions to adopt and actually use new communication technologies. The research team sought to explore specifically what factors shaped ethnic media producers’ intentions to use social media and their actual use of social media.

In addition to the aforementioned factors, more recently, researchers have shown that organizational culture can also be an important determinant of whether individuals in
organizations want to and end up using new technologies, or not (Dasgupta & Gupta, 2010). Organizational culture is generally understood to refer to those shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape how members of an organization behave. In this study, we employed an index of organizational culture that reflected values that media producers believed underlay communication in their organizations and thereby characterized the organizational culture, in which they were embedded and participated. Specifically, we asked study participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed that (a) different opinions could be expressed openly in their organization, (b) staff could speak up in meetings with superiors, and (c) employees were informed of organizational changes before they were implemented.

Communication inside an organization about technology, specifically, could be shaped by the general values and beliefs that characterize an organizational culture, but it may also influence adoption and use of new communication technologies differently from organizational culture. At a very basic level, values and behaviors—such as communication—within a particular organizational culture may not be perfectly aligned. For instance, although employees and management in an organization may value collaboration and vigorous exchange of opinions, in practice members of the organization may lack the time to engage in dialogue with colleagues and explore opportunities for collaboration. Hence, in this study, we also emphasized communication about technology as a separate predictor of social media adoption and use. Communication about technology may indicate how sensitive and tuned in a news organization is to the ongoing conversations across the media industry about how established practices are challenged and are being changed by new communication technologies. Moreover, though, social media are frequently used as channels through which news organizations disseminate information to their audiences (Li, 2010). Thus, it is possible that how and what employees communicate about social media amongst themselves could influence if and how they use these channels to accomplish their professional and organizational goals.

Finally, prior research indicates that organizational practices in ethnic media are partially shaped by how producers compare themselves to their mainstream media counterparts (Matsaganis & Katz, 2013). Hence, in this study we also examined the role of perceived inter-organizational competition as a factor that could enable or constrain the adoption of new communication technologies. When it comes to the adoption and use of technology in ethnic media organizations, it is possible that both individual and organizational factors come into play, including members’ perceptions about how ahead or behind the curve ethnic media are in adopting social media compared to their mainstream industry counterparts. Perceptions that ethnic media lag behind mainstream media could stimulate efforts leading to technology adoption. Alternatively, they could just reinforce the notion that ethnic media are technology laggards and thereby discourage efforts leading to adoption.

The research team employed multiple regression analyses and structural equation modeling to investigate if and how the abovementioned factors influenced ethnic media producers’ intentions to incorporate social media into their everyday professional practices and their actual use of these technologies. The results of these analyses indicated that the following three factors had a direct or indirect, positive influence on the use of social media among ethnic media producers:

- **Performance expectancy** (i.e., how useful producers thought social media were for work-related tasks) had a significant and positive influence on ethnic media producers’ intention to adopt social media and on actual use. Performance expectancy also had a positive influence on producers’ general disposition towards these technologies (attitude) and on how easy they thought it would be to use them (effort expectancy). From a practical
standpoint, this finding suggests that to promote a positive attitude towards using social media and to alleviate concerns regarding ease of use, the first step would be to demonstrate to ethnic media producers the usefulness of social media.

- **Perceived inter-organizational competition** had a direct impact on ethnic media producers’ intentions to use of social media. Producers who perceived their organization to be more advanced in terms of incorporating social media into their everyday professional practices were more likely to report that they intended to use social media for work-related tasks, and actually did use them.

- **Communication about technology** emerged as an important factor that had a positive influence on ethnic media producers’ intention to adopt and actually use social media in the workplace. The results of the analyses suggest that conversations about technology in the workplace can, first, help producers realize the usefulness of social media (performance expectancy), which in turn influences their decision to adopt these technologies. Talking about technology at work might also have a positive effect on social media use because it is through communication that ethnic media producers are exposed to new trends in the broader media industry. Additionally, comparing in conversations what others are doing in the industry and what they are doing, could encourage ethnic media producers to adopt social media. We hypothesize that having a whole organization orientated towards and discussing the issue of adoption of new communication technologies on an ongoing basis—fueled by new information about others’ successes and failures and relevant research—could help dispel misperceptions and allay fears regarding social media. These findings support the notion that in order to promote adoption of social media (and arguably new media more broadly), it is important for an organization’s members to engage in ongoing conversations about these media. Future research can provide insight into how to structure these conversations and what their content should be in order to best promote use of social media in ethnic media newsrooms; that is, use that will serve the organization’s mission and goals.

Based on prior research, we anticipated individuals’ attitude towards social media, social influence, and organizational culture to have a positive influence on adoption and use of social media among ethnic media producers. Our analyses, however, did not confirm our expectations.

Figure 12 (see below) summarizes the findings of the aforementioned analyses and highlights those factors that play a positive role in ethnic media producers’ adoption and use of social media.
Figure 12. Model predicting intention to use and actual use of social media among ethnic media producers who participated in the study in New York City.
Despite limited financial and human resources, the overwhelming majority of New York City’s ethnic media that participated in the study (and that serve over 30 different immigrant and ethnic communities) detailed a variety of ways in which they are adapting to a rapidly changing media landscape. Several producers interviewed also described clearly some important challenges they face because of the Internet. They spoke, for example, about competition from mainstream media based in what many among their audience would identify as their country of origin, which undermined the importance of their role as exclusive sources of information about current affairs in that country. However, they also identified opportunities for growth that the Internet affords them (e.g., expanding their audience base and taking advantage of media production expertise outside of the U.S., which translates to quality, culturally desirable content, but also to cost savings).

Many ethnic media producers indicated frustration with what they saw as the absence of a business model that they could implement to strategically invest in online ventures and grow as enterprises. Additionally, in interviews, some producers indicated trepidation in further developing their online presence because they feared their online expansion would cannibalize their offline products. This was true particularly in cases like that of an ethnic newspaper serving a large and growing audience of Chinese-origin where the offline offering continued to produce significant revenue. Moreover, in some cases, producers based their skepticism on their perception that either the owners of their organization and/or their audience were not interested in online media. Such perceptions regarding audience behavior, though, were infrequently supported by data.

Informed by the study’s findings, considering trends in the broader media industry as documented in other studies, and looking to the future, the research team would like to offer several recommendations that we hope will facilitate ethnic media organizations’ efforts to innovate and successfully adapt to the new media landscape.

- **Invest resources to develop digital platforms:** A recent study by the Pew Research Center (Lu & Holcomb, 2016) indicates that audiences across the U.S. are increasingly relying on digital sources for news. Specifically, 28% of adults in the U.S. said that they sought news on news websites and apps, and another 18% said they did so via social media (the related figures for television, radio, and print newspapers were, respectively, 57%, 25%, and 20%). The same study also indicates that the growing dependency on digital news sources is driven by individuals who are seeking news using their mobile devices (and not their desktop computers). These trends suggest that many ethnic media organizations’ efforts to invest in developing websites, mobile-friendly versions of their websites, apps, and a strong presence on social networking sites are on the right track.

- **Focus on developing locally relevant content:** The Internet does challenge ethnic media to rethink their roles in the communities they serve. Focusing on the development of content that is about the local community (as opposed to the “home country”) used to be recommended to ethnic media producers serving ethnic communities, which, over time, comprised of an increasing number of second- and third- (or later-) generation immigrants. That was because staying on top of current affairs in a distant country of origin grew less important for these individuals. Today, the same recommendation is appropriate for ethnic media producers whose intended audiences in the United States, regardless of generation, are using the Internet and can therefore access news about their country of origin with the click of a button.
- Identify new audiences: Ethnic media producers should carefully assess whether their content might also appeal to new audiences they had not targeted ever before. In our study, a Japanese ethnic newspaper in New York, for example, found that news about New York City and the local Japanese-origin community was of interest to individuals living in Japan who were interested in doing business in, moving to, or traveling to New York.

- Make technology a topic of ongoing conversation in the organization: Given our findings regarding the significance of communication around technology within the media organization in developing producers’ sense of how helpful it is to use social media for work-related tasks, which in turn promotes social media adoption, we would encourage ethnic media organizations’ leadership to inspire and sustain conversations among staff members about how to leverage the affordances of the Internet and social media, more specifically. Innovation is unlikely to occur unless it is marked in organizational communication as a priority.

- Collaborate to learn: Survey and interview findings suggest that the level of competition across ethnic media is relatively low in New York City, largely because they serve such diverse populations. Therefore, time and financial constraints aside, we expect producers to be more open to collaboration and we would encourage the exchange of information among them regarding their efforts to leverage the power of the Internet (both their successes and failures) and their concerns and ideas about how to proceed in the future. The Center for Community and Ethnic Media (CCEM) is well positioned to facilitate such an exchange, as part of the broad array of its initiatives (including training events and workshops focused on specific aspects of online media production), by serving as the convener of a series of follow-up roundtable meetings with producers who participated in the study. The initial duration of this initiative could be six months to one year. In that time, producers can deliberate and decide if they would like such an exchange to continue and what form it should take in order for it to be most helpful. Given the diversity of ethnic media organizations (e.g., in terms of size, audience characteristics, production goals), producers may decide, for example, to continue to meet regularly with colleagues who are confronted with the same challenges that they are or who have similar goals pertaining to the use of new communication technologies.

- Pool resources: In the context of the abovementioned series of roundtable events, New York City ethnic media producers (possibly with the support of the CCEM) can explore models of collaboration that would also allow them to pool resources to develop online content production and distribution platforms, from which more than one organization could benefit. The end product need not be a single platform serving all ethnic media in New York City and it need not take the form of a website. An innovative new platform might be able to attract venture capital. (Considerable such capital has been invested in recent years in what are frequently referred to as digital native media, but also digital platforms of legacy media.)

- Support (and even conduct) audience research: More research, specifically, on ethnic media audiences’ news-seeking behaviors would help guide producers who are considering if and how to strengthen their presence online, but who are struggling with how to allocate scarce resources (human and financial). Producers (and arguably advertisers) would benefit from a deeper investigation into audience members’ level and quality of access to the Internet, their level of familiarity with new communication technologies and their digital literacy, the factors that would encourage them to use ethnic media online more, but also to financially support them. Data could also be systematically collected about the online behaviors of ethnic
media audiences (e.g., what content is preferred, what content is re-distributed through social media and how, interaction patterns with producers) and analyzed to inform producers’ future investments online. Although some of this work would require raising or soliciting funding (e.g., with a grant proposal) and collaborating with a team of researchers, some of this research ethnic media organizations could also be trained to do themselves, in-house.


New America Media. (2012). About NAM. Available at: http://newamericamedia.org/about/
