소셜 네트워크 저널리즘 모델의 출현: 소셜 뉴스사이트, "위키트리" 사례연구☆

Emergence of Social Networked Journalism Model: A Case Study of Social News Site, "wikitree"

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요 약

이 연구는 글로벌 저널리즘 환경에서 부상한 소셜 네트워크 저널리즘의 제 가치를 검토하고, 네트워크 저널리즘 이론을 토대로 국내 소셜 뉴스 사이트인 '위키트리'의 사례를 분석하였다. 소셜 네트워크 저널리즘은 공중으로 하여금 크라우드 소싱과 상호작용을 통해 저널리즘 생산의 모든 측면에 관여할 수 있도록 허용한다. 공중과의 네트워킹 효과로 인해 저널리즘은 더욱 개방적이고, 더욱 연결되며, 더욱 즉각적인 반응을 촉발시키고 있다. '위키트리'는 누구나 페이스북과 트위터를 통해서 뉴스를 작성하고 배포할 수 있는 소셜 네트워킹 뉴스서비스이다. 위키트리는 개방형소스 프로그램으로 운영되면서 '구글번역기'를 사용해 자동적으로 모든 뉴스 콘텐츠를 전환시키고, 인터넷 접근이 가능한 글로벌 시민이라면 누구나 뉴스생산에 기여할 수 있게 하며, 자신만의 창의적인 콘텐츠나 다른 정보원으로부터 생성된 콘텐츠를 공유할 수 있도록 허용한다. 초창기부터 '위키트리 글로벌' 사이트는 160개국에서 생성되는 접속 포인트들로 인해 급속하게 보도범위를 확장하고 있다. 이 연구는 위키트리 글로벌 사이트의 국제 커버리지를 국가별, 뉴스유형 별로 분석함으로써 SNS를 활용해 글로벌 공중을 연결하는 것이 특정한 뉴스 아이템들뿐만 아니라 소셜뉴스 사이트의 뉴스 트래픽을 향상시킬 수 있음을 암시하고 있다. 또 다른 연구결과는 소셜 네트워크 저널리즘에서 트위터와 페이스북의 활용이 뉴스사이트에 대한 수용자들의 관심을 증대시킬 뿐만 아니라 뉴스수집의 능력을 확장시킴으로써 지역공중과 글로벌 공중 사이의 경계를 허물고 지역 온라인 저널리즘에 실현가능한 사업모델을 창출할 수 있음을 시사한다.

☞ 주제어 : 소셜뉴스, 네트워크저널리즘, 위키트리, 페이스북, 트위터

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rising value of social networked journalism and analyzes the case of a social news site based on the theory of networked journalism. Social networked journalism allows the public to be involved in every aspect of journalism production through crowd-sourcing and interactivity. The networking effect with the public is driving journalism to transform into a more open, more networked and more responsive venue. "wikitree" is a social networking news service on which anybody can write news and disseminate it via Facebook and Twitter. It is operated as an open sourced program which incorporates "Google Translate" to automatically convert all its content, enabling any global citizen with an Internet access to contribute news production and share either their own creative contents or generated contents from other sources. Since its inception, "wikitree global" site has been expanding its coverage rapidly with access points arising from 160 countries. Analyzing its international coverage by country and by news category as well as by the unique visit numbers via SNS, the results of the case study imply that networking with the global public can enhance news traffic to the social news site as well as to specific news items. The results also suggest that the utilization of Twitter and Facebook in social networked journalism can break the boundary between local and global public by extending news-gathering ability while growing audience's interest in the site, and engender a feasible business model for a local online journalism.

☞ keyword : Social news, networked journalism, wiketree, Facebook, Twitter

1. Introduction

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In an era of social media, networked journalism, as a new form of news production, has become ubiquitous in transforming and enhancing the quality of news media production. Networked journalism can be defined as a synthesis of traditional news journalism and emerging forms of participatory media enabled by Web 2.0 technologies such as mobile phones, email, websites, blogs, micro-blogging, and

social networks. It allows the public to be involved in every aspect of journalism production through crowd-sourcing, interactivity, hyper-linking, user-generated content and forum[1].

Networking with the general public can bring value to the small local online journalism entity as well as to its global readers themselves. It can enhance real-time breaking news-gathering capacity and create new relationships between journalists and stories and the international public. Thus, "networked journalism" is about an interlocking service with regards to a relationship, not property. Although not every news production will specifically be networked to an audience, concepts and principles of networking are increasingly being put to practice in the digital news media. It seems any online community and even small news media can now create a service that can link mainstream news media and the public together both at the local and global levels. Furthermore, the public that is interested in maintaining content integrity about a specific topic can contribute by serving both as a news source and as a reader, producing and disseminating news via Facebook and Twitter. In short, becoming more networked with the public is essential for any news media's effort to expand it reach and coverage.

It has been the case in recent years that local and small newspapers were deeply threatened by decreasing revenue and resources. Somewhat paradoxically, however, actual number of newspapers has exploded rather than decrease in the field of journalism. South Korea especially has experienced a huge surge with more than 4,000 registered online newspapers sprouting up, most of which are run with small staff who mainly curate mainstream media news[2]. And some of these online outlets specifically engage in the emerging 'networked journalism' business, heavily utilizing and dependent on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter for news production and dissemination.

According to rankey.com, "wikitree" ranks in the top-7 online news sites out of the 329 tabulated for the category[3]. wikitree encourages the public to participate by contributing news and amplifies citizen's voices through various SNSs. Overall, there was a tendency for fun/human interest news to be more often shared by SNS users across the world[4]. wikitree utilizes Facebook and Twitter very

proactively to disseminate its news to increase international readership as well as the domestic one. Anyone who has access to its site through Twitter or Facebook can join to freely write/edit/translate news content. Using Google's open sourced translation platform, wikitree also enables any news contribution to become automatically transformed into five international languages which are English, Chinese, Japanese, French and Spanish. The import of the news item is decided by the users and contributors.

Based on the value of networked journalism, this paper attempted to examine how a small, local online news site like 'wikitree' has built its network of international audience and enhanced its global coverage through SNS. It also analyzed what types of news were drawing the keenest attention from the international readers. Furthermore, it explored the most visited top 10 countries with the most visits per language on 'wikitree global', data based on the number of actual access by the public which from various parts of the world.

2. Theory of Networked Journalism

2.1. A Changing Global Journalism Culture

The fragmentation of mass media audiences and the migration of information consumers to tens of thousands of niche web sites are further evidence that everyone has something to say, and may even be considered an expert at certain things. The notion that people are simply ignorant, or that other people are interested in everything is a myth [5]. Diversity and magnitude of the public implies that a mix of publics is usually much wiser than a public comprised of just the elite or one segment of special interest. As Levy believed, as technology of cyberspace will foster the emergence of a "collective intelligence", [6] the public will tend to interact more readily with each other and to freely contribute to creating human knowledge and information throughout the Internet.

Especially, the new communications technology allows for new, virtual community formation, on a global, local or special interest basis, blurring the boundaries of the existing nation-state. As a result, the publics are capable of accessing news and information for themselves and will become more

direct and active information seekers on subjects they are already familiar with [7]. Within this changing global network communication culture, the dynamics of newsgathering, production and dissemination are transforming and the traditional one-way journalism's structure with unidirectional links to its ends, running from center to the periphery is being eroded [8]. In short, a 'network' character of communication is taking shape based on a 'network' structure of journalism in which decentralization and nonlinearity are the key parameters defining news flows [9].

The idea of an evolving 'networked journalism' is based upon Castell's model of the 'network society', which enhances multidirectional and non-linear information flows. Heinrich argues that the network structure suits "the increasing complexity of interaction"(Castells, 2000:70) within society and impacts all news distribution platforms from print, radio, all the way to television, as well as online journalism. In this respect, 'networked journalism' takes into account the new connectivity modes of today's journalism culture in which news exchange is organized in a more decentralized pattern.

To enhance their news gathering and interactivity, traditional journalism as well as new forms of online journalism has become more engaged with the global/local publics through Internet and social networking sites. Research shows that online journalists do not merely repurpose content for the Web; more of them are interacting with the citizens, while customising contents, providing them with hypertextuality, and supplying them with multimedia[9]. Such a changing form of news production implies that the journalists are more likely to become a facilitator than a 'gate-keeper' of news flows. In other words, 'networked journalism' is driving journalism to transform into a more open, more networked and more responsive venue, allowing the public to be involved in every aspect of journalism production through interactivity.

2.2. The Value of Networked Journalism

'Networked journalism' stands for a structural concept, in which a new organizational framework of journalistic operation is taking shape [7]. It is creating a new relationship between the journalist and the public which changes the old relations

in a fundamental way. According to Castells, as the Internet becomes "the technological basis for the organizational form of the Information Age"(2002:1), the network structure boosts multidirectional and non-linear information flows within journalism practices. In this respect, 'networked journalism' can be a model which takes into account the new connectivity modes of recent journalism in which the 'closed' traditional news production system is being replaced by an 'open' and dynamic information exchange mode. Within an evolving networked journalism sphere, news exchange is globally circulated and radically decentralized through other nodes and SNS.

Networked journalism has also added new core values to the journalism practices in the global news sphere. First and foremost is the public's participation and interactivity which impact journalistic practices directly. Journalist moves from a linear, one-off story to a stream of instant witnessing. They cannot help but become more open and more accessible to the global public which in turn helps journalism become more connected, diverse and deeper through public's participation.

Second, networked journalism can raise editorial value of the media entity, as linkages with more substantial, diverse and information-filled news sites can help enhance its own quality with regards to accuracy, variety and depth. And in reality, a new dynamic of newsgathering, production and dissemination is taking shape that affects journalisic practices in many social news sites[10]. Much of the research with regards to social networking media's impact on news flows suggest that networked digital media technologies are extending the ability of news consumers to both create and receive personalized social news streams, and subsequently, the networked publics are reframing the news and shaping news flows[9].

Third, public participation through networked journalism adds economic value directly to the news media, for most of the contents contributed by the public is free of charge. By utilizing networked journalism, mainstream media can connect themselves to a wider network of independent, individual and social media without cost. For instance, mainstream media organization can seek to connect itself to those grass-roots networks and in turn, provide a wider connectivity for their work. At a local level, networked journalism may offer a way forward in that professional media organizations can increase

their coverage by interlocking with global citizens. By the same token, many independent hyper-local news sites can get its messages out to the wider populace by allowing the mainstream media to connect to its network.

Lastly, networked journalism allows online journalism to scale its international news flow. Scalability refers to the capability of a system to increase its total output under an increased load when resources are added. In a networked setting, number of global audiences can be counted and the actual visitors from abroad on a specific news item can be gauged.

With such a link and scalability established, networked journalism can now offer a way forward for even small local media entities as they are able to receive information about and interact with the world via the participation of the global citizenry. As such, independent hyper-local news sites should always try to access the power of the networked audience and the advantages of connectivity to them.

3. Research Questions and Method

In light of these core values of networked journalism, social news sites are more likely to interlock with the global public to enhance news coverage and help boost its actual news traffic and advertising revenue. "wikitree global" site has been interlocking with global public through social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook since its inception. Its daily news was translated into five languages--English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and French. Each language site had its prime international readers who were interested in both local and global news from wikitree.

Based on the review of the literature, this study raised three research questions regarding the networking effects of the

social news site. First, how has 'wikitree global', an emerging "networked journalism" entity, engaged global users by region and by country? Second, to what extent were SNSs such as Twitter and Facebook used by global users to actually connect to the social news site? Third, what types of news were the most popular to the global public, ranked by top ten-accessing countries by language.

In order to answer these questions, this study conducted a secondary analysis of wikitree global's news data from Sept. 16, 2013~March, 31, 2014. Raw Excel data file was collected from wikitree's systems administrator. The seven and a half month-long log file data from wikitree global in its entirety were perused and analyzed by category such as region/country, news theme and the number of SNS exposures, "content sharing' and "Likes". wikitree global's news data was analyzed primarily in quantitative terms with regard to actual number of visits to a specific news theme and assessed by its rank according to the top ten accessing countries and by its five major languages. Their percentages as well as the total number of website views and mobile views were tallied.

4. Results

4.1. Regional Visitors and Highest Viewed News Themes

The results showed that more than 2/3 of the public who visit the site were from Asia and North America, while European public ranked 3rd [Table1]. For the last seven-and-a-half months, the total number of actual visitors was approximately 1.3 million. Asia boasted the most visitors, while North America and Europe were second and third respectively. Number of international public who were

Table1. Monthly Coverage of "Wikitree Global" by Region

Region	Monthly Visit Numbers							Total Rate(%)	Total Number
	9	10	11	12	1	2	3		
Asia	6375	18262	81997	76934	54025	178106	72750	36.53	488449
North America	2043	6551	26366	13580	14587	326521	40851	32.19	430499
Europe	598	2126	40786	11040	15714	246591	31977	26.09	348832
Middle East & Africa	3	161	3158	393	4214	2296	909	0.83	11134
South America	75	309	3387	1768	14638	12637	3857	2.74	36671
Oceania	18	86	1120	341	323	18025	1189	1.58	21102
Others	9	21	28	21	13	419	91	0.05	602
Sum	9121	27516	156842	104077	103514	784595	151624	100	1337289

interested in "wikitree" news was gradually growing. However, November showed the highest "views" during the study period because of one particular article about photos which gave the illusion of looking 3D.

Top ten countries out of 160 with the highest views represented 76.96% of the total shown in [Table2]. The American public showed the most interest in "wikitree"(27.14%), visiting the site more than twice as often as the second ranked Japanese (11.45%)and almost four times as often as the third ranked Chinese readers(8.14%).

Table 2. Top 10 Countries with Highest Views on Wikitree Global

Rank	Country	N.of Visits	Percentage
1	USA	362988	27.14
2	Japan	153059	11.45
3	China	108898	8.14
4	S. Korea	77590	5.8
5	Germany	64170	4.8
6	France	62915	4.7
7	Canada	54071	4.04
8	U.K.	50960	3.81
9	Austria	48250	3.61
10	Taiwan	46396	3.47
Total		1029297	76.96%

With regards to news theme, "Fun/OMG(Oh My Gosh)" news seemed to garner the most views generally across nations, especially among USA, Germany, Austria, France, and Taiwan. Though "World" news was the second most popular theme, actual number of views was far lower than for "Fun/OMG" items. But favorite categories differed by countries; for example, "World" news was the most popular theme with Canadians, while the Japanese clicked on "K-Pop" news the most. As a side note, with K-Pop's growing popularity worldwide, it probably warrants increasing such coverage.

Meanwhile, news regarding "North Korea" did not draw as much attention from the international public as one might have imagined, although it was still a slightly bit higher than that for "Korea(meaning South Korea-related news)" viewers. In general, though, wikitree global's public tended to favor "fun" items and liked to share these "soft news" rather than hard ones. Most of the "Fun/OMG" news consisted of a variety of funny, weird and eccentric topics.

4.2. Networking with Social Media

During the research period, total number of Twitter exposures was approximately 89 million, while Facebook exposures hit only 10 million. [Table4] demonstrates that the

Table 3. Top 10 Countries with Highest Views by News Theme

News Theme	USA	Japan	China	S. Korea	Germany	France	Canada	UK	Austria	Taiwan
Fun/OMG	180771	32705	3385	6667	48828	43328	28983	34294	46284	39146
World	93055	11230	1385	3265	2742	3474	15614	9665	428	988
K-POP	10592	30137	1303	14946	539	2219	1088	767	26	790
Sports	8306	24990	769	2585	1034	1391	1440	809	476	392
North Korea	7310	7165	1017	2283	395	807	551	600	44	167
Tech	4783	6679	848	2230	309	688	305	408	9	273
Entmnt	2666	9662	605	1772	263	642	191	328	6	261
Business	3611	4185	771	1926	194	418	369	255	6	144
Korea	4393	2737	812	2202	205	447	371	148	5	73
Travel	2464	606	134	1410	207	128	363	175	29	34
Cars	1310	1209	146	519	66	282	95	45	15	16
Kimchi/Food	870	215	61	391	42	76	75	41	3	7
Infographic	268	330	44	204	16	25	15	23	0	4
K-Style	142	157	44	182	2	19	6	11	0	9
Others	42447	21052	97574	37008	9328	8971	4605	3391	919	4092
Total (1337289)	362988	153059	108898	77590	64170	62915	54071	50960	48250	46396
Percentage	27.14%	11.45%	8.14%	5.80%	4.80%	4.70%	4.04%	3.81%	3.61%	3.47%

total number of Twitter exposures was much bigger than that of Facebook. The number of Facebook visits exceeded those of 'Content Sharing' and 'Likes'. The result also indicated that international Facebook users did not seem keen to "share" news contents from "wikitree global".

With regards to news themes, "Fun/OMG" items were the most disseminated via Twitter and Facebook, followed by "World" and "Sports." It is worthwhile to note that "Entertainment" news was the third most popular theme while "Korea" news was number four. Though not mutually exclusive, "K-Pop", "K-Style" and "Korea" news categories altogether drew approximately 1.5 million international views. In contrast to the high SNS exposure numbers, the fact that actual "Content Sharing" and "Likes" was relatively low and limited was problematic. "Fun/OMG" news was the most shared category among Facebook users.

Table 4. Twitter and Facebook Exposures by News Theme

News Theme	Twitter Exposures	Facebook Exposures		
		Visit Number	Content-sharing	Likes
North Korea	2367600	382827	2874	46
K-POP	6107778	662920	5135	55
Tech	5490805	463950	3081	32
Business	2192543	753371	4247	12
Korea	7181813	732993	5393	323
Fun/OMG	32713678	3685278	22031	3031
K-Style	1517635	67671	419	0
Sports	5975318	1070617	6910	87
Infographics	712150	36273	678	17
World	13006522	1201245	7719	105
Travel	2551010	489911	3562	34
Kimchi/Food	563347	54419	1086	75
Automobile	353497	64439	293	0
Entertainment	8060257	761795	4144	62
Sum	88793953	10427709	67572	3879

4.3. Interlocking Public by Language

There was an obvious correlation with the user's expected language affinity, though each language site revealed various geo-linguistic diasporas. For example, English language sites were accessed primarily by US & European publics(United States(35%), Germany(6.8%), Canada (5.6%), UK(5.6%), and Austria(5.5%)); while Chinese language sites attracted mainly Asian publics(China(41.7%), Taiwan(17.0%), Korea (9.0%)

and Hong Kong(3.0%)); for Japanese language sites, majority of the readers came from Japan(Japan(69.7%), U.S.(9.6%), China(9.2%), and Korea(4.2%)).

There were other noteworthy results such as the fact that there were many people from Russia accessing the Chinese site, that Ukrainians were also accessing the Japanese site, that Peru and China ranked number one and two for accessing the Spanish site, and that those from China and the U.S. were the second and third most accessing countries for the French site[Table5]. The results showed that global publics who were interested in a specific language site did not necessarily have to be from the country of the same ligua-franca.

Although there was a noticeable overlap of countries among the top four ranked accessing countries per language, there was not the same level of overlap in the popularity of news themes. For English, Chinese and French language sites, "Fun/OMG" type of news drew the most attention from the international publics, while the Japanese language content audience preferred news about "K-Pop", "Fun", and "Sports" and the Spanish language content followers tended to consume "World" and "Entertainment" news the most.

Table 5. The Top 10 Countries for Wikitree Global site by Language

Rank	English	Chinese	Japanese	Spanish	French
1	USA	China	Japan	Peru	France
2	Germany	Taiwan	USA	China	China
3	Canada	USA	China	USA	USA
4	UK	S.Korea	S.Korea	S.Korea	S.Korea
5	Austria	Hong Kong	Ukraine	Spain	Canada
6	S.Korea	Russia	Russia	Mexico	Ukraine
7	Taiwan	Japan	Germany	Argentina	Algeria
8	Singapore	Malaysia	France	Ukraine	Russia
9	China	Ukraine	Canada	Russia	Belgium
10	Finland	Canada	HongKong	Germany	Germany
Total	877519	59572	195753	82944	113526
	m246238	m8940	m67432	m8487	m22179

From the perspective of networked journalism model, certain news themes such as 'Fun news' and 'World news' tended to draw more attention from the international public than others. Thematically, these news items were similarly popular across various language sites, perhaps signifying that human-interest angle flowed more easily across network borders. Among 160 nations, U.S. and Chinese publics were

most proactive global news consumers of 'wikitree' sites. This was probably a function of both countries being comprised of very diverse ethnic groups who used different languages.

4. Conclusion

In a digitalized networked world, news is now a non-linear, multi-directional affair. Newsrooms are no longer fortresses for the Fourth Estate, rather they are the hubs at the center of endless networks[1]. What's more, gatekeeping function of the journalist has almost come to an end due to the new communication technology. As a result, journalism has become more of a service-oriented information industry, creating and connecting the flow of information, analysis and commentary through the Internet and social media. And in the process, networked journalism is becoming an integral part of mainstream journalism which allows for public participation in all parts of the news production process. Meanwhile, news media content seems to be becoming more and more deterritorialized, involving complex relations and flows across national borders and continents[11].

Nevertheless, the fundamental nature of what journalism is has not been radically challenged as networked journalism still emphasizes the role of giving critical accounts of daily events, gathering, selecting, editing and disseminating information, and serving as a platform for the global public's participation in politics, culture, etc. in their respective societies. The results of the case study on 'wikitree global' imply that networking with the global public can enhance news traffic to the social news site as well as to specific news items, and that geographic distance matters very little. Although Fun/World/K-Pop news was the top three most popular news themes overall, variance was noticeable by country, even within the same lingua franca.

The results of the study also suggest that the utilization of Twitter and Facebook in social networked journalism can break the boundary between local and global public by extending news-gathering ability while growing audience's interest in the site. In other words, diverse and fragmented gobal wikitree audience seems to represent new types of news consumers, perfectly capable of accessing for themselves global and local news and information via networked social news sites. The secondary analysis of the interlocking public data helps one to understand the new form of news production and distribution in terms of networked journalism via SNS.

However, this case study has some limitations. As the access data of the international publics have been collected and accumulated on the basis of IP address, it is impossible to discern the public's individual identifications such as age, gender, real nationality and social economic status. Further, the data only reveal actual visits by anonymous public who happened to get access to 'wikitree global' site and consume "Korea" related local and global news.

Despite its limitations, the results of the study implies that social networked journalism, as an open-sourced structure in which nodes are the vital connection points, should develop strategies to implement networking practices to enhance global coverage and its connections with other journalistic counterparts as well as to the informed and interested publics. And as networked journalism evolves, social news sites can pave the way in playing an important role as a vital node within the field of journalism.

In addition, interlocking publics who increasingly blend information sources and have the ability to connect, interact, and collaborate with the journalists through SNS will be a necessity to be included in the news gathering, production and dissemination practices. Therefore, it may be concluded that interlocking with the global public through SNS can contribute to boosting local online journalism by creating, connecting and enabling a free flow of news, information, and fun-oriented content and may transform journalistic practices both at the individual and at the news media organization level. Further, this emerging networked journalism model may be able to provide a wide variety of options to mainstream news services as well as online news entity via an increased network of sources, distributed over multiple, multi-directional platforms.

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