Public Communication: The New Imperatives
Future Directions For Media Research

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Social media are quickly becoming the channel of choice for disseminating emergency warning messages. However, relatively little data-driven research exists to inform effective message design when using these media. The present study addresses that void by examining terse health-related warning messages sent by public safety agencies over Twitter during the 2013 Boulder, CO, floods. An examination of 5,100 tweets from 52 Twitter accounts over the course of the 5-day flood period yielded several key conclusions and implications. First, public health messages posted by local emergency management agencies are often characterized as highly interactive digital technology. New media is “very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyper-linked and, perhaps most radical of all, easily searched for and accessed,” Robert Logan writes in his book Understanding New Media. Conceptually, new media can be viewed as a cultural process that reflects societal values and societal transformation. These and other considerations help define new media and explain its significance. Only 56 percent of newspaper readership takes place exclusively in print, according to the Pew Research Center. Newspaper ad revenue from print dropped to $16.4 billion in 2014 from $44.9 billion in 2003, while digital ad revenue increased to $3.5 billion in 2014 from $1.2 billion in 2003.