

My name is Ava Francesca Battocchio and I am an Information and Media Ph.D. student and University Enrichment Fellow at Michigan State University in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations. I am advised by Dr. Kjerstin Thorson. As Loyola University Chicago's School of Communication's first dual-degree student, I concurrently completed my Master of Science in Global Strategic Communication (2020) and my Bachelor of Arts in Advertising (2019).

Though my education has taken me elsewhere, I call Duluth, Minnesota and the Northland home. With my home base in Duluth and family in Bemidji and the Iron Range, it enabled me to spend considerable time in rural and remote communities across the northern United States and Canada, examining the relationship between history and current community narratives. Changing industrial and economic landscapes across the Upper Great Lakes has sparked my desire to understand the changing social and political climate in communities across the region and what that means for small-town civic life. In short, I want to better understand how self-identity associated with where one calls home interacts with the way that people develop knowledge systems, the types of information that is important, and what they share with one another while trying to make sense of the world around them.

Communities across the Upper Great Lakes are experiencing a decrease in local media, oftentimes becoming heavily dependent on news sources based in much larger cities, sometimes hours away, that are not reflective of one's community. Additionally, people in all corners of the United States and on both sides of the partisan line, are expressing heightened distrust in the news and political information sources. In response, many communities have seen the rise of hyperlocal social media groups with the intention of sharing civic information and news.

This current study aims to better understand the concept of community media ecosystems through exploring the visibility of civic information in Facebook groups. To do so, I intend to engage in participant-observer research in several local Facebook groups, where I identify themes in the types of information that is being shared by group members. Additionally, I will take special note of how moderators are engaging with content that members or admins indicate may not follow the group rules. Lastly, I aim to interview moderators for these groups to better understand their process in moderating content and how that shapes the community information that is shared in these spaces.

I am very interested in any recommendations that you may have so that I can better understand what a community storytelling network may look like in your neck of the woods.

To learn more about me, please feel free to check out my website at afbat.co. Additionally, please don't hesitate to contact with me questions, concerns or to learn more about this project at battocch@msu.edu.