

“The viewer is now the scheduler”

Broadcast journalism A critical appraisal

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FAKE NEWS

The newsroom has undergone a transformation since the introduction of digital technology. Journalists must now be able to employ a wide range of technical skills while upholding the fundamental values of journalism: finding and producing an accurate, well written story to a deadline. Technology convergence has given journalists new responsibilities in providing news for a variety of different platforms. In the following essay, I will be exploring some of the current issues in journalism, focusing on the use of mobile journalism. I will be relating this to my own personal experiences within my practical work on the course. According to a report by Ofcom, Smartphones have overtaken laptops as UK internet users number one device, with people averaging spending two hours on their phones every day. This has changed how we receive our news. “Amongst the 55’s to 64’s there has also been a growth with half the older age groups now owning a smart phone” (Ofcom, 2015) With most mobile phones having 4G accessible data people of all ages have access to the news wherever they go.

Audiences no longer need to wait for the evening news broadcast as they can receive news at any time using an internet browser. As Orlebor & Bignell describe in The Television Handbook (2011) “The viewer is now the scheduler”. News is portable and immediate, and journalists must adopt the techniques to support the audience’s needs. Technological convergence challenges our identity as journalists as news is much more accessible and people can now find the latest news stories for themselves. The need for punctuality is important now more than ever as we have entered a time where readers seek instant gratification.

The introduction of mobile journalism has presented new methods of creating news. In a time where most people have access to a smart phone, you can almost guarantee somebody will be nearby and ready to take footage of a live event as it unfolds. I was interested to find out whether the convergence in technology means anybody can be a journalist. News organisations often include mobile footage (user generated content) of news events because the focus is often on how quickly they can get footage of a news stories, rather than the quality of the footage.

People have increased access to publicising footage and news items online. In my research into whether there is still a need for the role of the journalist, I concluded that despite how easy it is for members of the public to share news items online with the rest of the world, journalists are still relied upon to provide the most accurate account of a news report. People are generally aware of the use of ‘fake news’ so when a crisis occurs they are much more likely to search for a well-known news organisation like the BBC for example,

than they are to look at Facebook status’ if they are looking for facts. “Despite all these innovations, almost all the most reliable, authoritative and accurate news content is still produced by broadcast journalists”. (Hudson & Rowlands, 2012 p 4). Social media platforms have the power to influence the public however, they do not have an editorial process to control what is posted. As a result of this, audiences are unable to guarantee that the stories they are reading on social media are completely accurate.

News organisations have a competitive demand for getting their stories out before other media organisation do so that they can ensure their audiences they are providing the most up to date news coverage. The audience demands visual representations of live events, so that they can see exactly what is taking place. Since the rise in online news, organisations must take into consideration the feedback they receive from their audiences so positive audience feedback is crucial in running a successful news page. “Television company’s seek responses and involvement from consumers”. (Orlebor, J & Bignells, J. 2011 p 20)

When I was allocated television reporter for a Newsday, I wondered whether I could use my mobile phone to take general views or to record interviews which I could include in my reports. There was pressure for us to get back as quickly as possible so we had time to edit and produce the news feature so taking the footage on my mobile would have saved time. One of the core values for television is to provide a good visual representation which could not be achieved to the same standard with a mobile phone. With the video camera, we were able to provide clear footage and experiment with five shot sequences and zoom shots which we wouldn't be able to achieve on a mobile phone. "The video journalists challenge is to stimulate the public by infusing the work not only with human appeal but with clever videography as well". (Kobre, K. 2012 p46)

If there is the option of time and planning, the best footage I captured was taken professionally as I was able to frame the shot suitably and I could record for a longer period of time as the camera was being supported by the tripod. The windproof mics were essential in providing good audio; the slightest shift in wind was picked up by the microphone if I didn't use the protective wind shield cover. When the audio isn't clear in a news report it can be very distracting to the audience as it takes the focus away from what the reporter/ interviewee is saying because they are trying to focus on being able to hear them. Clipping the microphone onto clothing when interviewing members of the public made them feel more comfortable as they could talk freely. Previously I have felt that people rush their answers if the reporter is having to hold the microphone up to them. My selection process when conducting the research for my assignment was

based on relevance and magnitude. I was looking for something that would be relevant to people in Bristol so that they would be comfortable voicing their opinions on the subject. I noticed there had been frequent mention of music venues being closed down in the city centre including Thekla. I decided this story would attract lots of attention from the people of Bristol as Bristol is full of upcoming musicians and people who simply enjoy Bristol's unique music culture.

I arranged an interview with Thekla's general manager to discuss the potential closure. On arrival at the venue I met two musicians who were happy for me to interview them because they also felt very strongly about the subject, and they were concerned how this would impact their chances of success in the music industry. Including the stories of these musicians gave my package a personal feel to it which the audience could understand and relate to.



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As Paul Bradshaw says in his book "The online journalism handbook: skills to survive and thrive in the digital age" "if you know who your audience is, you have a good idea of what information is the most valuable, what knowledge to take for granted, what style is appropriate and where and when it is best to reach them".

The venue was being closed because of plans for a new residential flat, this would affect many people in the area, so I was interested to hear the local reactions. When I was recording Vox pops on this topic I was pleased that everybody I spoke to already knew about these plans, and most of them had already formed a strong opinion on the subject. I decided this story would be suitable for a radio feature as I'd learnt in my workshops that features are used to spark debate and give an overview of a topic. Features rarely make it into bulletins as they are a more detailed look on a story.

In conclusion, I believe there is still an important role in society for journalists. The public still depends on news organisations for the latest, most accurate versions of the news. Despite how easily a person can publish online and call themselves an online journalist, official news organisations are still the most trusted source of news. I do not feel the role of a journalist is threatened by the convergence of technology as audiences rely on news organisations to provide high quality footage and clear audio when covering a story.