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Citizen Journalism and Hyperlocal Media: Building Your Brand

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Citizen Journalism and Hyperlocal Media:

Building Your Brand

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Sample PowerPoint Slides

Demonstrative website at www.cibchealthquote.com/k-net.htm

Introduction

It is common knowledge that the media in general is struggling to adapt to a much smaller business model. While some industry professionals would point to the Internet as a main reason for falling revenues, the main reason for the decline in viewers, circulation, and relevance is time (Couldry & Langer, 2005). Consumers no longer need to wait for the news to come on TV, or wait for the paper to hit the front porch. In most cases, the information is "old news" as soon as it hits the printing plate or is typed into the teleprompter. Without question, the Internet is the fastest way to reach the masses in the digital age, and for the most part, it is all free.

How did traditional media get to this point of marginalization? Among other reasons, it was their shared lack of a systematic approach to utilizing digital media, a lack of metrics associated with online content, and a lack of original online content that fueled the decline in relevance (Adams, 2006). The Internet is viewed as an interactive marketplace (Adams, 2006), and because most newspaper and broadcast websites were just a regurgitation of the core product (Chyi & Sylvie, 1999), there was little attempt to extend the organizational brand outside the core product. Newspapers were, and mostly still are, not using their websites to attract new users (Adams, 2006), and coupled with the fact that the Internet's strongest demographic (the young) are getting their news from new media sources like Yahoo! and MSN (Oyedeji, 2007), there is a loss of a branding opportunity for both the core and online products. Less than 10% of newspapers have distinctive brands (such as *The Wall Street Journal*), and even less have a strong brand image (Adams, 2006). The fear of cannibalization of the news by online offerings (Ferguson, 2000) also contributed to an overall fear of new media (Internet, e-mail,

etc…), which led to a lack of a plan for this emerging medium (Adams, 2006). Even Belden Interactive, a leading media consultant group, admits that all media is "Struggling with the online model" (How Old Media, 2005). Most print organizations who offer web-based products utilize the circulation of the print product to support their ad rates, and this is a significant factor for advertisers (Adams, 2006).

So where are people getting their news? According to a June 2010 Pew Report, 58% of the people are still getting news from television. The report's significance lies in the fact that now, more people are getting news online than from print sources. As noted in Figure 1 (next page), online news is par with radio at 34%. Also of note is the "Any web or mobile news" entrance into the survey. As smart phones connect us to our online lives (email, social media), 44% of respondents said they had used these devices to monitor news and information. This, combined with the variety of news sources found in Figure 2, directly speak to the "snacking" nature of news consumption. People are consuming bits of news across a variety of platforms. In Figure 2 (next page), it should be noted that almost twice the amount of people get their news from Yahoo!, an aggregator/search engine, than from the number two source (CNN), and other aggregator/search engines Google and MSN (Bing).

Out of this subset, only CNN has burdened the cost of gathering the news. Local news sites only make up 11% of the consumers, and as noted by Chyi and Sylvie above, most of these are newspapers' regurgitation of their print product online.

Fig 1

Fig 2

Where People Got News Yesterday
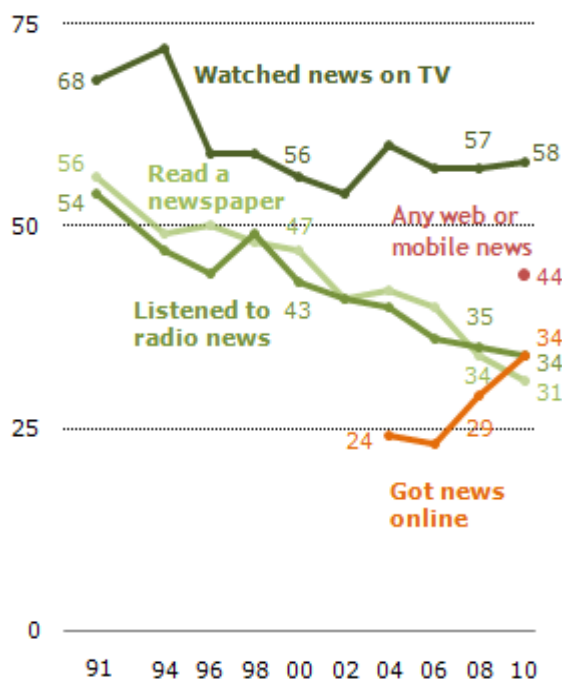
PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 8-28, 2010.

Where Do People Get News Online?

Websites used most often ...

	%
Yahoo	28
CNN	16
Google	15
MSN	14
Local news sites	11
Fox	8
AOL	7
MSNBC	7
New York Times	6
Internet service providers	4
BBC	2
Drudge Report	2
ABC	2
USA Today	2
Wall Street Journal	2
NBC	2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 8-28, 2010. Q42.
*Open-ended question based on those who go online for news. Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

Also of note in the Pew study is the fact that political news aggregator *Drudge Report* garnered 2% of consumers, Hyperlocal online outlet *Huffington Post* held 1%, and *Facebook* tallied the same number. Pew summarized it this way:

Maybe the best way to understand what is occurring today with the way people interact with the news and technology is to think of it as the end of our digital childhood. In the last two years….people are beginning to exploit the capacity of the technology to interact with information differently (Pew, 2010b, p.3).

This idea of using the tools differently without completely abandoning the old

tools can be quantified in how much time people spend on news. When looking at current numbers, as compared to the past 10 years, people say they are spending more time acquiring or interacting with news than ever before (Pew, 2010).

As usage is fragmented and revenues decrease, media companies are challenged to not only turn a profit, but also challenged to keep the doors open. The overall revenue for the 100 largest media companies in the U.S. declined by 4.3 percent in the first half of 2009 (Johnson, 2009). This slide was the first decline on record for the group. Eleven of the companies which were in the 2008 list of the 100 largest media firms have declared bankruptcy in 2009. (Johnson, 2009)

The Pew Report also states that news producers today understand how they can deliver news in new ways "to create new understanding, whether through the use of online graphics, customizing news to fit a consumer's interest or location, or recognizing the public as a community that participates in the news rather than an audience that receives it" (Pew, 2010). Different platforms serve consumers differently, and now there is strong evidence that consumers are blending a "media cocktail" to suit their own taste for local, regional, national, or international news and information.

The purpose of this project is to discuss the current state of the media, media branding, brand preference, and how hyperlocal media might utilize consumer branding principles while delivering multi-media news and information products to local consumers. In addition, a website demonstrating these hyperlocal principles has been produced, along with a workshop designed to educate potential content contributors on the basics of journalism, blogs and feature packaging, co-branding marketing techniques, and a capstone relating to diversity and the power of the media.

The State of Media

The overall state of media can be summed up in a word; ugly. All media numbers are a mere shadow of what they were even 10 years ago. Newspaper ad revenue fall 26% during 2009, and the three year trend is off 41%. Local television ad revenue fell 24%, triple the decline the year before, and radio was off 18%. Magazine ad pages dropped 19%, network TV 7%, and online ad revenue over all fell about 5% (Pew, 2010).

The majority of Internet users (59%) now use some kind of social media, including Twitter, blogging and networking sites (Pew, 2010). Most people, 57%, range from using between two and five websites, and only 11% use more than six.

Also of note is the data that 79% of online news consumers say they rarely if ever have clicked on an online ad. Seems like this may be one reason it has been hard to monetize websites. People ignore the ads!

The Pew Study said that only about a third of Americans (35%) have a news destination online they would call a "favorite," and even among these users only 19% said they would continue to visit if that site put up a pay wall**.** When there is a strong brand driver, as we have seen, people will pay more for that brand. This suggests that there is a brand void that is being filled by a variety of media.

In 2009, only digital and cable news saw audiences grow among the key sectors that deliver news. The data continue to suggest a pattern in how Americans get their news: they are increasingly nibbling consumers, finding places where they can get the news they want when they want it-- from a variety of sources and platforms.

Network news audiences in 2009 continued their long slide in viewership (off 2.5%, or 565,000 viewers). Newspapers saw print circulation losses accelerate in 2009. In

September, industry-wide circulation fell 10.6% from a year earlier. That comes on top of losses of 4.6% in 2008. The industry has lost 25.6% in daily circulation since 2000.

More than 4 in 10 Americans now say they listen to less terrestrial radio due to iPod/MP3 use, and nearly 1in 3 now say they listen to online radio. (Pew, 2010). This is yet another example of fragmentation and loss of brand. The Ipod is the aggregator in these cases.

Of the 472 consumer magazines for which comparable data were available from the Audit Bureau of Circulations, circulation fell 2.23% for the last six months of 2009 compared with the same period a year earlier (Audit Bureau, 2009).

Internet and mobile radio revenues are growing (a projected 9.4%), but they count for less than one fortieth of total revenues. In 2009, SiriusXM posted a net loss of $441 million (Arbitron, 2009).

In summary, media is increasingly fragmented, and the associated revenues are shrinking (fig 3, next page). Only cable is at least "treading water", but that is due to subscription-related revenues. While there have been gains by the strong brands in media (*New York Times, Wall Street Journal, MSNBC),* these gains have yet to be monetized en masse. All of this data points to a revenue and informational void created by fragmentation in media consumption. The economies of scale have shifted to more nimble, streamlined, and technology-based organizations that deliver news and information….but don't necessarily produce all of the content themselves.

Fig 3

Change in Ad Revenue by Medium 2008-2009
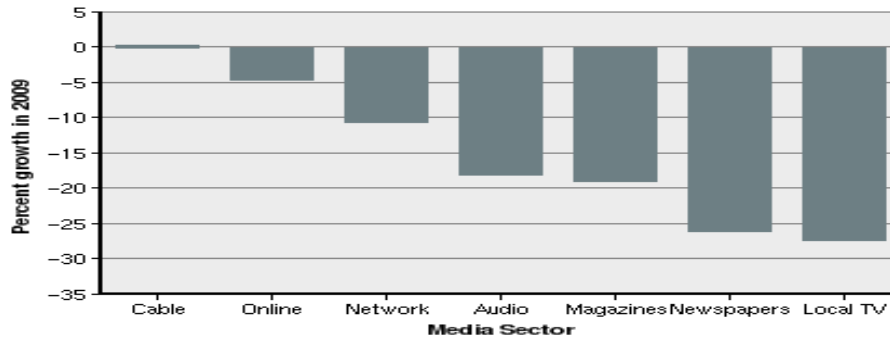
Sources: Cable-SNL Kagan; Online: eMarketer; Network: TNS Media Intelligence; Audio-Radio Advertising Bureau; Magazines: Publishers Information Bureau; Newspapers-Newspaper Association of America; Local TV: Television Bureau of Advertising. (Retrieved from Pew, 2010)

Brand and Preference

A brand is, in terms of marketing to consumers, "the aggregation of all the physical and emotional characteristics of a company, product, or service encountered by customers at all points of contact" (Roellig, 2001, p.40).

Media managers, until recently, have not looked at their brand in the same terms as the consumer products industry (Oyedeji, 2007). As discussed previously, newspaper and broadcast websites were regurgitation of core products re-done digitally in a "haphazard fashion" (Adams, 2006). Brand loyalty is a deeply held commitment to buy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future regardless of other situational influences such as price or marketing (Oliver, 1999).

The importance of brand loyalty has been well documented for over 30 years

(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). There is a strong correlation between brand loyalty, trust, and credibility (Oyedeji, 2007), and brands high in these traits are also high in market share and can command premium prices for their product (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Studies have shown that a message on the net is perceived less credible than the same message in print. For messages associated with strong brands, however, no substantial difference in their credibility is found (Marshall, 2003). In this respect, the literature suggests that brand preference is tied to credibility, personality, image, trust, loyalty, and thus tied to revenue. It can be argued that, in terms of the acquisition data in Figure 1 and brand preference, these online sources carry strong brands for the consumer.

Loyalty, Personality, and Trust

Higher brand relevance and brand trust build a strong association between consumers and the brand in over time (Rajagopal, 2010). Brand personality can increase levels of brand trust and evoke brand affect, which in turn builds the level of brand loyalty (Sung & Kim, 2010). The perceived brand personality of a news outlet, especially along the dimension of competence, also contributes to an audience's attitude, usage, and loyalty of the news brand (Chan-Olmstead & Cha, 2008). The different brand personality dimensions influence brand trust and brand affect differently, which increase the level of brand loyalty (Sung & Kim, 2007). In this way, each aspect of credibility and loyalty (trust, usage, personality, image, etc…) all are dimensional aspects of a brand that is preferred and trusted.

Credibility

Credibility can also work in the other direction. There is a strong correlation between poor credibility and declining circulation in the print media (Merritt, 1998;

Meyer, 1988). Credible media is more likely to be patronized (viewed, listened to, or read) than less credible sources of information (Meyer, 2004), and non-credible products are less likely to be purchased (Greenberg, 1996; Wanta & Hu, 1994). A credible product is directly correlated to a loyal audience (Oyedeji, 2007), and finally media managers are coming to the realization that quality equates to brand, which equates to brand loyalty (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001) .

Some older publications, due to their specific strengths, are "appealing to new audiences in ways they almost certainly never could have without the creative destruction and promise of the digital age" (Pew, 2010, p.15). Regular readers of The New York Times are young – 34% are younger than 30, compared with comprising 23% of the public (Pew, 2010). This data points to the idea that a younger generation of news consumers are discovering that credibility matters. It would be interesting to gather data on this inter-generational transfer of brand preference into new media.

Branding and Media

In terms of the media, branding is somewhat a new idea (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001). One organization, the Newspaper Association of America, decided to take a look at this in the early 2000's by developing The Readership Institute at Northwestern University. The Readership Institute is a division of the Media Management Center at Northwestern, and it focuses on research, field-testing of readership-building ideas and measurement of their success, and education and training for the newspaper industry on readership-building best practices (Impact Study, 2003). The Institute came together after newspaper publishers and CEOs agreed to make a commitment to a readership study and asked the Center to lead the effort. The Impact study identified current brand practices in

a representative sample of newspapers that got better overall readership results. The New Readers study (2004) looked at experiences that cause different age groups -- especially younger and more diverse adults -- to engage with the newspaper or discount it. It also identified branding approaches that resonate with them.

The Impact Study found that brand is as powerful as content as a driver of readership, yet remarkably few newspapers have a strong brand image (Impact Study, 2003). Newspaper readers desire a product that is relevant to their personal lives (Nesbitt, 2003). According to Nesbitt's work, brand was just as powerful as content in terms of readership initiative. Brand concepts, according to the Readership Institute study, must "address readers' interests and lifestyles" (Impact Study, 2003, p.3). Somehow, since people are gathering information from a variety of free sources, the current trend of putting content behind a "pay wall" seems to fly in the face of this data.

Nesbitt's Readership Institute counterpart on the online side, Rob Runett, notes that brand building in the online world must address a mix of marketing, PR, and media coverage. It must also address how the content is viewed and how quickly viewers are able to have their needs fulfilled (Runett, 2000). The data in Figure 2 (page 3) suggests that people are gravitating toward outlets that satisfy the need to access news across multiple platforms at any time desired.

Scholars have been looking at brand and brand extension for over ten years, but there has been no consequential research toward understanding brand extension in the online context (Song & Zhang, 2010). It was previously noted that there are not many recognizable and desirable print brands, so it makes sense that most of these unfavorable brands are undesirable online. Recent findings in the consumer product sector indicate

that perceived quality of a parent brand can be transferred to its branded extensions (Song & Zhang, 2010). Also, the perceived fit between the parent brand and a new product "positively influences perceived quality of the extension," and in the online environment, the actual association is a positive branding factor (Song & Zhang, 2010). This leads to an argument that there are co-branding opportunities between content submitting contributors and the media outlet, regardless of media type. In short, if there were an online source of information and news available in a local market, there is an opportunity for the outlet AND the writer to co-brand themselves.

Aggregators and Brand Loyalty

Internet news consumers are gravitating toward news aggregators (top 10 emailed stories, most discussed stories on *Yahoo!* and *MSN, DeadSpin.com, Huffington*, Fig 2), so much so that there is the possibility that people will skip their own searches and use these aggregators to navigate the Internet, thus creating the possibility of artificially altering news patterns (Thorson, 2008). So, there is the possibility of a salacious story in your hometown paper being picked up by *Yahoo!*, and the flood of traffic to your website equates to almost no financial gain. Your story hit "the lottery", so to speak, and there was no financial reward for this excellence. The brand loyalty is to Yahoo!, and the ad next to their "Top 10 E-mailed or discussed stories" is how they reap the reward. Your hometown paper paid the reporter, hosted the viral video, and paid for all of the other overhead but *Yahoo!* got the revenue. The reader did not even have to go to your local paper's website to consume the information, so there is no ancillary benefit to revenue (hits, CPM-Cost per Thousand, etc…). This is the crux of traditional media's problems: brand loyalty. Without establishing the credibility, trust, image, and brand associations,

all of the brand loyalty is going to the aggregators. And so is their local audience (revenues). This new model of media consumption has turned the brand qualifiers upside down, so much so that the aggregators have commoditized the news into a list of top ten stories and three or four local blurbs.

It can be argued that there is greater brand recognition, and stronger positive and weaker negative schemas associated with hyperlocal and aggregator sites like *DeadSpin, Huffington, Yahoo!* and *Patch* as opposed to most online versions of local print outlets. The perception, according to the data noted above, is that "the local paper stinks, and so does their website." This is something that could be studied, along with the actual schemas that present when "*Washington Post*" is mentioned, and also "*DeadSpin*" or "*Huffington Post*" compared to "*Your Local Paper or Broadcast Outlet*."

Brand Building

Brand building is not just creating a slogan, logo, mission statement, and image. It's is an ongoing process that must be managed and monitored (Ingram, 2007). Consumer *experience* is playing a greater role in molding brand perceptions (Berry, L., 2000). According to Cliffe and Motion, the "increasingly influential role of experience in brand evaluations would suggest that brands should seek alternative branding strategies to the traditional advertising-based approach in an effort to create greater tangibility and depth of brand" (Cliffe & Motion, 2005, p2). Marketing literature asserts that successful internal marketing is essential for effective consumer branding in the services context (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Berry, 2000; Gummesson, 1994; Lovelock, 1998 and Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). Hyperlocal by execution is internal marketing, so as the outlet partners with UGC (User Generated Content) contributors, co-branding can occur. And

as we have seen, the brand can be extended.

In an online sense, without the positive user-experience and interaction with the media, the media's brand could be affected negatively. According to Berry, marketing and external communications help build the brand but nothing is more powerful than the customer's actual experience. Experience with the brand is the primary driver of brand equity over time (Berry, 2000), especially for service-oriented brands, and the entire bank of brand equity that it carries along can be seen as a branding tool by itself, as can the website. If the consumer engages the article or video on another site via link or post, and does not have to visit the originator's site, there is a loss of branding opportunity that equates to loss in revenues long-term. Goodwill is also essential to the successful cultivation of brand equity (Berry, 2000). That goodwill could be sponsorships of local events, running a submitted article, or running the local church pancake breakfast ad for free the day before the event.

Soon, video will account for the majority of internet traffic (Verhoeyan, 2009). There is also a trend for TV manufacturers to offer web-based content via their sets (Netflix, Pandora, etc…). These media-nets (Ahmad, 2009) are designed to provide video to your mobile device, your TV, your email, or all of these simultaneously. Sling Box, a device that sends your home TV signal across the Internet to mobile devices, is another example. The investment into WiFi and all of the afore mentioned devices is considered future-safe and thus a sound investment for users, government, and business to invest in infrastructure (Verhoeyan, 2009). So as brand loyalty extends across multiple platforms, it is up to multi-media organizations to choose the right message to the right channel (Grabe, 2009), and utilize every available media at their disposal (Curley, 2007). Why?

Because their consumers and potential consumers are utilizing these platforms! *YouTube* and *Google* are not just for phones and computers anymore. They are right there on your TV, also.

So as the media is integrated further in consumer's lives via technology, this technology is driving the way we consume advertising. Personally, I have watched commercials on *YouTube*, as have millions of other viewers on *YouTube*. The number of viewers is right there on the "views" meter. I wait for the Clorox preroll ad to run on espn.com in order to get to my *Web Gems* video, and so do millions of other viewers. So why use rich media and video in brand campaigns? Because just as video is clicked on and banner ads aren't, people are engaging this 'rich media' more than static photos or static ads. Spalding, Cole and Fayer (2009) compared more than 4,000 online campaigns in Dynamic Logic's *MarketNorms* database and identified the brand impact of those campaigns that used rich media as compared to those that used "simple" Flash and image formats. Brand (Delta) scores for the campaigns were compared across five branding metrics, and the results indicated that campaigns using rich-media formats generally had stronger branding effects compared to campaigns using GIF/JPG and "simple" Flash formats. Campaigns using rich-media advertisements with video features showed the strongest performance. The results suggest new strategies for improving brand campaign performance based on advertising format choice. Rich media, interactivity, and video are taking over the user experience, and until newspaper can animate an above-the-fold image like in a *Harry Potter* movie, print will always be the ugly step-sister of online imagery.

The bottom line is revenue. It is all about revenue, and as the literature suggests,

the key to sustainable revenue is brand loyalty. Local markets used to rely on newspaper

for most of their state and local news (Riffe & Reader, 2007), but the Pew survey noted

above suggests that this has changed in three short years (Fig 2). In local markets,

however, the local newspaper is usually the dominant source for hyperlocal information

online. In this way, newspaper will always be relevant. But their revenues are shrinking,

and so are their staffs and available linage.

How, in a climate where there is less revenue to pay fewer journalists, can all of these

markets and platforms be served? One answer may be found in utilizing UGC alongside

traditional journalists, with both groups producing content for hyperlocal markets and

creating/extending/enhancing the brand.

What is Hyperlocal?

Hyperlocal content, described as information and news content that is generated

in and parsed to local markets (Macmillan, 2010). Hyperlocal content is generated by

local writers about local subjects whether they are employees of the media organization

or not. By utilizing traditional journalistic content (court/crime/government) alongside

user-generated content, especially where local media is resource-challenged, local

citizens can fill the informational gap by writing the stories (or submitting the video)

themselves (Schaffer, 2007). The user-generated material (written, video, documentary,

commentary in any format) is light and usually focuses on local events, clubs, and other

content that has been a casualty of smaller staffs and linage in newspapers across the U.S.

Historically, and even today, print journalists frown upon UGC (Singer, 2010)

and even those organizations that actually embrace UGC still are wary of the possibility

that UGC, and the lack of journalistic training and thought-processes it may bring, might

trivialize regional and national news (Shaw, 2007). There is some indication that print editors (gatekeepers) are relaxing, and even embracing UGC in recent years (Gade, 2008) as long as they edit and massage the material before it goes live. Some believe that UGC is a natural progression of the journalistic process (Thurman, 2008).

Perceived quality is a universal assessment of a consumer's judgment about the superiority or excellence of a product (Hwang and Kim, 2007; Zeithaml, 1988). The sales message, or selling premise of a product, can be either product or prospect centered. A product-centered appeal focuses on the product and its features, while an audience-centered appeal focuses on the needs and wants of consumers (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarity, 1998). Hyperlocal and UGC address both areas at a basic level.

So as media keeps cutting back on staff and newspapers are printing skimpier editions, journalists, entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens are creating websites to cover the local news. Michele McLellan is a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri, and she has spent the past year studying nearly 70 of the best hyperlocal sites (McLellan & Maksl, 2010). In her opinion, 1 in 10 hyperlocal sites is producing "good" content that compares to traditional journalism. Some, like the *Huffington Post*, are finally making money. After relying on donation drives to keep going, hyperlocal outfit *West Seattle Blog* made "six figures in revenue last year before taxes…(and) the same is expected for 2010" (Moskowitcz, 2010, p. 3).

Citizen Journalism

Citizen Journalism is a sub-category of user-generated content. It is the role citizens play in collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information (Bowman & Willis, 2003, p. 9). Where it used to be outside of mainstream media, this

type of content has started to be found within the traditional news media (Rappaport & Leith, 2007). This new journalism offers citizens the opportunity to become involved in the process of gathering and reporting the news. Although it is not yet clear to what degree this trend will revolutionize the news industry, it appears that citizen journalism, in one form or another, is here to stay (Rappaport & Leith, 2007).

Citizen journalism content adds to the diversity of information available in the marketplace. Citizen journalism articles are more likely to feature a greater diversity of topics, information from outside sources and multimedia and interactive features versus traditional media (Carpenter, 2010).

The goals of citizen journalists and traditional journalists are very similar, but they have differences in focus and presentation. Both traditional and hyperlocal citizen sites and articles have similar levels of political coverage, but hyperlocal sites carry more opinion-oriented news than traditional media sites. In addition, hyperlocal sites seem to be very interested in carrying out the watchdog function of the press, especially in terms of local government (Viall, 2009). A content analysis of 86 citizen blog sites, 53 citizen news sites and 63 daily newspaper sites indicated that citizen journalism sites, including both news and blog sites, differed significantly from newspaper sites (Lacy et al., 2010).

Citizen reporters, compared to their mainstream counterparts, can serve as a vital complement to mainstream journalism (Reich, 2008), but there are drawbacks. Their modest use of human sources, the high proportion of one-source items, and their reluctance to interactively negotiate versions with sources are all drawbacks. Their contacts with sources tend to be ad hoc exchanges rather than long-term role relationships (Reich, 2008). This shows a need for citizen journalists to become familiar with the

practices and policies of traditional journalists.

On the other hand, citizen reporters have adopted mechanisms that help them make up for their comparably limited access. They are much more likely to pursue stories at their own initiative. They tend to predicate their stories on firsthand witnessing, technical sources (mainly Internet), personal acquaintances, and on their own experience (Reich, 2008). They use links within their stories, and along with noting their byline, enhance their credibility of their product to the level of traditional journalists in the readers view (Weidenbeck, 2009).

Hyperlocal Survey

The Knight Foundation, a nonprofit journalism organization, has given out roughly $20 million in grants since 2006 to help nurture the most promising sites. Last August, msnbc.com bought EveryBlock, a site that publishes public records and news, and is searchable in over 16 cities. This past March, AOL began investing $50 million in hyperlocal initiative Patch, a site that posts community-specific news in 65 towns and has begun rolling out hundreds more during the 3rd and 4th quarter of this year (Moskowitcz, 2010).

Hyperlocal and UGC have already had an impact on mainstream media. Take the case of Mayhill Fowler, a non-journalist who broke the story on then Senator Obama's campaign comments about how some rural folk will cling to "guns or religion or antipathy" in tough times (Michel, 2009). That story was first seen online, and then picked up nationally. She was actually an Obama contributor who, as a non-journalist, took the road a journalist would have and reported the facts regardless of personal feelings or allegiance.

Another successful adaptation of the UGC alongside traditional journalism is the successful 50 year history of *The Daily Record,* a daily newspaper in Dunn, NC. This newspaper has embraced UGC for 50 years, and reports journalistically on crime and government. In this respect, the public finds the lighter, often UGC lifestyle stories engaging, and also enjoys the muckraking from the traditional, "on-the-payroll" journalists (Smith, 2008).

A notable example of hyperlocal is *Talking Points Media*, a group of interconnected websites that serve different sub-groups interested in different types of content. One of their sites broke the story about the mass firings of U.S. Attorney's in 2009. Traditional media missed the boat on that story, and a nimble organization like TPM had the ability to focus on the story (Glenn, 2007).

With the good come the bad. As it was previously noted, there is a co-branding opportunity for both the news outlet and the writer in this new hyperlocal model. But, if not managed properly, this co-branding partnership can lead to another, less desirable outcome. Over 90% of co-branding ventures fail and half fail because three simple rules were not observed: Equal value for all parties, brand value match, and easy to understand (Lindstrom, 2005). Blogger/journalist Mike Doyle's experience with hyperlocal outlet *ChicagoNow* is a great example of this failure to connect and (co)create a brand.

ChicagoNow is a hyperlocal online publication made up of both bloggers connected to the site, but not employees per se, and content from the parent company (*Chicago Tribune*). The parent company's goal was gather blogs together into one hub and sell advertising around it in local markets. In Doyle's opinion, and according to his blogging partners and readers, the platform wasn't designed with either users or bloggers

in mind (Doyle, 2010). The site was hard to navigate for both bloggers and users trying to find information, and worse yet, the parent company refused to address the user and blogger concerns. Poorly thought out strategies and design were "rolled out on a moment's notice" and in Doyle's opinion, no thought about the user experience was taken into consideration (Doyle, 2010). In Doyle's opinion, the site made it hard for people to get around, and that is reflected in page views and revenue. Worse yet, there was no indication that the developers at the *Tribune* were going to address these issues. Doyle completed his contract with the organization and moved on. According to Lindstrom's (2005) three co-branding rules, the *Tribune* failed to provide equal value for all (bloggers and readers got lost, and bloggers lost traffic/revenue), they failed to provide a value match for bloggers (the bloggers work hard and publish, but no changes are made to the site), and they failed to address the design and functionality issues that impacted the user's utilization (understanding) of the site.

The New York Times recently got out of the hyperlocal game, or "experiment" as they termed it, in June, 2010. *The Local*, a pair of hyperlocal sites in New Jersey, were handed over to *Baristanet*. The *Times* was one of the first major media outlets to try hyperlocal, and when they first announced *The Local*, there was a fair amount of criticism. Some media professionals questioned the decision of not launching each blog on its own domain (they were launched under the *nytimes.com* domain). In its announcement, the *Times* talks about *The Local* being an "experiment" and mentions "lessons learned" (Last Stop, 2010). Interestingly, the editors of *The Local* had a high opinion of the UGC partners:

From its launch on March 2, 2009, the heart of *The Local* has been our

contributors, who taught us that communities are filled with talented, civic-minded, interested and interesting people who have much to offer in the way of local coverage. We are spreading that message far and wide, encouraging other journalists and news organizations — and other citizens — to venture down this path (Last Stop, 2010).

Backfence, a group of hyperlocal sites that originally had substantial backing and journalistic support (Potts, 2007), but now is only a series of local business search engines void of any news content. Their attempt, however well-funded and supported by journalists in local markets, failed to generate revenue in sustainable levels.

Then there is the story of *Planet Money*, a multi-media team of pod cast, blog, Web, and radio stories about financial subject matter. They got it right. They had tons of UGC, and also self-produced content. They edited the UGC, and even let that content become featured content across all of their platforms. But, as NPR (National Public Radio) and *Planet Money* staffer Adam Davidson lamented:

> We now have a full service news site. Users can find out what happened...and get our take…and access a rich trove of narratives to place the news in context. They can even create their own mini-documentaries to reflect of what the news means. If they feel we are biased, they can make their own arguments. Journalism has never been stronger. Now all we have to do is to figure out how to make some money out of this thing (Davidson, 2009, p.34).

Hyperlocal and Brand Preference: The Hole in the Donut

There is a void of research in how branding has taken root in hyperlocal media. A multi-disciplinary search through academia has proven to be unsuccessful in identifying

anything approaching the NAA studies or traditional consumer brand studies except for one just-completed, groundbreaking study by Michelle McLellan and Adam Maksl at the University of Missouri-Columbia. This work has put the first real quantifiable numbers behind the brand of hyperlocal versus legacy media in local markets. The results point to 84% of surveyed consumers say hyperlocal is doing just fine. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in the survey said they are more satisfied with that site than with their local mainstream media source (McLellan & Maksl, 2010).

The survey also found that users place a high degree of trust in their local sites, suggesting many find the new sites more credible than traditional media sources. Users go to the sites for original local news but they also see sites as important places to engage in community, and more than a third of those responding say their local site is their primary local news source.

Trust and Satisfaction

More than 83 percent of survey respondents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the local site. Most users reported elements of trust very high. On a five-point scale, with five showing that that the site was doing an excellent job, user responses rating fairness, relevance, accuracy, and credibility of coverage all averaged above four. In fact, nearly 80 percent of survey respondents gave a four or a five in each of these categories.

Mission of the site

Nearly three-quarters of users said that they like the ability to access in-depth local news, and 41 percent said they liked being able to access local breaking news content. Nearly half of people said that they use the site to help interact locally.

Usage

Users' satisfaction with community news websites appears to also manifest in usage patterns, with a little more than a third of the respondents (36 percent) reporting that on most days, the community news site was their primary source of news.

The others said they get most news either from their local newspaper (35 percent) or another news website (31 percent). Television, which many other studies have shown to be a very dominant news source for consumers, was reported by only about 10 percent of this group as a source of news.

About half of survey respondents said they access the community news site at least once a day, with about a quarter saying that they access the site several times each day. During each visit, users say they spend an average of 13.3 minutes on the site (McLellan & Maksl, 2010).

<div align="center">

Brand, the Message, and the Channel

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Further hyperlocal branding studies are needed, especially so local organizations can measure their brand against regional, national, and international media. As noted above, however, there are some strong correlations between consumer views on media and products (Oyedeji, 2007) and these correlations could and should be studied further.

If managed properly, brand loyalty does extend across multiple platforms (Callaghan, 2008). When print media is integrated into a mix of niche markets utilizing print, web, and mobile technologies, there is more relevance for a wider audience. It becomes more attractive for advertisers to parse their messages in different ways across multiple platforms with one bundle media buy (Callaghan, 2008). So from an advertiser perspective, there is a strong brand driver for those outlets that serve multiple media

avenues to the consumer. Also, most consumers gravitate toward specific media based on their educational, and to an extent, cultural background (Grabe, 2009). These consumers with lower education tend to view and retain information via television much better than those individuals with a higher education level who retain print media better. According to Grabe, there is also a direct correlation between acceptance of the content, the method of delivery, and the education level of the consumer. In short, if a media organization wants to target all demographics in their area, and bundle advertising offerings, they need to offer multiple platforms (mobile, Internet, E-mail, print, TV over the Net, etc…). Then, they will extend the brand loyalty from one medium to another. There has to be interaction and cross-platform presentation of content for users to engage the products and advertisers to buy into these products. No one platform alone can fulfill these requirements anymore.

Now, as consumers get local info across multiple platforms, small hyperlocal organizations can find a profitable niche in local markets. The key, as the literature suggests, is to establish and nurture a brand, and then craft brand preference. In today's media and economy, one of the best ways to achieve this goal in local communities is for a small group of cross-trained journalists and contributors to produce branded hyperlocal content across multiple platforms. The bleeding edge of media metrics, The Pew Report, sums it up in this way:

> Michael Schudson, the sociologist of journalism at Columbia University, sees the promise of 'a better array of public informational resources emerging. This new ecosystem will include different 'styles' of journalism, a mix of professional and amateur approaches and different economic models — commercial, nonprofit,

public and university-fueled (State of the News Media, 2010).

Current trends indicate (Pew, 2010; McLellan & Maksl, 2010) that people are gathering their news from a variety of sources, and "snacking" on bits of information across multiple platforms on a daily basis. Hyperlocal has a place in this media "salad bowl", and the key is to success and longevity is to utilize branding techniques designed to build brand preference. A strong brand drives revenue, especially in local markets. As it has been documented, a strong brand needs credibility and trust to be conveyed to the consumer. The purpose of the following workshop design is to provide the ethical, journalistic, packaging, writing, technical, and other brand-impacting skills to potential media contributors, and also to provide the basic understanding of how to market and co-brand content with other media outlets.

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Governors State University
College of Arts and Sciences
Division of Liberal Arts
Course Syllabus

COMS505:Communications Workshop
Citizen Journalism and Hyperlocal Media: Building Your Brand
Spring, 2010. Sat, March 13th and Sat, March 20th, D34115, (2) Credit Hours
9:00 am-4:00 pm
Kankakee Education Center
Instructor: Andrew H. Wheeler
ptman1969@yahoo.com
815-592-1984
Office Hours: arranged

Text: None. Materials provided.
Additional Suggested Texts: Associated Press Stylebook, latest edition, and The
Elements of Style, Strunk
& White
Prerequisite: College level English and grammar skills. Internet and computer access, and
willingness to establish a temp Facebook account.
Course Format: This course will employ a combination of lectures, discussions,
readings, case studies, and classroom and take home assignments with an online
component.

Overview
This workshop engages students in the concept and practice of hyperlocal citizen
journalism in the digital age. Students will be challenged to think, work, and act like
journalists while utilizing new media platforms and formats. This workshop also
reinforces branding practices, diversity in media practices, media ethics, and introduces
some of the tools and methods used to produce hyperlocal news across multiple
platforms.

Outcomes
1. Students will develop a conceptual understanding of journalism and be able to
   demonstrate sound journalistic style and methodology. They will also be able to
   demonstrate and discuss ethics and branding techniques.
2. Through lectures and writing assignments, students will demonstrate APA style,
    interviewing techniques, and utilize different types of content and delivery media.
3. Students will utilize some of the technological tools of the 21st century journalist.
4. Upon completing this course, you should be able to:
   - Critically analyze all media.
   - Discuss how we are influenced and shaped by media.
   - Write, edit, and post for electronic and print media.
   - Demonstrate the proper use of video and photos (packaging)

- Demonstrate and discuss branding techniques to further your
  brand and reach
- Describe the nature of the Web and Web-based
  journalism and be able to evaluate Web publications in a
  critical manner.
- Analyze and address ethical challenges that come with being in
  the media.
- Develop an awareness of the trend of converging media in terms
  of the applications and the potentials.
- Analyze and apply principles of diversity and understand the
  impact of media on majority/minority relationships and roles.

5. Students will write, edit, post, and market their articles online.

Teaching and Learning Philosophy

As the student, you are responsible for your own learning.   The instructor is proficient at
bringing information to students and experienced with industrial applications of concepts.
By planning the course schedule and course activities and developing the course
assignments, the instructor in this class is simply the facilitator in your quest for in-depth
understanding of journalism in the digital age. Through the use of critical pedagogy, you
as a learner will be challenged with applying and verbalizing course concepts to and with
your classmates. If at any time your learning is hindered by a lack of clarity or
understanding of course material or expectations, it is your responsibility to speak up.
The instructor and your classmates are ALWAYS ready and willing to help as we are all
part of the learning journey.

Student Assignments/Assessment/Evaluation:

Students will write 1 news article, and present their content via the class blog. Grades
will be based on the timely and thorough completion of assignments — the quality of
writing, the depth of research and interviewing, and adherence to deadlines. The
following list of assignments/assessments will be discussed in more detail in class.

Student Story- *To be determined by student* (400 words)
This story has no specific topic, but it must be news (event) oriented. Please begin to
think about this story and all stories as soon as possible. Make sure you have the
resources to write a story BEFORE you begin the story. Feel free to ask questions at any
time about any story topics or ideas.

Final Exam
Students will, after writing, editing, peer editing, and rewriting….post their stories on the
class blog and market the story via Facebook. All final exam articles will be submitted
via the class blog. Photos/graphics/charts/links/videos submitted with stories will be
given extra credit based on quality and relevance to the content. This entire

process/product is your final exam, and thus should demonstrate the class materials, exercises and lectures.

Computer malfunctions and other calamities are common and should be anticipated.
Backup your research and work. Speaking from experience, you DO NOT want to recreate a finalized publication that has been lost in a server crash. In this class, LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Journalists who miss deadlines become unemployed journalists.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance
         There are only two classes. Attendance is required, and assignments will not be accepted beyond their due date.

2. Assignments
         Story –You must complete your interview, rough draft for print, and rough draft for online for the second class meeting. We will break into groups and peer edit-make suggestions.
         Blog – Your final draft of the story will be published on the class blog, and final print version emailed to the instructor by 9pm, March 21st. This is your final assessment (exam). Final exam grades will be emailed back.
         Case Study- Each student will be presented with case studies during the first class meeting to take home and evaluate. The students will present the case to the class during the second meeting, and explain what their course of action would be. The rest of the class will also state their position in turn.

There will also be in class assignments/exercises to be completed individually and in groups.

3. Respect
         A great deal of this class, and Journalism for that matter, is based upon respect. There will be open and honest classroom dialog, sometimes containing uncomfortable subject matter, and sometimes there will be differing opinions. As this is a workshop, we will place extra emphasis on discussing much of our material in a social context and performing class exercises that require mutual respect for others and their right to their opinion. Much of your educational experience going forward, and also your life experience, will be positively impacted by listening and then contributing to discussions in a respectful, academic manner.

Class Outline
      Week 1: 8/27
      Section 1-Journalism
      Section 2- Branding

Week 2: 9/3
Section 3-Ethics and Law
Section 4-Diversity and Media Criticism

*** *THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF
THE INSTRUCTOR*

Grading Scale
A 90-100
B 80-90
C 70-79
D 60-69
F Less than 60

Take home article presentation -- 20%
Final Exam --   50%
Class Participation --   20%

College Policies

Withdrawals
Since this is a two-hour workshop, all withdrawls must adhere to the policy of the
University. There will be no withdrawls allowed after the last business day before the
first scheduled class.

Code of Conduct
By participating in this course, the student agrees to adhere to the GSU Code of Conduct,
found in each academic year's catalog, and understands that his or her classroom behavior
shall be in compliance with the Code.

Disability Statement
GSU is committed to providing all students equal access to all university programs and
facilities. Students who have a documented physical, physiological, or learning disability
and need accommodations, must register with Access Services for Students with
Disabilities (ASSD) in Room B1201 or call 708-235-3968. Email assd@govst.edu. If you
are already registered, please contact me privately to discuss.

Cell phone policy
Smart phones are great. People who use them in class, however…..not so much. One
Professor of mine provided me with sage advice, and it was so ground-breaking and life-
affirming that I must share it with you:

"*Many phones have vibration or silent settings on them, and all of them have an 'off '
button.*"

All joking aside, you will get one pass, then your grade will suffer. It goes toward class participation, and showing a complete lack of respect for the instructor and your classmates by texting, Facebooking, or whatever during class will impact your grade...and can result in expulsion from the class.

Suggested Resources

NY Times Style Manual
Broadcast News Handbook, Tuggle, et al.
Workbook for News and Writing, 8th ed, The Missouri Group
Broadcast News Writing Stylebook, Papper
AP Guide to Photojournalism, Horton
Race, Gender, and Media, Lind.
Ethics in Media Communications, Day.

www.custom-essay.net/PROFESSIONAL-FEATURE-WRITING/essay-writing-STRUCTURE.htm
www.weeklyreader.com/pdfs/hardnews.pdf
www.ypp.net/pdfs_writersguide/unit2.pdf
www.facsnet.org/tools/biz_econ/covering_biz/types.php3#news
www.mackerelwrapper.blogspot.com/2006/03/model-hard-news-story.html
usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/journalism/telling.htm
www.journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2004/03
www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/1017964134.php
Mtsu32.mtsu.edu/171/pyramid.htm