A look back and a blueprint for mobile journalism in the era of mobile media

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Abstract

Although the technological convergence of mobile "phones" and multimedia began in the 1990s, it was not until the commercial launch of touchscreen-enabled mobile devices with flat-rate mobile internet subscriptions that widespread production and consumption of news-related content and services began to flourish. Mobile news consumption has gained momentum in the public's daily lives. Simultaneously, traditional news organizations have expanded their news offerings in recent years by reusing or customizing journalistic material provided for mobile websites and/or apps. This article discusses and synthesizes the results of modern literature on the intersection of journalism and mobile media to examine the generation of mobile news. It proposes a paradigm of journalism that emphasizes the roles of people and technology in customizing or repurposing activities. Additionally, the essay outlines a research agenda centered on the generation of mobile news.

Keywords: model of journalism; mobile journalism; digital phones; mobile news;

Introduction

Today's expanding, fractured, and digital media landscape is characterized by constant change. There are reconfigurations of traditional media such as newspapers, as well as the development and usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Citizens in the information era have a wealth of options for not just accessing information such as news, but also for producing and sharing their own.

Many individuals currently have access to up-to-date news from any location and at any time, since some kind of media or information technology is seldom more than an arm's length away. As a result, many individuals have shifted their attention and media expenditure away from traditional media outlets such as newspapers. The rapid adoption of internet news has not only exacerbated readership declines (e.g. Westlund and Fardigh 2011), but has also jeopardized newspaper revenue models (Nel 2010) (1). As a result, researchers and pundits often speculate about the impending demise of printed newspapers. Advertisements and pricing for news content have been a fundamental part of the economic models of legacy news organizations, which have evolved omnipresence strategies in order to survive. More crucially, after many years of internet news publication, mobile news creation and consumption have gained traction in recent years (2).

Nowadays, mobile news publication encompasses a variety of distribution channels, ranging from customized SMS or MMS news notifications to mobile news websites and convergent mobile news applications (which commonly and hereafter are referred to as apps). In this essay, the term "mobile device" will be used to refer to this omnipresent ICT in a broader sense than "mobile phone." It does not, however, relate to other types of portable devices (such as tablets and netbooks) that support voice calls via mobile networks. The widely used but ambiguous term smartphone is omitted here, not only because it was used prior to the launch of touch-screen devices with downloadable and customisable content and services (by Nokia, for example), but also because there are inconsistencies in how to define this constantly changing object. Although a recent journal special issue added to our knowledge of how smartphones are "smart" (Watkins, Hjorth, and Koskinen 2012), other questions remain unanswered, and the smartphone label is still mostly associated with the "phone" dimension. The term "mobile device" is a more inclusive yet precise term that refers to a variety of devices (3), including feature phones (such as the Nokia 100), smartphones (such as the iPhone 5), and the emerging so-called phablets category (such as the Samsung Galaxy Note). Phablets are devices with a touch-screen measuring between five and seven inches.

While mobile news consumption has grown in popularity in recent years, the landscape was very different just a few years ago. Initially, there was a reluctance to obtain news through mobile devices (Westlund 2007), which seemed to find a place solely in the interstices of normal life, mostly accessible when other news sources were unavailable (cf. Dimmick et al. 2011). Other research have found that beginner users consume news exclusively on the move, as a supplement to other media. They did, however, identify that advanced users access news in both public and private situations (Westlund et al. 2011). According to a

worldwide research conducted by telecoms giant Ericsson (2011), the most popular occasion for using mobile applications (54%) was while commuting, however many also used them before getting out of bed (38%) and throughout the morning (54%) as well as when in bed in the evening (50 per cent) (4).

Legacy news organizations are cognizant of modern shifts in how consumers get information, with some executives predicting that mobile news consumption would overtake that of desktop computers within a few years (Seale 2012) (5). Along with the growth in popularity of mobile news consumption, the creation of mobile news services has accelerated. The essay explores and synthesizes literature on the confluence of journalism and mobile media in this article on the creation of mobile news. It highlights the fundamental ideas and discoveries from the expanding corpus of journalism literature while downplaying commercial factors and technology advancements. The essay is divided into four main parts on a thematic basis. The first reports on how traditional news organizations have embraced and developed mobile news publication, both from an industry and organizational standpoint. The second section explores the literature on the possible rise of mobile journalism, concentrating on editing procedures for mobile news platforms as well as how journalists and people use mobile technology to report on news. The third section addresses the major results and provides an example of good journalism (6). The fourth and last part identifies critical topics for future journalism study in an era of mobile media.

Recent development

Through specialized services, legacy news organizations continued to experiment with ways to make mobile news more user-friendly. Through a cooperation with these firms, Dagens Nyheter, Sweden's biggest quality newspaper, debuted a particular mobile device (by Nokia) with an unique flat-rate subscription (from pan-European telecoms provider Telenor) at the end of 2007. Their bundled offering offers a dedicated button for print customers to access their mobile news site for a flat fee. The worldwide news business generally recognized their service, and their head of mobile presented it at events such as the World Association of Newspapers' annual conference (WAN-IFRA) (7). In 2008, Aftonbladet, Scandinavia's biggest newspaper, hired a dozen media professionals as part of an initiative to build a firm devoted to producing and managing mobile media. Among their ideas was the use of so-called QR coding technology to show bar code tags alongside newspaper articles. When consumers photographed the tag with their mobile device's camera, they were linked to richer and updated material on the company's mobile news website. This was done to provide a direct and user-friendly link between print and mobile that would encourage complementary news consumption (Westlund 2011). Despite tremendous effort

and industry recognition, both of these trials were discontinued prematurely and did not show to be relevant in the long run. Rather than that, it is other technologies that should be attributed with catalyzing the explosive expansion of mobile media at the time. Much of this started with Apple's 2007 debut of the iPhone in the United States, followed by a rapid spread around the world in the following years. The hardware and software that circumvented the iPhone embodied a novel strategy to structuring mobile media ecosystems, inspiring other key telecoms and media businesses. As a consequence of this, a slew of high-stakes patent fights ensued, primarily between Apple and firms that attempted to bypass the Android environment (8).

It's worth remembering that academics began conceptualizing and experimenting with touch-screen devices in the 1980s. 10 WESTLUND, OSCAR Parallel to the fast use of touch-screen mobile devices, third-party content providers such as traditional news organizations have seen an explosion in mobile app development. The initial generation of iPhones were actually advertised with the New York Times logotype. News organizations initially guaranteed that their material was available through mobile browsers such as the iPhone's Safari browser, and then began producing so-called native applications that offered news and/or utility services. Initially, their efforts were focused on developing applications for iPhones running the iOS operating system. Following Google and the Open Handset Alliance's commercial introduction of Android in September 2008, several mobile device manufacturers built similar smartphones (e.g. HTC, LG and Samsung). On the other hand, third-party content creators such as news organizations have invested in producing Android applications. In recent years, Research-in-Motion (Blackberry) and Symbian have seen precipitous decreases. Nokia's transition to Microsoft's Windows Mobile platform has garnered just a small share of the worldwide mobile media industry, which is driven by Android and Apple iOS (9). From the standpoint of news publishers, various mobile platforms have appeared on which they might feel forced to distribute their content, and increasingly do. This has increased the complexity and expense of news publishers' difficulties, since they must break new ground when producing appealing mobile applications. Nonetheless, a 2010 worldwide newspaper industry poll indicated that 51% of media executives saw mobile platforms as a high priority for the future (Stone, Nel, and Wilberg 2010). Another research found that previous to the widespread use of modern touch-screen mobile devices, mobile media were already seen as increasingly significant (10). Managers and media employees, particularly those in the editorial and information technology departments, voiced faith in the emergence of mobile media, taking on responsibilities as change agents inside the organization prior to the widespread use of touch-screen mobile devices. On the other hand, entrepreneurs adopted a more circumspect stance (Westlund 2011) (11). The following provides an insider's perspective of Goteborgs-

development Posten's procedures from 2007 to the present. Following that, quantitative audits shed light on the modern mobile efforts of heritage news organizations in a variety of nations as of 2011. Finally, an industry analysis featuring 15 case studies sheds light on current newspaper mobile initiatives. Throughout 2007–2009, Goteborgs-media Posten's management and staff were reticent to build mobile applications. This was partially due to route dependence and a significant investment in a mobile platform aimed at their mobile news site. Other possible factors include the recession and the company's decision to prioritize other development initiatives. Nonetheless, media professionals saw the proliferation of mobile applications and grew more persuaded that they should build and distribute such applications (Westlund 2011). By early 2010, the recession had ended and other development projects had been finished, creating more opportunity to invest in the creation of mobile applications. However, media professionals in various departments formed divergent perceptions of the project's needs (12). For example, a team of media professionals from the editorial and IT departments conceptualized a news app using a "producer-centric approach" that placed a strong focus on traditional as well as local news reporting.

In June 2012, the International Newsmedia Marketing Association (INMA) published a paper titled Emerging Mobile Strategies for News Publishers (Seale 2012). The interviews highlight both parallels and variations in the perspectives and behaviors of different European and North American news publisher representatives. Respondents often say that mobile news consumption enables them to reach people at any time and in any location. Mobile news is thought to widen the window of opportunity for news consumption and that a tipping point will occur within the next two years. This has prompted a number of major news organizations to invest in mobile technology and services in order to increase their omnipresence, with some claiming to have embraced a "mobile first" policy. Nonetheless, experimentation and adaptability are emphasized, since it is impossible to forecast what will happen next. Some companies outsource development work, while others build mobile applications in-house. Their distinctions stem from their disparate approaches to mobile news dissemination. On the one hand, news organizations like as The Guardian prioritize personalized content such as live and breaking news, as well as news summaries, while the San Francisco Chronicle prioritizes opinion pieces and blogs, since mobile users are often the most engaged. Additionally, one can find niche apps promoting in-depth information on specific topics, such as the New York Times' election app or the Chicago Tribune's Bulls app (Season 2012) (13), as well as utility services such as restaurant guides from Goteborgs-Posten and sudoku games from Svenska Dagbladet in Sweden. On the other side, firms such as the Financial Times are pursuing a platform-neutral strategy by opting out of native app-based mobile versions of their digital content.

Indeed, they have opted for responsive web design (HTML5), which is also being considered by other firms such as Sanoma, the Chicago Tribune, and Deseret News. Other firms, such as Digital First Media in the United States, state that their approach includes both native applications and responsive web design, as well as SMS news notifications (Seale 2012). Responsive web design refers to fluid websites that adjust automatically to any screen size, whether it's a mobile device, computer, tablet, or television.

The overarching goal is to avoid compartmentalizing information for various displays, or even distinct types of native app ecosystems, and to make material more accessible and managed (Marcotte 2010). Native applications are limited in their ability to hyperlink and share content through social media platforms like as Facebook and Twitter . This is not just a disadvantage in terms of user traffic generation, but also from a commercial one in terms of traffic measurement and sending people to other sites through adverts. There has basically been a trend among news publishers toward expanding their cross-media portfolios with an increasing number of customized mobile news applications. Managing a multitude of news channels, on the other hand, is a challenging chore that media executives have voiced worry about. Technological self-direction and more platform-agnostic techniques have been seen as viable strategies for overcoming the problems and delays associated with continuously improving many mobile app platforms at the same time. Nonetheless, the newspaper industry's isomorphism, organizational path dependence, and desire to provide customers with the solutions they choose (usually iOS and Android) all contribute significantly to the difficulty of transitioning .

A rising number of individuals own mobile devices equipped with a camera, a web browser, and access to social networking applications such as Twitter. Thus, mobile devices are used to report live from both mundane and momentous events such as natural catastrophes, crises, civil conflicts, and riots, including recent occurrences such as the Arab spring and looting, arson, and rioting in England in 2011.

Numerous studies conducted globally have shown widespread usage of mobile devices during times of crisis. According to Bivens (2008), the usage of mobile devices to transmit SMS, MMS, and e-mails including photographs and videos hit an all-time high during a number of worldwide crises, including the South Asian tsunami in December 2004 and the July 2005 London attacks. Mabweazara (2011) also adds that in Zimbabwe, residents have been more receptive to mobile technology during times of crises and major national events. Gordon (2007) conducted an in-depth investigation of individuals' usage of mobile devices in the public domain during three significant crises: the SARS epidemic in China (2003), the tsunami in Southeast Asia (December 2004), and the London bombings (July 2005). She describes how residents have several alternatives for interacting with family and friends, as well as recording and

reporting firsthand from the sites of these occurrences. They give viewpoints, images, and tales that would not be covered otherwise by capturing photographs and short videos and distributing them to people and the media. Meanwhile, Gordon observes that traditional media accept citizen journalism but only on their terms, serving as gatekeepers and editors of such information (Gordon 2007).

On the other hand, Mortensen (2011) discovered that news organizations seem to lack editorial processes for controlling video arising from citizen usage of mobile devices. Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan (2011) also investigated the function of mobile media in citizen journalism, with a particular emphasis on the 2005 London bombings (commonly known as 7/7). Their method, however, was unique in that it concentrated on how British broadcasters employed citizen images and videos in news reporting. The authors find that these traditional news organizations relied heavily on user-generated material for their live reporting, which was mostly comprised of homogeneous mobile media video. Additionally, not only were the journalists who picked the film sanitized, but the residents who provided the mobile footage were generally marginalized or even rendered invisible (Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan 2011).

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