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New Aspect of Media: Mobile Journalism

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Abstract

Journalism has always been audience oriented. The primary objective of journalism is to provide audience with correct and factual news as soon as possible. Earlier reporters or stringers used to record news in audio or video form and send the clips to bureau from where it was sent for telecasting. Carrying huge video recorders, cameras, sound recording equipments and travelling with a big crew was quite complex. The process was long and tedious and by the time it reached to the audience the news already loosed its prominence. Now, with the life becoming fast paced and technology growing simultaneously, audience wants to get the news quickly. News channels also in the race of TRP want to telecast every news as soon as possible. With the invention of smart phones and its easy availability to common man, things have become quite easy.

Key Words: Journalism, Media, Mobile Journalism, MOJO, New Media

Introduction

Smart phones have given birth to a new type of Journalism called Mobile Journalism. Mobile journalism can be defined as the process of gathering and delivering news using a Smartphone or tablet. It is a trend in news covering and broadcasting and has the potential to become the new standard in journalism practice, especially to report breaking news. With slim and sleek body, HD cameras, good quality inbuilt microphone and a good 4G network, the journalism has shifted from a big backpack to our pockets. Highly sophisticated cameras, apps and add-on equipment allows journalists to explore their creativity and use their smartphones not only in crisis or high-risk situations, but also to consistently deliver broadcast-quality news-pieces to the audience, such as feature stories and documentary films. It has made work of correspondents quite easy. Now, if correspondents get a tip about something, they don't have to wait for their crew, they just have to pick up their mobile, a selfie stick or gimble and there channels microphone and they are all set for reporting.

News channel like NDTV have shifted most of their correspondents and stringers to mobile journalism, without any negative impact on their video or audio quality. In recent times, with the development of New Media, many web news portals are also coming up. Mobile Journalism is a big boost for these channels as it gives maximum output in minimal cost. From recording news to editing and telecasting, all of it can be done single handedly by one person. The economic cost of running a channel has come down with the emergence of mobile journalism. Although, Mobile Journalism cannot entirely replace basic journalism techniques but it has made things a little easier. Armed with only a Smartphone, journalists are empowered

to cover almost any story in a timely and safer manner. One of the most notable advantages of mobile journalism is that it enables the journalist to overcome frequent challenges and barriers, often strengthening freedom of speech and access to information.

Mobile Journalism popularly called as MOJO has also enhanced the safety of journalists. Working with big equipments and large crew is easily noticeable and can be risky at times. Journalists, especially reporting from remote and high risk areas like naxalite area of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand or parts of Jammu and Kashmir where militancy is a big issue. Smartphone can broadcast live in a simpler and less expensive way than traditional equipment, and live stream apps have made the process easy. Reaching real-time audiences is a key consideration for newsrooms, as is the ability to measure content performance through real-time statistics. Live streaming through social platforms allows journalists to engage with their audience while broadcasting. Choose the right app based on your broadcasting needs, target audience, and technical costs, amongst other criteria.

The mobile handset has rapidly moved beyond voice telephony or even simple text-based communication into more complex multi-platform delivery systems; some of the latest models are portable digital media production and data transfer systems with configurations of features such as still and video camera capabilities, multimedia file swapping, global positioning satellite receivers, music players, access to radio and television content, email and Web browsers, databases, address books, calendars, clocks, games and many other downloadable and upgradeable software applications. The dominant example of current MoJo practice described in the literature revolves around an experimental toolkit developed by Reuters. The kit is based around a Nokia N95 Smartphone, a small tripod, a compact wireless keyboard, a solar battery charger and an external microphone. In late 2007, selected Reuters journalists used the kit to provide field reports that were published on a Websiteⁱ established specifically for the project and it continues to be cited as one of the main examples of a mainstream mobile newsgathering.

Reuters journalists used the MoJo kits as part of their coverage of the Beijing Olympics, though plans to issue MoJo kits to delegates at the 2008 U.S. Democratic and Republican conventions were hampered by a lack of 3G and wireless services in the convention venues. *Washington Post* reporter Ed O'Keefe used his mobile phone at the Democratic convention to capture footage of Hillary Clinton's endorsement of Barack Obama – this was later edited with TV broadcast footage to form an online news package. Video is one of the mobile phone features driving current MoJo practice. The Voice of Africa mobile journalism project operating since 2007 describes its reporters as 'camjos' (camera journalists) although they are equipped with mobile devices as an alternative to expensive computers and camerasⁱⁱ. Australian academic Stephen Quinn recently outlined other examples of mobile journalism, all of which centre on video recording as a key element. These include experiments at Norway's national broadcaster NRK, where various departments reportedly plan to use MoJo content for mainstream platforms like television, while reporters at the online site of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* in Manilaⁱⁱⁱ have been filing stories remotely via Nokia N80 mobile phones. Reporters at German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle plan to introduce the MoJo concept later this year.

There are also examples of highly productive MoJos working outside of mainstream media, such as Dutch MoJo, Ruud Elmendorp, operating out of Kenya with a Web site offering more than 130 video news reports from 22 countries in Africa^{iv}. A number of Elmendorp's stories cover the use and diffusion of mobile technology across that continent, in another example cited by Quinn. Californian technology blogger Robert Scoble^v has been broadcasting live video from his phone since 2007 using the *Qik* mobile video streaming service^{vi}. Scoble's work is possibly the inspiration for experiments with mobile journalism by BBC technology reporters. Tolbert and Hall outlined the positive effects that are most relevant to mobile

journalism when they said “when people specialize in different tasks, they are able to hone relevant skills and knowledge and, thus, able to perform those tasks at a higher level of reliability, quality and speed”. Two studies from the UK attempted to investigate how mobile journalism affected news practices. Cottle looked at the implementation of new technologies at the BBC and did not find evidence of “technological determinism” in the sense that the new technology itself was affecting news production -- but he did find a concern among new multimedia journalists of the “increasingly pressurized and superficial nature of multi-skilled, multi-media news production”.

A study of regional UK newsrooms some years later found both positive and negative effects of mobile journalism on news quality (although the author acknowledges the difficulty of defining news “quality”) and the traditional “watchdog” function of news. In the journalism literature Aviles, Leon, Sanders and Harrison investigated this phenomenon specifically in British and Spanish television newsrooms. While they found that younger news practitioners could adapt to their news roles relatively quickly, there was a genuine concern over the effect on the news product. “Multi-skilling leaves journalists less time to fulfill traditional journalistic practices, such as double-checking of sources and finding contextual information. The newly established routines tend to emphasise concern about the quality of output”. Martyn gives an overview of the impact of mobile journalism on news products. By examining the phenomenon on a macro and micro level, the author finds some causes for concern but also reasons for promise. One thing Martyn is sure of is that the “the technological Pandora’s box is open” and that multimedia journalism and multi-skilling should be used carefully by journalists who have both sufficient training and experience to ensure journalistic standards are maintained.

Currently, many channels have either switched or in the process of switching to mobile journalism. One of the leading female journalist of India, Barkha Dutt, with her show ‘on the road with Barkha’ for The Quint started doing mobile journalism. Initially her claims were rejected by people but in a short span of time, she started covering elections. Within days Dutt had pulled off interviews on smartphones and DSLR cameras with the likes of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and Samajwadi Party leader Aparna Yadav. She also reported from the war rooms of parties such as the BJP. During COVID19 when government enforced lockdown, Barkha Dutt continued her reporting through mobile journalism. She travelled the length and wide of the country and brought stories that were missed by the mainstream media channels. Being a veteran of television news, she was wowed by the superior production quality. Newspapers and magazines like Rajasthan Patrika has also switched to mobile journalism for the social media accounts of their newspaper.

Not only freelancers, but mainstream news channel like NDTV has also switched to mobile journalism. All the correspondents of NDTV has started using Samsung mobiles for recording news and telecasting it. Mobile journalism can also be a reason to generate revenues for the media houses. Newspapers and Television channels can partner with mobile phone manufacturing companies and can generate revenue. Channels can give access to there audience to do live streaming. On one hand it can promote citizen journalism and also generate revenue for the channel. Another way of generating revenue is by channels switching to youtube. Channels nowadays have started posting their news clips on YouTube. With the changing times the new audience is not sitting in front of TV screens nor buying a paper version of a newspaper. They spend most of their time on social networks where they interact directly with newsmakers and have a great influence on the way in which news institutions and media companies are presenting their productions. Channels also generate revenue from the Youtube advertisements. News channel like Aaj Tak have started various YouTube channels like Sports Tak, Crime Tak, Khabar Tak, Bihar Tak. On one side it has given the audience to choose what type of news they want to watch and also generate revenues. Channels also offer exclusive

membership to their YouTube channels and websites, where videos and especially interview videos can be seen before being released. Channel like scoopwhoop has started doing it for some of their Interview shows. When it comes to mobile journalism, one of its most positive aspects relies on the fact that it can overcome censorship and find the way to deliver information to the audience. This is especially important in local areas where journalists are easy targets of political and financial pressure. Burum thinks that “a local Indigenous media field can potentially serve to enable accurate local reportage by creating a specialized local journalistic subfield of Indigenous reporting”.

Even though there is no strict definition of mobile journalism in the academic field, many authors tried to extricate its characteristics in order to differentiate it from multimedia journalism and establish its own working area. For now, this phenomenon lacks a permanent name, so Lopez-Garcia and others noted that some authors called it mobile digital journalism, mobile news journalism, and mobile journalism. For instance, Ran Wei defines mobile media as “primarily as a personal, interactive, internet-enabled and user-controlled portable platform that provides for the exchange of and sharing of personal and non-personal information among users who are inter-connected”. When it comes to practice, Aljazeera Media Training and Development Centre in its publication titled *Mobile Journalism* defines this form as “the process of gathering and delivering news using a smartphone or tablet. It is a trend in news covering and broadcasting, having the potential to become the new standard in journalism practice, especially to report breaking news”.

Still, when talking about the media aspect, there are two important perspectives that should be in the focus of research - dissemination and reception of content for mobile devices and content production. mobile journalism is not facing challenges in academic fields only, but in practical areas as well, because it is still trying to find its place inside the media sphere. As observed by Perreault and Stanfield, “mobile journalists find themselves in a place of tension, between print, broadcast, and digital journalism and between traditional journalism and lifestyle journalism”. Therefore, one of the major questions regarding this journalistic area is whether mobile journalism should be observed as a part of existing media models or as an independent entity. At the same time, the role of mobile journalists is questioned – does production completely rely on mobile devices to prepare the content for use on various platforms or is it about a content intended for mobile consumption only regardless of the device used to produce such content? In order to try to place mobile journalists and mobile journalism into a complex media system, Perreault and Stanfield conducted a research using an online survey that was sent to mobile journalists from different media hubs. Results showed that these journalists saw an opportunity for better storytelling, ability to report in a timelier nature which allowed them to become community and breaking news reporters.

Additionally, there is an ability to share information easily through various platforms while working remotely. Here, interactivity, which has always been proclaimed as one of the chief characteristics in the context of new media, gets an additional dimension. Speaking of interactivity, we usually refer to the connection between a reader and a story. However, this research indicates that this characteristic goes one step further in mobile journalism. Because of that, we can also discuss a new connection – the one between a reader and an author. Thanks to this improved process of interactivity, the change of roles is also possible, so, at a certain moment, a recipient can become a content creator and vice versa. Taking this into consideration, mobile journalism can be perceived and accepted as an alternative journalistic form that offers non-mainstream content that, one would think, was hidden on purpose. But, aside from resistance, the authenticity of mobile generated content should also be questioned. For instance, the vacuum that puts mobile journalism between amateurs and professionals in the media system has increased the competition between them, so in efforts to publish certain content as soon as possible, especially in the era of live transmitting, we can easily get the

product that can fool and manipulate the audience. “The videos and photos may be tampered or manipulated, or the content may be provided in such a way that it conveys half or wrong information. Videos may be spread by the opposite parties and provide completely false information”.

According to Journalists The future of mobile journalism is quite bright. Reuters’ chief scientist Nic Fulton believes mobile technology is evolving very fast. He says with changing times mobile phones can have high definition capacity, extremely powerful VPUs (computer processing unit) and with these changes there is a potential to have transformative effect on Mobile Journalism. Kevin Anderson the blog editor for ‘The Guardian’ believes that mobile journalism let journalists stay closer to the story. He says the news organizations that experiment now will be best placed to take advantage of the journalistic possibilities that continuously advancing mobile technology allows. Jeff Jarvis of Buzzmachine says the key skill in the newsroom of the future will not be the ability to get the reporters to the scene, but to notice news as it happens as member of the audience shoot videos with there mobile phones.

The mobile phones makes mojo work possible but as with all tools a person makes the choice to use or reject that technology. Think of the mojo as swiss army. It is useful if you are alone in the forest. Better to have this tool than rather than nothing. The same applies for breaking news. A mojo is perfect for breaking news, for getting multi media onto a website from the site of action. The best mojo work is done in teams, with allocation of different roles. Mojos working alone need to have sufficient confidence in their bosses that they can call for help if the story they are covering gets too big to handle for a single person. The single mojo can handle the event but it becomes difficult. A mobile journalist should be prepared while going in the field. An external microphone to catch sound, a tripod to handle mobile phone, some extra batteries and a high speed network. The mobile Journalism is a thing of future and with a big country like India with a population of more than 135 crore going to celebrate its 75th Independence day, mobile journalism is a thing of future. From huge mountains of Kashmir to beaches of Kanyakumari and from runn of kutch to forests of Arunachal Pradesh, mobile journalism is a way to cover all the news. Journalists can fetch the news details as soon as possible due to mobile journalism.

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