PRESENTATION JEANZ CONFERENCE 29 JUNE, 2017

By Danielle Mulrennan, Auckland University of Technology

Television news: an ugly business?

> "The TV business is uglier than most things. It is normally perceived as some kind of cruel and shallow money trench through the heart of the journalism industry, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free and good men die like dogs, for no good reason."

> (Thompson, 2003, p. 43)

My presentation is based on the literature review I am writing for my Doctoral research project: "UGC and television news". This study comes from a critical perspective, and explores the occurrence of user-generated video content, its integration by television journalists as news, and the impact this has on their work experiences.

WHY? SLIDE 2

Like all journalists, television news journalists are losing their stronghold as a dominant players in the news landscape. This is the result of three drivers:

1.   the Internet which has brought technological convergence of news in text, audio and video through websites;

and Web 2.0 which has brought a level of participation not only by the news media, but also by the audiences who use it (also known as "users" or "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2006)

2.   the economic landscape of a besieged media sector dominated by major conglomerate ownership and subjected to political interference and governmental regulation.

and

3.   the proliferation of non-journalistic content generated online through social media sites. Here I am talking about UGC – user-generated content. My particular area of interest is ugc video. So that means sites like Vimeo, Instagram, Facebook and of course Youtube which was identified as the most widely used UGC, by 55% of the New Zealand population (Adcorp, 2013);

SITUATED IN NEW ZEALAND

A New Zealand nexus provides a contribution to a wider body of research for these reasons:

- the small population has demonstrated a rapid uptake in many technological areas, and this enables me to look at the overall system and its dynamics more clearly than that of a larger country (Horrocks, 2004);
- it is a country highly exposed economically, again due to is size;
- and because of our the television news service design. It has been built under the influence of British model and American models, neither of which bear any true relation to the size and culture of the local sector. Therefore, New Zealand provides a hybrid with insightful consequences that I expect will bring value to an international body of knowledge.

GAP IN LITERATURE

As I have been looking at literature relating to the role of user-generated content in the news, I see that it is dominated by research on the impact it has on journalists working in newspapers and online (Cushion, 2011).   But there appears to be a significant gap in the area of UGC and television news. One of the most significant pieces - on UGC in the BBC newsroom - draws on data from 2007 which is now a decade old (Williams, Wardle & Wahl-Jorgenson, 2011). Obviously the world has moved on a lot since then.

But first, I just want to make it clear to you what is meant by UGC video by looking at a story which you are no doubt familiar with from a couple of months ago:

NEWSHUB STORY: BROTHER VIDEOS HIS SISTER AFTER TAKING CHEMICALS LINK: http://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2017/03/worried-brother-posts-video-of-sister-in-zombie-like-trance-after-taking-drugs.html

By definition, UGC is created by the general public outside professional routines and practices, is published on websites or social media platforms, and usually contains a certain amount of creative effort (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development [OECD], 2007). Posting it enables users to express themselves publicly, and to achieve fame and prestige within their circle of friends or even on a global scale (Moens, Li & Chua, 2014). According to van Dijck, UCG "increasingly demands room for ordinary citizens to wield media technologies - technologies that were once the privilege of capital-intensive industries - to express themselves and distribute those creations as they see fit (van Dijck, 2008, p. 42)."

TECHNOLOGY

There is no doubt that the greatest influence over technology has been the launch of the Internet on 6 August 1991 (thenextweb.com). The development of 'modern mass communication technologies' has increased a person's capacity for controlling space by reducing lag time when communicating between people in different places (Atkinson, 1988). Atkinson states that the rapidity and reach of these technologies has enabled humans to multiply the scale and communication capabilities quickly and directly over significant distances. This has been accentuated further since the development of Web 2.0. Allan (2008) describes Web 2.0 as a "curious term, laden with uncertainty" (p. 2). Allan describes in detail the four key elements which distinguish Web 2.0 from the earlier iteration of the Internet:

1.   the design and functionality of Web 2.0 websites include the ability to prioritise and manipulate data through the interactions between humans and computers;

2. Web 2.0 allows advertisers to reach consumers through personalized or targeted marketing at a time of greatest effect, such as at the point of an online purchase

3. Web 2.0 panders to a new kind of audience who is an active participant in creating, maintaining and the expanding of content

4. and a philosophical element where societies are increasingly mediated by entertainment and information media against the political sphere. There are arguments that Web 2.0 emphasizes freedom of choice and empowerment through O'Reilly's (2005) "architecture of participation".

According to Allan, 2008, advocates of Web 2.0 claim it is a continuation of the World Wide Web "but in a better way". And this is invigorating enthusiasm for the concept of Web 3.0 as we look into an unknown future (ibid).

THE AUDIENCE

… or should I say "people formerly known as the audience" according to Rosen, 2006.

Television audience were once members of a stable family unit or other social grouping where the site of reception was a private or domestic setting (Lealand & Martin, 2001). Horrocks (2004) states that in 2002, more New Zealanders watched television in one night than attended live theatre over a whole year. Barwise and Ehrenberg (1990) said viewers in many countries spent between a third and half of their leisure time watching television. The audience was described as a "passive participant" who did not want to spend 25 hours a week worrying about what they were seeing. Krugman (1965) described the audience as enjoying a passive activity which requires "little physical, emotional, intellectual or financial effort or investment".

What is clear, is that the developments during the 1990s and 2000s have marked a paradigmatic shift in the way audiences interact with the news. Kohut (2013) found that news audiences are shrinking generation after generation in a longitudinal survey which revealed a steady decline in consuming news from the "Silent" generation (67-84 years old), to the "Boomers" (48-66 years old), "Generation X" (33-47 years old) and "Millennials" (18-31 years old). This is supported by data from the Pew Research Centre.

UGC

We all know (and some of us have experienced) how difficult it is now, for news media organisations to sustain their growth (Vujnovic, Singer, Paulussen, Heinonen, Reich, Quandt, Hermida & Domingo, 2010). And we all agree that one main cause, is a loss of revenue as audiences shift away from traditional news source information. The OECD (2007) claims it is user-generated content that is leading the demise of media production, and changing the nature of communication and social relationships.

The phenomenon of user-generated content has implications for us, at the point where the "professional" journalist and the "citizen" journalist intersect (Witschge & Nygren, 2009). Journalism holds fast to its definition as a semi-profession (ibid) by providing a public service of information gathering and sharing. This is achieved under the conditions of objectivity and fairness, autonomy, newness and ethical appropriateness (Deuze, 2005).

But the proliferation of user-generated content means the journalist and the public are increasingly being perceived as equal partners (Singer, 2014).

Jenkins (2006) states that due to the pervasive nature of media across multiple platforms, economies and national borders audiences have taken an active role as consumers of news. A number of academics in the 2000s have attempted to capture and explain the changing role of the audience, including Rosen (2006) who is oft cited for his catch phrase of the "people formerly known as the audience" which refers to the significant shift from passive to participatory audiences. This, states Rosen (2006), is a

migration from "those who were on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another" (p. 1). Jenkins describes "convergence" as the flow of content across multiple platforms, the co-operation between multiple media industries and the migratory behaviour of audiences in search of entertainment experiences (p. 2). He is against the idea that convergence is a technological process; rather, he says that it represents a cultural shift towards "participatory culture" enacted by the audiences functioning in a new media system. He examines how formerly passive audiences have greater opportunity to participate online through tools and formats which continue develop, and states how journalists' are responding is important in understanding the evolution of participatory journalism (Hermida, 2011, p. 14). Hermida says the terms "participatory journalism", "citizen journalism" and "user-generated content" are interchangeable; these terms refer to a citizen's act of "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information" (Bowman & Willis, 2003, p. 9). However, "participatory journalism" is a term which best describes the process and effects of such an interchange (Hermida, 2011; Singer, Domingo, Heinonen, Hermida, Paulussen, Quandt, Reich and Vujnovic, 2011).

Bruns (2006) describes how the paradigm shift towards audiences in a participatory role came in response to a shift in technology. Audiences become produsers (with an "s") when they engage in the creation of informational content which Bruns calls "produsage" (Bruns, 2006; Westlund, 2015). Bruns refers to an early example of produsage: *Wikipedia* which displaced the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* as an online content management system which invites audiences or "users" to contribute information on global topics of interest, which is then verified by others.

Singer et al. (2011) have reviewed the terms "user-generated content", "citizen journalism" and "produsage" and favour "participatory journalism" as it is a term which connotes collaborative and collective action. Lasica (2003) defines "participatory journalism" as a "slippery creature" which is separated from journalism by one distinctive feature, which is, that journalism must involve original reporting and an editorial filter.

IN CONCLUSION

Due to its three-dimensional nature (moving images, sound and text), television news is regarded as the most challenging of media.   Not only is a journalist is required to articulate the news, he or she must also harness visual images that give an accurate representation of the facts (Tuchman, 1975). UGC video is increasingly becoming entwined in the narratives of television news. But is it just another source? or are there implications that go far beyond that? This project aims to fill a gap in knowledge, that will identify issues and make recommendations for better outcomes for television journalists, and journalism as a whole. And of course journalism educators!

References:

Adcorp. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.adcorp.co.nz/news-blog/Social-Media-Statistics-October-2013,-Australia-an Allan (2008)

Allan, S. (2010). News, audiences and everyday life. In S. Allan (Ed.), News culture (pp. 121–144). Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Atkinson, J. (1988). Mass communications , economic liberalisation and the new mediators. *Political Science*, *41*(2), 85–108. London. Sage.

Barwise, T.P. & Ehrenberg, A.S.C. (1990). Television and its audience. London: Sage.

Bowman, S., & Willis, C. (2003). We media: how audiences are shaping the future of news and information. http://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809336551

Bruns, A. (2006). Towards Produsage: Futures for User-Led Content Production. *Cultural Attitudes towards Communication and Technology*, 275–284. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-9622(06)01179-0

Cushion, S. (2011). *Television journalism* (pp. 1–195). London: Sage.

Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism?: Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, *6*(4), 442–464. http://doi.org/10.1177/1464884905056815

Hermida, A. (2011). Mechanisms of participation: how audience options shape the conversation. In J.B. Singer, D. Domingo, A. Heinonen, A. Hermida, S. Paulussen, T. Quandt, Z. Reich & M. Vujnovic (Eds.) *Participatory Journalism: guarding open gates at online newspapers*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN 978-1-4443-3227-8

Horrocks, R. (2004). The history of New Zealand television. In R. Horrocks & N. Perry (Eds.) Television in New Zealand: programming the nation (pp. 20-43). Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: where old and new media collide.* New York: University Press.

Kohut, A. (2013). Pew surveys of audience habits suggest perilous future for news. Retrieved from http://www.poynter.org/2013/pew-surveys-of-audience-habits-suggest-perilous-future-for-news/225139/

Krugman, H. (1965). The impact of television advertising: learning without involvement. *Public Opinion Quarterly.* Vol. 29 (3): 349-356. doi: 10.1086/267335

Lasica, J.D. (2003). What is participatory journalism? *Online Journalism Review.* Retrieved from http://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/1060217106

Lealand, G. & Martin, H. (2001). *It's all done with mirrors: about television.* Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Moens, M., Li, J., & Chua, T. (2014). *Mining user generated content*. London: CRC Press. ISDN: 9781466557413

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (2007). *Report from Working Party on the information economy: participative web: user created content.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/sti/38393115.pdf

O'Reilly, T. (2005). What is Web 2.0? Retrieved from http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html

Rosen, J. (2006). The people formerly known as the audience. *PressThink*, 1–7. Retrieved from http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr.html

Singer, J. B. (2014). User-generated visibility: Secondary gatekeeping in a shared media space. *New Media & Society*, *16*(1), 55–73. http://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813477833

Singer, J.B., Domingo, D., Heinonen, A., Hermida, A., Paulussen, S., Quandt, T., Reich, Z., Vujnovic, M. (2011). *Participatory Journalism: guarding open gates at online newspapers*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN 978-1-4443-3227-8

thenextweb.com. (n.d.) Retrieved from https://thenextweb.com/insider/2011/08/06/20-years-ago-today-the-world-wide-web-opened-to-the-public/#.tnw_ZeAOXz7h

Tuchman, G. (1975). TV news : the control of work and construction of reality. Politics, 10(2), 149–154. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00323267508401513

van Dijck, J. (2008). Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content. *Media, Culture & Society*. 31(1) (pp. 41-58). London: Sage. ISSN: 0163-4437 DOI: 10.1177/0163443708098245

Vujnovic, M., Singer, J. B., Paulussen, S., Heinonen, A., Reich, Z., Quandt, T., Domingo, D. (2010). Exploring the political-economic factors of participatory journalism: views of online journalists in 10 countries. *Journalism Practice*, *4*(3), 285–296. http://doi.org/10.1080/17512781003640588

Westlund, O. (2015). News consumption in an age of mobile media: Patterns, people, place, and participation. *Mobile Media & Communication*, *3*(2), 151–159. http://doi.org/10.1177/2050157914563369

Williams, A., Wardle, C., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2011). "Have they got news for us?" Audience revolution or business as usual at the BBC? Journalism Practice, 5(1), 85–99. http://doi.org/10.1080/17512781003670031

Witschge, T., & Nygren, G. (2009). Journalism: a profession under pressure ? *Journal of Media Business Studies*, *6*(1), 37–59. http://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512461762

Thompson, H.S. (2003). *Generation of Swine: Tales of Shame and Degradation in the '80's*. New York: Simon and Schuster