

# **The Open Newsroom: broadcast news ecosystem in an era of online media migration and audience participation**

Vincent Murwira

An exegesis submitted to the School of Communication Studies, AUT University, Auckland in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Communication Studies

2009

School of Communication Studies  
Faculty of Design & Creative Technologies  
AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand  
Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Martin Hirst



## **The Open Newsroom: broadcast news ecosystem in an era of online media migration and audience participation**

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Vincent Murwira

## Table of Contents

1	Abstract .....	5
2	Hypothesis.....	6
3	Key Research Areas .....	7
3.1	Audience Participation in the media as contributors or media creators.....	8
3.2	Citizen Journalism content in the media globally and in N Zealand broadcast news media (TV One, TV3) and online content at <a href="http://nzherald.co.nz">http://nzherald.co.nz</a> .....	8
3.3	Online migration by the media and its effect on newsgathering .....	8
3.4	IPTV – global take-up and review and emerging technologies and their effect on newsgathering and dissemination .....	8
3.5	Changes to the practice of journalism and to news.....	8
4	Methodology .....	8
5	Who was interviewed and why .....	8
6	Output Format.....	10
7	Research Challenges .....	10
8	Research Findings.....	11
8.1	Format Changes .....	12
8.1.1	Newspapers Now Multimedia.....	12
8.1.2	Changes to News Content.....	12
8.1.3	News is beginning to mimic entertainment and is now watered down.....	12
8.1.4	News becoming opinion-based.....	13
8.2	More purveyors of news-supply side of news is changing .....	13
8.2.1	Bloggers and commentary .....	14
8.2.2	PR encroaching into news.....	14
8.2.3	Too many niche websites.....	14
8.3	Definition of a journalist contested.....	15
8.4	Impact of online migration on news .....	16
8.4.1	The Good-news appears online first .....	16
8.4.2	The Bad-online irresistible for traditional media audiences .....	16
8.4.3	Online media-emerging issues.....	17
8.4.3.1	Archival and search functions presenting challenges .....	17
8.4.3.2	Dwindling Newsroom Staff numbers likely to lower quality of news. ....	17
8.4.3.3	Loss of advertising.....	18
8.4.3.4	Competition and Brand Recognition .....	18
8.4.3.5	The Internet -a dissemination platform for all media 24/7 .....	19
8.5	Impact of the Internet on newsgathering .....	19
8.6	Fragmentation of News Platforms .....	20
8.7	Citizen journalism.....	20
8.7.1	Limited Audience participation .....	21
8.7.2	Benefits of citizen journalism are contested .....	21
8.7.3	Expectation that audiences will fill the void.....	22
8.7.4	Benefits of citizen journalism .....	23
8.7.5	The Risks of accepting copy from citizen journalists .....	23

8.7.6	Gatekeeping-mitigating the risks .....	24
8.7.7	Media and citizen journalism- relationship not symbiotic.....	25
8.7.8	What's limiting citizen journalism?.....	25
8.7.9	The future of citizen journalists .....	26
8.8	Emerging online television platforms - IPTV and Online TV.....	27
8.8.1	Emerging Online television formats still face many hurdles.....	27
8.8.2	IPTV success limited by lack of a business model .....	27
8.8.3	IPTV-bandwidth not a limiting factor.....	28
8.8.4	Is Online TV and IPTV the future of television?.....	28
8.9	The Future of News .....	29
8.9.1	Predicting the future impossible, but media will survive .....	30
9	Critical Analysis of Research.....	30
9.1	What are the strengths of this study? .....	30
9.2	The weakness of the study .....	31
10	How relevant is this study to general debates within the field .....	31
11	Areas of Future Research.....	32
11.1	IPTV and non-linear television.....	32
11.2	Online Newspaper subscription and new newspaper technologies .....	32
11.3	The Other 3 Billion Global Wireless Broadband Project (o3b).....	32
12	Conclusion .....	33
13	References.....	36

## 1 Abstract

The Internet has become a pivotal tool for newsgathering and dissemination. The ubiquitous nature of the Internet has seen media organisations and citizens alike adopt this tool at increasing speed since its commercial launch and wide availability in the 1990s.

Since then the Internet has revolutionized the media and changed a lot of fundamental traditions and practices like newsgathering and dissemination particularly the change from scheduled and periodic to 24/7 round the clock news

For the media and citizens alike, the Internet has become a communication tool and a publishing platform. This capability has seen vast amounts of content like video, audio and text contributed, submitted or published by citizens. These citizens are now content creators or potential news providers, an activity and function that has always been the domain of journalists. This is being made even more possible by the availability of other enabling technologies like inexpensive digital technologies like video cameras, digital cameras and recorders.

With citizens now empowered with the tools to create content and publish, just like traditional media, debates in many parts of the world have suggested that these abilities are catalysts that could spur citizens into contributing news content like video to the media. After all, some online social networking sites have already demonstrated that citizens possess the skills to produce video content.

This research looks at the premise that the Internet is an enabling technology and looks at the situation in New Zealand to gauge how much content citizens are contributing in the media and also looks at other paradigms in newsgathering and dissemination in the Internet era

## 2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that the convergence of the Internet and digital technologies has changed newsgathering and dissemination in the media, creating a paradigm shift and an enabling platform that makes it easy for citizens to participate in the media. Literature from different parts of the world suggests that some news organisations have taken advantage of this new paradigm of interactivity and started incorporating user-generated content or creating platforms for user-generated content. As such, this research project expected to find a fair amount of user-generated content in the media in New Zealand

The ubiquitous nature of the Internet and increasing availability of inexpensive “prosumer” (professional consumer) digital technologies and inexpensive or free editing software is creating an enabling environment that makes it easy for anyone to create content like video and audio and upload it for publishing. In the past, cost was prohibitive and few publishers or broadcasters had space or air time to publish content, video or audio created by amateurs or enthusiasts. Even where there were outlets, such material had to be physically carted or mailed to any publisher keen to use it. The Internet changed all that. It gave everyone the means to transfer files from one point to another, quickly and also the ability to publish themselves. These abilities have seen the emergence of audiences who write and contribute material (text, video, audio) to the media (traditional online media or to self-published blogs), audiences commonly referred to as citizen journalists

Since the 1990s, debates abound regarding these enabling capabilities of the Internet. A lot of research and literature have translated these to mean that the internet will change the media, news gathering and dissemination and that audiences can now potentially do what previously only the media could do. As a result, some debates say audience participation in the media or citizen journalism is inevitable, with some going further to say that citizen journalism or audience contributed content will eclipse what professional media contribute.

Some research posits that publishers and broadcasters have opened up their newsrooms and are inviting citizen journalists to participate in the news process. In other words, it’s now an “open newsroom” as the title of this research suggests.

Indeed as most international research suggests, some of them have opened up their newsrooms and invite audiences to “be part of the news” and the reasons for doing so vary from publisher to publisher or broadcaster to broadcaster and from country to country. Some of the reasons are opportunistic, i.e. taking advantage of a new pool of on-

the ground “journalists” and getting quick eye-witness accounts, while some are based on financial restructuring or survival.

A major change in news dissemination is that news is now “immediate”; in other words news gets published as it happens. The result of “immediacy” has been the media has changed from being scheduled or periodical to being instant or 24/7 round the clock.

For this thesis, the research put the premise of the enabling capabilities of the Internet and proliferation of digital technologies to test, the focus being on television news production in the New Zealand media. The aim was to see whether having access to enabling technology like the Internet or digital video equipment and inexpensive or free editing software have led to a rise of news video footage or content from non-professionals in mainstream television news broadcasts or mainstream media.

In tandem to that, the research looked at the new ways of news dissemination, most of which are online based. Traditional media has embraced online technology and have established a very strong online presence. In New Zealand, TVNZ and TV3 are heavily marketing their websites as sources of breaking news 24/7. Even on their main television news, most stories don’t end on the television screen; they end on their websites-“for more on this story, visit our website”.

This research looks at the likelihood of these online platforms eclipsing traditional media as a result. Already the online platform’s characteristics of publishing news as it happens or “immediately” has dramatically changed the media from being scheduled or periodical to being instant, 24/7 round the clock.

These new ways are changing news consumption habits and fragmenting the news. Internationally and in New Zealand, the internet has become the defacto news platform and has become a source of free news to the detriment of newspaper circulation.

### **3 Key Research Areas**

The aim of the research is to gauge the changes and trends in newsgathering, dissemination, new players in the media, format changes and quality of news. The main focus was on:

- 3.1 Audience Participation in the media as contributors or media creators
- 3.2 Citizen Journalism content in the media globally and in N Zealand broadcast news media (TV One, TV3) and online content at <http://nzherald.co.nz>
- 3.3 Online migration by the media and its effect on newsgathering
- 3.4 IPTV – global take-up and review and emerging technologies and their effect on newsgathering and dissemination
- 3.5 Changes to the practice of journalism and to news

## **4 Methodology**

### 1. Literature Review

2. Monitoring news bulletins on Television New Zealand (TVNZ) and TV3 in New Zealand to gauge audience and citizen journalism participation in the media.

3. Technology Review-Assessing technologies like IPTV and their possible ramifications on new television formats and news consumption habits.

4. Online research- Given that most news organizations worldwide now have an online presence, the aims of this research were to gain insights into the new developments, changes and debates on online platforms.

### 5. Open ended interviews

To understand the changes happening in the media, the research asked several questions to respondents recruited or canvassed for interviews via telephone, email and word of mouth. The questions were tailored to suit the individuals, given differences in age and experience in the media, location and specialty. The bulk of interviewees are from New Zealand, 2 from the United States, one from the United Kingdom and one from South Africa.

### 6. Content Analysis.

Transcribing interviews and viewing and logging video footage for suitable grabs  
Content analysis was done over 12 months from early 2008... The aim was to elicit views, professional opinion and assessment from interviewees.

## **5 Who was interviewed and why**

More than 30 key players with a wide range of skills and experience in the media were approached via email, telephone, and word of mouth with a request to participate in this research. The interviewees range from an editor with more than 40 years experience in the media, broadcast journalists, a blogger, and technology professionals to a recent communications graduate and cumulatively represent all the major sections of the media. The research is journalistic in nature and the broad areas or categories of people identified and approached at research design stage fell in the following categories

1. consumers who have turned news gatherers
2. consumers with a view on this phenomenon
3. journalists and their views on this development and
4. broadcasters who utilize services of citizen journalists
5. critics, scholarly or media commentators
6. companies that produce media technologies

In the end 15 people were interviewed from all categories except number 2 above (consumers with a view on this phenomenon). An attempt was made but interviews conducted with two people did not have any meaningful views to add to this debate. Instead, a telecommunications expert and a blogger agreed to participate and offered some insights that enriched the research. One candidate provided a write-up assessing the perceived threat of the Internet on television. The 16 interviewees, all professionals in the media and related industries provided a workable sample of opinion which is published in this report and on [www.theopennewsroom.com](http://www.theopennewsroom.com) website

Interviews with most New Zealand based candidates were filmed on a MiniDv camera. The interviews were all transcribed and relevant answers are featured in the Media Gallery on this website. Below is a list of the candidates interviewed.

**Brent Impey: CEO MediaWorks New Zealand (TV3, C4)**

**Crisford Chogugudza: Doctoral Candidate and Social Work Manager, London, UK, Freelance journalist for 20 years.** Recently graduated with Diploma in Journalism and news writing, London School of Journalism

**Dan Gillmor: Director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship.** a project of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, United States. Author of *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*, and writer of online book <http://mediactive.com/>, Journalist, and 25 year veteran of the newspaper business

**Dr Paul Reynolds: Chief Executive Officer-Telecom New Zealand,** formerly with British Telecoms and a pioneer of Video on Demand

**Gavin Ellis: Former Editor In Chief of the *New Zealand Herald*, Doctoral Candidate and Lecturer at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.** Media experience- more than 40 years, began journalism just as television news started in New Zealand

**Glyn Jones: Editor News Plus, TVNZ (Television New Zealand),** Radio and Television Journalist since the 1980s

**Jeremy Rees-Publisher, *New Zealand Herald Online*** <http://nzherald.co.nz>  
Media experience for 20+ years

**Keith Slater: TV3 New Zealand, Auckland Bureau Chief, Broadcast Journalist** since the 1970s

**Lauren Mentjox: Freelance Journalist, Auckland, New Zealand**

**Meagan Ellwood: Communications Studies Graduate, AUT University, New Zealand-** Interest in all types of media but predominantly uses the Internet

**Paul Norris : Head, New Zealand Broadcasting School, Christchurch, New Zealand,** former Head of News and Current Affairs, TVNZ (Television New Zealand) plus former Broadcast Journalist, BBC, London with 25 + years experiences

**Rawdon Christie- Television Producer and Presenter, TVNZ (Television New Zealand),** former Broadcast Journalist/Presenter, BBC, London with 10 + years experiences

**Russell Brown: Journalist and writer of Hard News a blog found on PublicAddress.net,** a community of New Zealand-centric weblogs

**Shayne Bowman: Co-writer, *We Media, A whitepaper on Citizen Journalism and how audiences are shaping the future of news and information.*** Commissioned by The Media Center at The American Press Institute, Shayne is based in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States

**Tommy Makhode: National News Editor, SABC-South African Broadcasting Corporation,** Johannesburg, South Africa, Broadcast Journalist for 15 years.

## 6 Output Format

Research findings are on [www.theopennewsroom.com](http://www.theopennewsroom.com) website in three formats: (a) as video and audio grabs in the Media Gallery, (b) as Q & As and (c) as write-ups in the Research Articles section on the front page of the website.

The exegesis document sums up the research methodology and findings and a full copy is in the Research section with an extract on the main page.

These formats were chosen to present content in as many formats as possible in line with trends on online media. Video and audio content were selected to let audiences hear opinions directly from research participants. The Question and Answer (Q & As) were chosen due to the fact that they're easy to read and digest. Write-ups in the Research section on the main page of the site were chosen as these sum up the literature review in academic research format and include the exegesis.

## 7 Research Challenges

During the research, interviews conducted with media consumers yielded unusable results. As a result, a decision was made to drop this category and interview a blogger and a telecommunications expert instead.

At thesis proposal stage there was an indication that news stories submitted by citizen journalists would be compared with those submitted by professional journalists. This never happened as during the media monitoring period no stories from citizen journalists were broadcast on the two television channels that were being monitored.

Also at proposal stage my research was more inclined towards broadcast journalism. This quickly changed when the research started. Online media does not have the demarcations that traditional media has. As such any analysis of any online endeavours by broadcasters inevitably leads to analysis of all types of media online.

During the 12 month period of monitoring TV3 News and One News on Television New Zealand (TVNZ), beginning in November 2007 to December 2008 only one “complete” TV story was submitted by a ‘citizen journalist’ to TVNZ. The story is discussed by Rawdon Christie in the Media Gallery under “Risks of citizen journalism”

During the monitoring stage, the sheer size of recording an average of 6GB of footage a day for TV3 and for TVNZ became impractical. In the end, I decided to go to TV3’s newsroom and checked their news rundown for the 12 month period in their ENPS News Production System which keeps a record of all stories broadcast and details such as the running order, source of story etc and together with Auckland bureau Chief Keith Slater satisfied ourselves that indeed for the whole period of news monitoring, the only contributions from citizen journalists had been photos sent via mobile phone and email and a few video clips, mostly of severe weather, something that has always happened in the media.

TVNZ provided a print out of the stories broadcast from November 2007 to February 2009 from their iNews production system. Again they had Am-Cam (Amateur Camera) footage from viewers, mostly of severe weather, something which has always been sent in by viewers and predates the advent of citizen journalism.

Both TVNZ and TV3 networks said Am-Cam footage has always been part and parcel of the news and both indicated that they now seem to be receiving a lot given the ease and simplicity of uploading images to their websites or emailing.

The publisher of [www.nzherald.co.nz](http://www.nzherald.co.nz) Jeremy Rees said that they receive very little in the way of stories from citizen journalism, save for photographs and a few video clips. (See Media Gallery on [www.theopennewsroom.com](http://www.theopennewsroom.com) for his interview)

## 8 Research Findings

This section represents a range of professional viewpoints from media practitioners (journalists, freelance journalists, producers) and news leaders (editors, researchers, academics, managers) in TV and newspapers, online media and bloggers in New Zealand, the United States, London and South Africa and technology experts interviewed for this research and also research findings.

“The media is undergoing massive transformation which isn’t as simplified as we’d like to think. It really is affecting so many different aspects of not only how we create information but how we share it”

“A lot of times we are talking about one big thing like citizen journalism but it’s really a lot of separate things that have to be talked about individually. You can’t just say citizen journalism changes how we report, well, it does a little bit, what’s changes more, what’s really changing is how we share information like, from individual to individual ”<sup>1</sup>

## **8.1 Format Changes**

The Media is changing significantly in a number of ways. Newsrooms are changing to multimedia to cater for the new changes online and news is increasingly becoming opinion based. There are claims that news is now watered down and mimicking entertainment

### **8.1.1 Newspapers Now Multimedia**

The media ecosystem is undergoing massive changes in formats and approach. Traditional print newsrooms like the Telegraph in London, or the Guardian for example now have TV studios and describe themselves as multimedia newsroom to provide for the multimedia demands of the online environment <sup>6</sup>

### **8.1.2 Changes to News Content**

The format of early journalism days-that of “who what where when why and how”, as Gavin Ellis says, has changed and journalism now has elements like commentary and analysis added to it.

Views from participants in this research include claims that online content is now highly politicized and highly sensationalized and that traditional media ethos are not being applied. Others say that there is “no attempt to apply the basic principles of accuracy and balance and fairness”<sup>2</sup>, adding that “this has an effect on how people perceive the media in general”<sup>2</sup>

### **8.1.3 News is beginning to mimic entertainment and is now watered down.**

There are some who feel that news is beginning to mimic entertainment and that as a result, there's a "dumbing down effect" on news.

Some expressed concern at the way celebrity had intruded into previously serious newspapers and said inclusion of that sort of material must be to the exclusion of other more serious topics.

"It's a function of declining audiences and the need for publishers to try and to recover those audiences. They think that populism is the way to go... You might say by definition yes, it must be, it's more popular. But you do reach a point where the dumbing down effect is problematic"<sup>6</sup>

Not everyone agreed that TV news is now watered down or that it's now more of PR style pieces.

"there's more variety news and there's more news just in bulk terms and that's partly because of the increased amount of airtime...the news is being spread in a different fashion and says that what in the old days may not have been seen to constitute news, entertainment news, that kind of thing is now seen as part of the landscape"<sup>16</sup>

#### **8.1.4 News becoming opinion-based**

Globally, Fox News ranks as one of the most strongly opinionated media. In conversations on the media, Fox News is used generally as a benchmark of opinionated media. Many media channels globally are now following this trend. Rawdon Christie believes that in a ratings-driven industry, often an opinion is more interesting to listen to than somebody presenting the facts, due in part to an entertainment value in that.

"I think that news gatherers, news presenters, I think we are playing a far less objective role a lot of the time. Let's just hope that we're balancing out something on the other side"<sup>3</sup>

Others say no matter where you're getting your story from, "it's gonna come from a person who comes from a context that's going to make them try and form an opinion even if they try not to"<sup>4</sup>

## **8.2 More purveyors of news-supply side of news is changing**

With many new purveyors of news like bloggers and others like PR who are increasingly encroaching into news, the supply side of news is increasing. Many new niche platforms are also emerging and are changing many aspects of the news.

### 8.2.1 Bloggers and commentary

The traditional media's hold on supply of news is facing challenges from new forms of journalism, particularly on online newspapers and blogs. Some of these blogs have carved a niche in the void left by a highly pressured news media trying to stay up to date in the round the clock 24/7 news cycles and offer analysis of issues. Journalist and blogger Russell Brown says online access to government reports for example "gives everyone the opportunity to read and analyze reports" and says that examining source material is a really core activity for good bloggers in particular..

"Keith Ng at Public Address (blog) is very good at this -- his demolition of North & South's 'Asian Angst' (North & South Magazine, New Zealand, November 13, 2006) story about a supposed Asian crime wave was founded in a correct reading of public data -- which North & South had fundamentally misread. It resulted in the Press Council's upholding complaints on grounds of accuracy."<sup>5</sup>

In the new media paradigm, "Everyone may not be the source of news, but everyone is certainly the source of comment on the news"<sup>6</sup>. There is an explosion of news commentary on many blogs and while these are not supplying news, some of them debate and bring up pertinent issues and keep stories alive for much longer than the original sources.

### 8.2.2 PR encroaching into news

The research also found claims that the growth of the media has also been accompanied by a growth and encroachment of PR into news. These PR firms are said to have skills to package broadcast quality materials "that are couched like news items, so a Television station can put it to air with minimal editing"<sup>6</sup>. TV3's Keith Slater corroborated this; he says they receive many packaged ready-to air videos from PR companies, show them on air with an explanation to viewers that this is what the PR company "would have you believe," followed by an investigative piece questioning the motives and also telling viewers the real story behind the PR campaign

### 8.2.3 Too many niche websites

As online media slowly becomes the defacto platform for all media, there's an increasing variety of websites dedicated to news. These range from commercial news portals which aggregate news from many other sites like traditional media sites or other online news sites, to sites that publish user generated content and blogs. The ubiquitous nature of the Internet on a multitude of Internet-enabled devices makes news available round the clock. The variety of niche sources of news is also increasing, and there are fears that this can potentially lead people to rely on these niche forms of communication and forsake mass media entirely, according to Gavin Ellis

“What you’ll have is a multiplicity of small sectoral information portals, often skewed to a particular point of view or a particular part of the political spectrum or the social spectrum and if people are only accessing information that is tailored to a particular point of view and tailored to their specific outlook, then we lack the common knowledge”<sup>6</sup>

Gavin Ellis adds that if you’re only getting your news “from a website provided by the *National Front*, for example, then you are not going to be exposed to viewpoints on multiculturalism” and concludes that we’ve got to be exposed to viewpoints with which we do not agree because “its only in so doing that we have a fully informed opinion of our own”

### 8.3 Definition of a journalist contested

As technology changes how news is gathered and disseminated, the role and functions of journalism have changed. Where journalists used to write stories for a daily newspaper or prepare stories for a daily news bulletin, the new paradigms of 24 hour round the clock news means journalists have to feed their multi-media outlets constantly with news updates. Some believe that the definition of a journalist has changed partly as a result. This notion is contested

Most of the interviewees in this research saw no changes in the definition of a journalist. Paul Norris says the definition has not changed and identifies a journalist as “a person who gathers news or presents news and usually works for a professional organization, but they don’t have to”, and adds that “they can be freelance, but they usually have to have some credentials as a journalist, either having a degree in journalism or having been published and that gives them authority and credibility”<sup>21</sup>. Russell Brown says journalists do not necessarily have to work for mainstream media organization and added that “by the same token, not every blogger is a journalist”<sup>5</sup>.

As journalism expands its scope to incorporate audiences, the lines between a professional and an amateur journalist are blurring every day, and some say this is one of the reasons why the definition of journalism is changing

Others say the definition has changed, but for different reasons. Gavin Ellis, a 40 year veteran of the news industry says that as a cadet journalist in the 1960s; his function was the gathering and presentation of facts straight and simple. He says that the role of the journalist today has expanded.

“In addition to the gathering of facts, there is an expectation that the journalist will be able to analyze, in the case of some journalists, also to comment. So they do have that extended role, but definitely the role of the journalists today, particularly in an era where people have access to almost too much information the ability of the journalist to synthesize large amounts of information and to analyze this information and to analyze its significance has increased beyond way beyond when I started in Journalism, way beyond”<sup>6</sup>

## **8.4 Impact of online migration on news**

As the media increasingly migrates online, the Internet has become the main source of breaking news. Media organisations are increasingly concentrating on their online platforms and some like newspapers are scaling back on their traditional formats. To make do with the reduced advertising revenues and profitability in this changing media landscape, most media organisations are restructuring and the cliché ‘doing more with less’ is being applied with numbers of newsroom staff numbers being reduced and workloads being increased. The sweeping effects are being felt across all types of media as the old demarcations of radio, television and newspapers are disappearing on the online platform

### **8.4.1 The Good-news appears online first**

All media, including newspapers (some of which used to publish more than once a day) now compete head to head to break stories online, at the same speed as radio journalists and continually update material without being held hostage to other more immediate media like radio, like television. The old demarcations of television, radio and newspapers do not exist online. Online publishing has also “removed the tyranny of deadlines...having to wait until the next morning to publish your news”<sup>6</sup> Television used to keep everything for 6 o’clock, but that is now changing. TVNZ’s Glyn Jones says unless the story is an exclusive story, it will appear online before it appears at 6pm

### **8.4.2 The Bad-online irresistible for traditional media audiences**

The adverse impact of online media on traditional media audiences is widely contested. During this research those in the television industry dismissed any threat and said that on the contrary, the Internet is a promotional tool for them as it drives audiences back to the television screen. Television viewership figures support them-viewership is at an all time high and the industry believes viewers are watching many platforms at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

Shayne Bowman says the current TV News formats are not viable long term or even a viable short term strategy “in an era where two or three clicks online can have news content wants delivered right to a desktop or through to a TV without sitting through a whole bulletin in its current linear presentation format”

“We tolerate what’s relevant and what’s not but in five years, it’s going to be another whole demographic that’s driving those choices and decisions...our children definitely won’t tolerate it”<sup>8</sup>

Could this be the reason why the demographic of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are watching video online than traditional television? NielsenWire viewership

figures both in New Zealand and the United States show a marked decline for this age group<sup>9</sup>

TV3's Keith Slater says the Internet is not a threat, but a valuable tool; “..We also use it as a device to drive audiences to watching our 3 News bulletin at 6 o'clock and our other news programmes. It's one big promotional device so we don't see it as the enemy; we see it as a friend.”<sup>10</sup>

Meagan Ellwood, a recent communications graduate says her generation almost exclusively accesses news online and says what broadcasters should be worrying about is knowing “whether their audience is in front of their television screen or in front of a PC”<sup>4</sup>

### **8.4.3 Online media-emerging issues**

This research found that online media like [www.nzherald.co.nz](http://www.nzherald.co.nz) and many others get approached by many people named in crime stories requesting to have their names removed from their servers. This is a new issue that has emerged in the internet era

#### **8.4.3.1 Archival and search functions presenting challenges**

Using the right keyword or name, an online search on a website that has its own search engine or a site that uses any of the popular ones like Google or Yahoo can easily bring up all published and archived stories.

“..that's opened up a huge can of worms...about the public archive , keeping the public archive versus a person's right-in news gathering” according to Jeremy Rees of the *New Zealand Herald*. The archive, says Rees, can be detrimental as the continued availability of people's crime records can hamper their search for jobs among other issues.

Judge David Harvey, sitting in the Manukau District Court New Zealand on August 23 2008 had this in mind when he banned publication of names of two murder accused on news websites during an initial court hearing while allowing print and broadcast media to publish the names. Judge Harvey was concerned about people being able to “Google someone's name in the future and being able to access it later and finding them linked to a crime if found innocent.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **8.4.3.2 Dwindling Newsroom Staff numbers likely to lower quality of news.**

The migration of the media online has changed processes in newsrooms and dissemination and has seen a reduction in numbers of newsroom staff. With newsrooms now working round the clock, journalists are now doing more work and updating online news 24 hours a day, not just in New Zealand, but in many countries. Besides that , for both print and television, journalists not only have to update web content several times a day, but continue supplying traditional mediums like the newspaper or television, worst

of all with no greater resource than before .Gavin Ellis believes that this is likely to cause news quality to fall and journalism to suffer<sup>6</sup>

Statistics of numbers of newsroom staff laid off were not easily available, but media layoffs are common knowledge and have been widely covered in the media.

#### **8.4.3.3 Loss of advertising**

As the media migrates online, one of the negative consequences is the reduction of revenues from advertising in traditional media. The ongoing global financial crisis has exacerbated this by further as advertising budgets get slashed:

“We are seeing an ongoing secular shift from traditional to online media as marketers recognize that ad dollars invested in interactive media are effective at influencing consumers and delivering measurable results...”<sup>12</sup>

Online advertising revenue in the United States increased from the \$21.2 billion reported in 2007 to \$23.4 billion in 2008 a 10.6 percent increase.<sup>13</sup>

In New Zealand, television advertising revenue for the first half of 2009 was reported at \$257.1 million, a drop of 13.3% from the \$296.5 million achieved in the first half of 2008. Interactive advertising on the other hand recorded an increase of 7 percent for the first half of 2009 over first half of 2008<sup>14</sup>

While online represented 8.3 percent of all adspend in 2008, the Interactive Advertising Bureau IAB (New Zealand) were forecasting online to exceed 10 percent of all adspend for the full 2009 year<sup>14</sup>

While advertisers are moving their advertising dollars online to where audiences are, advertising costs online are much lower than offline, therefore revenues being generated online are still nowhere near those of traditional media. This means traditional media hoping to get advertising revenues online will get less than they're normally used to. However, traditional media like TV and newspapers still reach out to mass markets compared with online

#### **8.4.3.4 Competition and Brand Recognition**

In theory, the impact of the Internet on news is that anyone can now set up their own news website or blog. TV3's Keith Slater says broadcasters are no longer the custodians of the tools for disseminating information .He say that although anybody can disseminate news, people look for credibility:

“I guess that credibility is always going to be the hurdle for so called citizen journalists that they can't get themselves into a position where what they say, their views, their opinions, their allegations, their thoughts don't have the backing

of a rigorous editorial process, and so while they might be there, they're not going to have the influence that a programme like 3 News will have in the marketplace"<sup>10</sup>

The sentiment is shared by others. Jeremy Rees says to survive and thrive in the current media environment, the trick is going to be convincing people to “come to the *Herald*, TV3 or TVNZ because we've got something that's different from everybody else because we've actively gone out and found it”<sup>15</sup>

#### **8.4.3.5 The Internet -a dissemination platform for all media 24/7**

One major change brought by the Internet is the ability for audiences to go online and watch news video clips. Broadcasters like the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Tommy Makhode see this as valuable for their audience-enabling them to “catch-up” on the news online.

The Internet's 24/7 nature and immediacy requires constant updates and as a result, news is now no longer tied to production cycles or programming cycles that were prevalent more than a decade ago. The old demarcations of radio, TV and newspapers do not exist on the Internet and the lines are blurring. This has an impact on newsgathering and journalists:

“Even as a student who's studied journalism, you're no longer trained to write a story just for print or for broadcasting, you need to really know how to do it all”, says Meagan Ellwood. As a result, in today's newsrooms there is no longer any specialist journalist.

“The timeframe is now thoroughly compressed and there are more outlets, so journalists working for say Reuters, will probably have to service print, radio and television and the web, all for the same story”<sup>21</sup>

### **8.5 Impact of the Internet on newsgathering**

In the pre-Internet era, news gathering was focused on traditional building of contacts and building of networks and a lot of time was spent on the phone, meeting people and trying to find the news actively, whereas today a “lot of the news is presented or potential news is presented to us on a daily basis through email, or through the Internet” according to TVNZ's Rawdon Christie.

Everyone in this research expressed the sentiment that the Internet now makes it easy to do some research. Online news sites can easily see what their competitors are running with and news sites can quickly catch up on a breaking story if their rivals have out-scooped them or they can simply use their rival's site as a ‘bouncing board’ for story angles and ideas and “react pieces”.

This ease of newsgathering and research “certainly helps in getting things turned around quickly”, according to Lauren Mentjox, particularly when “doing research on another country” (Tommy Makhode)

As a searchable database, the Internet can hold vast amounts of information and this is useful for the media as it allows those doing some research to pull out information from multiple sources and also for researchers to pull out and see full press releases, documents or speeches that are unmediated.

## **8.6 Fragmentation of News Platforms**

The media is now fragmented with many different portals, websites, blogs, RSS feeds that can be accessed on multiple devices that connect to the Internet. Fragmentation is said to be affecting audiences. Where in the past media organisations had captive audiences, these days they have to fight for their audience.

This has been caused by the “ease and ability that people have to choose what they watch, when they watch it, how they watch it, where they watch it, what they watch it off”, according to Rawdon Christie.

The media, particularly broadcasters have responded by delivering content faster.

Fragmentation has another cost. TVNZ’s Glyn Jones believes that fragmentation of the media is one of the reasons why newsrooms have had to reduce in size. He says that there is more competition across platforms for funding or revenue and that while “part of it is a commercial reality; it’s also a technological reality.”<sup>16</sup>

## **8.7 Citizen journalism**

There’s now a general expectation that audiences or citizen journalists will fill the void when journalists are not present at the site of a breaking story. But as this research found, the relationship between the media and citizen journalists is not symbiotic as most citizen journalists do not get rewarded or paid.

Citizen participation in the media, or contribution of user generated content or ‘citizen journalism’ as it’s commonly known is a growing phenomenon in some ways. Its benefits are that audiences witnessing incidents can post eyewitness accounts on the Internet as soon as they happen or send in their account to mainstream media. Citizen journalism also dwells a lot on analysis and debate of issues and stories appearing in mainstream media. Unlike journalists in the mainstream media, citizen journalists can be anonymous contributors with no journalism training.

Debates in media research acknowledge the benefit of citizen journalism to the media as potential sources of up-to date news, but some say citizen journalism is risky. Some media organisations have found ways of mitigating these risks-through gatekeeping.

However, citizen journalism still faces many hurdles. Glyn Jones describes the relationship between the audience and journalists:

“There are still very defined boundaries between journalists and the audience, if you like. Citizen participation in journalism is still somewhere else, so you have your message boards, on Internet sites and people sending emails which are read over the air on the breakfast show, you have people sending their opinions, emailing their shots of severe weather events and that kind of stuff. I am not sure if we’ll ever get to it, the era that citizen journalism is prevalent to the extent that its difficult to work out what is journalism and what is the a member of the public writing something.”<sup>16</sup>

### **8.7.1 Limited Audience participation**

Although audiences have the means and ability to create content and publish, the reality is that their participation in the news process is still very limited particularly in mainstream media, the only media with a meaningful and significant audience reach. Audiences however do have access to individual or community blogs and a growing range of commercial and independent citizen journalism sites. But most of these have limited reach.

All editors and journalists and research interviewees in this research mentioned the limitation of citizen journalists and audiences in the media. In mainstream media, contribution of content is only beneficial in times of emergencies like disasters where imagery capturing the disaster can help the media shape up the story. Audience participation in the media by way of blogs where they publish user-generated content is seen as non-effective as the majority of blogs do not have the same audience reach that mainstream media has.

### **8.7.2 Benefits of citizen journalism are contested**

On the one hand the media is aware of the potential citizen journalism brings to the news process. On the other, the media sees citizen journalism as a limited channel or source of news and some even wonder why citizen journalists do it, given that there are very little incentives or rewards, apart from posterity.

Some believe that citizen journalism belongs to social networking sites and blogs and not in traditional media. They say niche areas like reporting of local events, which are being under reported in mainstream media could benefit from citizen journalism input.

Gavin Ellis felt that if we continue to see the corrosive reduction in newsroom numbers in our mainstream media, then it may be that citizens, “almost by default will have to fill in the gaps that are not being covered by professional journalists”<sup>6</sup>

Although that may be so, the idea of citizen journalism “neatly replacing the established” does not sit well with everyone as there is “no substitute for skills, knowledge, experience and ethics”<sup>5</sup> according to Russell Brown.

In TV news for example, the role of citizen journalists will always be limited as TV news is all about pictures. Getting “fully processed reports from amateur journalists”<sup>21</sup> was never going to happen as citizen journalism “often focuses on the kind of detail that's hard to convey on television”<sup>5</sup>

Others say citizen journalism has not brought about quite as much change as most people predicted. The change has occurred in degree, rather than a complete wholesale change as initially predicted. Newspapers like the *New Zealand Herald*, have always published stories written by people who are not trained journalists since the newspaper began in 1863, according to Jeremy Rees, who describes citizen journalism in New Zealand

“most citizen journalism in mainstream media comes down to a couple of things; down to news tips, a little bit of writing, photos that are sent in from news events and a little bit of video—generally non controversial issues and none of political speeches, political meetings, church meetings”<sup>15</sup>

### **8.7.3 Expectation that audiences will fill the void**

The media and audiences or citizen journalists now have a relationship where there is an expectation by mainstream media that audiences or citizen journalists will capture visuals, like video and photographs and email them or text messages to the media in the event of a disaster or hard news event. These expectations have increased since the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami coverage when ordinary people used their media generating tools (camera, mobile phones) and committed “acts of journalism” and published the imagery on blogs and also submitted photographs, videos, texts and personal accounts to media like the BBC, MSNBC, CNN. This disaster highlights the potential power of audiences or ‘accidental journalists’, terms that all relate to citizen journalism.

The media increasingly expects images from eye witnesses in far-flung places or dangerous places, and in these times of tight newsroom budgets, this can be a good thing. An example of this is the Iran elections of 2009 where audiences and citizen journalists fed compelling visuals of the Iranian government’s clampdown on protests against election results to websites, blogs and the microblogging tool Twitter. Mainstream media picked up images from these spaces.

Keith Slater of TV3 says the first question their reporters ask when they go down to a news scene is if anybody present took some video.

“All our journalists ask that question first up. Or if they don’t they bloody well should”, Keith Slater says he has received picture of fires, or beached whales sent in via email by audiences just by asking.

#### 8.7.4 Benefits of citizen journalism

The media benefits immensely from contributions to their hard news reporting by audiences. In an era of immediacy, any useful material that helps achieve this is useful as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)'s Tommy Makhode says. Journalist and blogger Russell Brown says first-hand reports from people on the scene expand the scope of what can be reported.

There are many numerous examples of disasters where the media has benefited from copy sent in by audiences or citizen journalists. Even where the contributions fail to make it into the final stories, some can serve as starters or leads.

A good deal of citizen journalism out there started after citizen journalists felt that stories of significance were not being covered or were basically ignored by mainstream media outlets.

Historically, the *Drudge Report* will always stand out as one of the best examples. In 1998, Matt Drudge scooped mainstream media by publishing Bill Clinton's alleged affair with a young White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, after Newsweek magazine refused to publish it after a one year long investigation.<sup>17</sup>

The story was then picked up by mainstream media from [www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com) and went on to become one of the biggest stories of all times.

Dan Rather's downfall at CBS<sup>18</sup> where bloggers questioned documents he used to criticize President George Bush's army service record also demonstrates how citizen journalists have found avenues of writing stories and not necessarily for mainstream media. This was just one instance in a growing trend which started a few years ago. There are numerous instances where citizen journalists writing on blogs have raised important issues which are then picked up by mainstream media

#### 8.7.5 The Risks of accepting copy from citizen journalists

Rawdon Christie, a Presenter /Producer at TVNZ saw first hand the potential risks of citizen journalism and the potential biases and hidden agendas that can come with it. During TVNZ's coverage of the 2008 New Zealand General Election campaign, the first video he received in response to his public appeal for contributions from citizen journalists was from an activist political supporter trying to discredit the opposition candidate.

Another relatively minor risky incident was in July 2007 when TVNZ and TV3, the two main TV News channels in New Zealand aired a photoshopped photo from an anonymous user who had superimposed a twister to the photo. While not risky, the image put the New Zealand media on guard and now they always tests the provenance of any visuals.

### 8.7.6 Gatekeeping-mitigating the risks

Gatekeeping is paramount in news coverage. Jeremy Rees of the *New Zealand Herald* tells of his shock at finding out that one simple tenet of gatekeeping was not carried out during coverage of one of the biggest stories of all times.

“Ben Bradlee who’d been editor of the Washington Post during the Watergate Scandal came here and spoke with us and was asked ‘Did you know who Deep Throat was, the main source of information on Watergate, and did you know who they were during the thing?’ and he said ‘No’. He said he never asked and when he was asked ‘would you ask now’, he said ‘absolutely!’ He can’t believe looking back that he didn’t ask who Deep Throat was.”<sup>15</sup>

Jeremy Rees says now they need to know the name of the source, that even the editor would need to know the name of the source or to be convinced that if the worst came to the worst in a law case, “we’d be able to contact that source”.

Generally, the media mitigates risks by setting conditions for accepting copy. Most conditions are set around the issue of ethics, breach of privacy and the law.

Most interviewees in this research acknowledged the risks of accepting copy from citizen journalists.

“The question is how traditional organizations label and investigate what they get from other people, whatever the information is, how they apply basic principles including being skeptical, they need to be skeptical”<sup>19</sup>

With commentators predicting that gatekeeping in the media will become a primary functions for journalists, there are many other suggestions on how to mitigate risks of copy from citizen journalists.

Other ways mainstream media could implement gatekeeping was to adopt CNN’s style of setting up their own separate citizen journalism site and then pick up stories from there, give them a “journalistic treatment” before they publish them on their own site. CNN’s iReport has no editors and every now and again some of these reports make it into the CNN site. The iReport website carries a warning which says that stories on the site are user-generated “That means the stories submitted by users are not edited, fact-checked or screened before they post. Only stories marked "On CNN" have been vetted for use in CNN news coverage” it adds.

Others say that their way of mitigating and gatekeeping was to ensure editorial control remained in their hands at all times. TV3’s Keith Slater firmly believes in this; he said while citizen journalists could contribute information, pictures, audio that should be tested and corroborated, “the editorial control remains fair and square right here... we do the shaping so the editorial control remains with us ”<sup>10</sup>. This represents a widely held view in the industry

### 8.7.7 Media and citizen journalism- relationship not symbiotic

Although some sections of the media value and incorporate citizen journalism into some of their reporting, the relationship between citizen journalists and the media is not symbiotic. Dan Gillmor has a lot to say about this. For television, Dan Gillmor says the way broadcasters could get more participants is “to solicit video and information from people and pay for it instead of assuming that it’s free”. He believes that incentives could produce better results.

“The current procedure that I’ve seen generally is to say ‘please send us things, if we use them, thank you very much. That seems to be kind of an unfair system’”<sup>19</sup>

Others are undecided and see both benefits and disadvantages of using rewards and incentives. While Jeremy Rees thinks that incentives can increase citizen journalism, he also doubts if the economics are there to be able to do it especially under economic restraints at the moment.

### 8.7.8 What’s limiting citizen journalism?

Apart from the lack of revenues to pay for user generated copy and fear of risks like breach of laws governing the news media, there are other reasons why the media is holding back from embracing citizen journalism. The structures of traditional media and systems in place are limiting, according to TVNZ’s Glyn Jones

“In real terms, it’s actually quite difficult for TV. You really have to want to contribute something to TVNZ News for it to get here. You have to capture the visual footage from your camera, you have to email it or send it. There’s not a simple ‘Oh I’ll send One News that shot’; it actually does take some thought and some process to do it”<sup>16</sup>

The most obvious participation in television by citizen journalists has been in the requests from television news operations that ask people to send in videos, according to Dan Gillmor.

“At this point, the main participation is going to be what people do themselves that may or may not make it to the attention of mainstream media. But there is plenty of interesting work going on by people who are doing their own media. I don’t necessarily think that they have to do it with traditional media”<sup>19</sup>

As a result some say citizen journalists could be better off setting up their own blogs or going off to social networking sites like YouTube where they have no stringent quality and story structure control.

Other limiting factors identified are that the phenomenon of citizen journalism varies from society to society. In theory, citizen journalism is mostly conducive in countries that

have high Internet usage. The basic principle behind citizen journalism is that it is a voice for the voiceless, or an alternative view or voice to that of established media. In countries that have state controlled media or highly politicised media, citizen journalism can bring to the core issues neglected by the media particularly media that only cover politically correct stories that do not offend authorities.

The same can be said about countries with highly commercialised media where profit motives override the traditional public service mandate of the media resulting in news coverage of sensational and dramatic stories and neglect of a lot of other stories particularly local issues. Through discussion and opinions, citizen journalism can potentially bring to the fore issues that fall under the radar.

Citizen journalism models that work in one country do not always work in other countries. The South Korean citizen journalism site *OhMyNews*' foray into Japan demonstrates this. Attempts to replicate *OhMyNews* in Japan failed and this online newspaper closed shop in 2008. This story has been covered extensively in the media. "Now you'd have to ask why, is it because the society is different, the expectations are different or what should be published perhaps, I don't know", said Jeremy Rees

### **8.7.9 The future of citizen journalists**

As new technology emerges, consumer media consumption habits are changing. As a result the media is increasingly adopting technology, particularly online technologies to cater for audiences. This is increasingly making the future of the media hard to predict. Despite that, predictions say that in the future, citizen journalism will be prominent in the media landscape.

Rawdon Christie believes that citizen journalism will find a role and thinks that it will be a very large role. He however rules out citizen journalism taking over as he believes that "news providers will always try and stay a step ahead as far as the quality goes and as far as the assurance"<sup>3</sup>

Dan Gillmor believes that audiences will contribute a large chunk of what we read in the media

"The people who have been audiences in the past will contribute to the media but it won't necessarily be contributing by working with traditional mainstream media organizations. A lot of it will be published by them. Probably more so with video"

In an uncertain media future, or one that's difficult to predict, this research found little willingness to compromise on dwindling numbers of newsroom staff by sourcing content from non-journalists

"Taking stories from people who don't even have the experience to write in an impartial manner, or in an un-opinionated manner, I think that just compromises everything we see in the media"<sup>4</sup>

Freelance journalist Lauren Mentjox was uncompromising; “I don’t know if I like the term citizen journalist in a way”, she said adding that “I don’t know if you can base news entirely on that”

## **8.8 Emerging online television platforms - IPTV and online TV**

This research found mixed views and opinions on online television formats, invariably referred to as Internet Protocol Television (IPTV). Online formats represent a shift from the one-to-many linear format that traditional television uses to the one- to- one non-linear format that enables viewers to choose what to watch and when. Critics say online formats still have many hurdles while supporters claim that it’s not a long way to go before online television formats take on traditional television. This research found that both camps have compelling arguments and this makes the job of objective analysis of the future all the more difficult.

### **8.8.1 Emerging online television formats still face many hurdles**

Critics say there’s clearly a digital divide which will limit the success of IPTV. This digital divide is two-fold; at the first level, there are those who cannot get broadband (a minimum requirement for online TV) which automatically rules out more than two thirds of the world. The second level of a digital divide occurs to those that can actually get broadband, but have many other hurdles including slow broadband speeds and data caps on their broadband, user inertia, lack of interest or desire to change and most of all, satisfaction with existing television formats.

Besides the digital divide, critics also say IPTV’s long incubation; technical issues like hardware compatibility and poor video quality experience for users have failed to give the ‘plug and play’ experience offered by traditional television.

However IPTV technology is changing rapidly and many new set top boxes which plug into a broadband connection and stream a video signal to a TV set are beginning to flood the market. But it’s still a long way away from reaching a critical mass.

### **8.8.2 IPTV success limited by lack of a business model**

Dr Paul Reynolds, Chief Executive Officer of Telecom New Zealand, a man who dabbled with the world’s first Video on Demand-a variant of online TV since the 1990s says IPTV has not taken off fast enough due to lack of a business model.

Dr Reynolds said that lack of a business model makes it difficult to guarantee a return on investment and said that everyone currently involved in IPTV is “wasting a tonne of

money”. He added that other limiting factors include the fact that many technology-led services and applications do not take account of usability and the cost of technology.

His analysis was that IPTV tended to be successful or more successful in situations where there is no entrenched cable TV company or satellite distribution company. Hence so far IPTV has been successful in a few countries like France and Hong Kong. Generally, IPTV tended to be “less successful than people thought 5 or 10 years ago” he says, adding that the hype has “been overestimated because it’s actually quite hard to do”.

Despite this uncertainty, telecommunications companies are said to be taking a greater role in content distribution,

“The common approach is in maybe in partnering with, studios, TV, traditional TV stations to distribute more on demand offerings”<sup>20</sup>

Dr Paul Reynolds believes that in ten to fifteen years time, virtually all communications companies will have somewhat more active roles in media and content distribution”

### **8.8.3 IPTV-bandwidth not a limiting factor**

The deployment of IPTV, which represents a shift in television consumption habits, is a complex one which has no clear answers as this research found. Enthusiasts of online television believe that IPTV will ultimately eclipse traditional television. Other like Paul Norris are doubtful of that and see IPTV only succeeding in niche markets.

“There are enormous problem in terms of that, simply in terms of bandwidth. If everybody is trying to receive the same programmes at once, it creates enormous difficulties and its doubt if any networks optic fibre or otherwise will be able to cope even though there has been talk of hubs and so forth”<sup>21</sup>

Dr Paul Reynolds dismisses the issue of bandwidth and says there is enough capacity on networks to deliver IPTV

“. For example in the UK, the BT Vision Service works on 2mbps lines. I think there’s a myth that you need some massive capacity for people to get. It’s a myth. 2 MB does a good job”<sup>20</sup>

### **8.8.4 Is online TV and IPTV the future of television?**

It’s hard to gauge dissatisfaction with current one-to-many linear delivery formats of television. Paul Norris says pundits, enthusiasts and commentators have suggested that we’ll move away from that model and we’ll move into the “me channel model’ where you’ll go home and select various news items recorded by your recorder or content obtained from the Internet. He believes that there are people who are very happy to come

home and slump in front of the TV and watch their news that way and believes in coexistence between different forms of obtaining the news.

Others see online TV as the future. Shayne Bowman says he does not read newspapers for the same reasons why he doesn't consume broadcast TV News.

“I won't sit there and wait. Why bother when I can go online and in two or three clicks have that delivered right to my desktop and it will look just as good if not better than what I get through my TV”<sup>1</sup>

Bowman says he doesn't understand how TV News thinks that it's a viable long term or even viable short term strategy (current formats).

“Certainly you and I won't tolerate it; our children definitely won't tolerate it! I think we don't often think enough in those terms. We tolerate what's relevant and what's not but in 5 years, it's going to be another whole demographic that's driving those choices and decisions. If you look at our lives, our lives are constructed to consume news that way. For the mobile devices that we have now, they're connected and interactive”<sup>1</sup>

The question is what percentage of the TV viewing public share this view and what percentage will act on it and switch their viewing online. This is highly contested issue with no clear answers.

## 8.9 The Future of News

Most research participants said the future of news is very hard to predict. While there is acknowledgement and recognition of the existence of citizen journalism as a new entity or player in the media, participants saw the future of the media as 'business as usual' with or without citizen journalism.

“I am not sure if we'll ever get to it, the era that citizen journalism is prevalent to the extent that its difficult to work out what is journalism and what is the a member of the public writing”<sup>15</sup>

Dan Gillmor says he's not pessimistic about the future of news.

“I think we are going to have plenty of good supply. This more diverse eco-system is better than, better than the sort of mono-culture that we've had. And the big trick, or tricks and difficulty could be in figuring out what we can trust and helping people do that. I'm pretty optimistic. I don't think we'll lack for a good supply. What I worry is we'll lack for high quality”<sup>19</sup>

### **8.9.1 Predicting the future impossible, but media will survive**

This research found that although predicting the future of the media is impossible, many tough times lie ahead due to financial constraints and shifts in media consumption. The media in the United States and to a large degree in the United Kingdom are said to be “in such a state of flux that the next 5 years are going to be quite cathartic” and that we’re going to see considerable change in the media landscape.<sup>6</sup>

The effect of online media over traditional media is a highly contested issue. Some say online media will eclipse traditional media particularly in terms of drawing audiences. Lauren Mentjox disagrees:

“Online is about breaking news, and it’s about reading headlines and it’s about having punchy headlines that draw people in. There is still a background to news and there’s still a story there that will take time to read, or to watch to get the full story. Online is instant; it’s more of keeping up to the pace with what’s going on, so I don’t think it would affect things.”<sup>22</sup>

However, most say although the media is troubled, it will survive. Some of the media players in his research foresee changes in frequency of newspapers - the replacement of a daily paper by a weekly paper for example (similar in a way to the Christian Science Monitor experiment) and the introduction of an electronic reader which Rupert Murdoch says is the future platform for the newspaper of the future.

## **9 Critical Analysis of Research**

### **9.1 What are the strengths of this study?**

The strengths of this study are that there has been a clear attempt to identify the different sets of problems going on in the different media, particularly in television and newspapers, caused in part by technological shifts, new media consumption habits, reduced revenues, and an unstable global economy, which are all mentioned in this study.

The research highlights the causes of the changes and problems in the media due to technological change. As media adopts technology, some processes are changing. Technology has seen the media migrate online to cater for changing media consumption habits.

Online migration has also seen a culture change in newsrooms with more work being done by fewer people. Advertising revenues online have not matched levels previously accrued in traditional media have

Other changes have been caused by the recent global financial crisis which has further inflicted harm on an already bleeding media due to loss of advertising revenues as

advertisers cut their advertising budgets. The emergence of citizen journalism and its role in the new media ecosystem has been highlighted in this research.

Many other complex issues have been raised in this research but these require in-depth study as standalone topics in order to gain a thorough understanding. This research is a primer on the new paradigms in news and as such does not go into detailed analysis.

## **9.2 The weakness of the study**

This is still an emerging area of academic research particularly here in New Zealand and the speed of change makes it hard to keep up.

This research relied heavily on the willingness and openness of interviewees to discuss processes in their news organisations or activities. Ample time was given to interviewees to ponder the research questions. The questions were emailed several days or weeks before the interviews were held

There is no global office that has a record of all the latest technology in the media or the dates when a new technology is released. This means that there is no central register of what business strategy each media organization is implementing or who has just purchased what technology and for what problem. Neither is there a register that keeps research findings on the effect or impact of technologies on audiences. This makes it challenging to assess the challenges in the media.

The fact that media have all responded differently to problems is a challenge. Some media have reduced newsroom staff, lowered newspaper circulation, and dropped some news and current affairs shows, particularly the long-form shows in response. Affected media organisations are using different strategies. The situation is constantly evolving as well.

## **10 How relevant is this study to general debates within the field**

The issues raised or discussed in this research are happening in the media or in other debates in communication research. The interviewees selected for this research are all active practitioners in the media or related fields who are aware of the changes in the media and are confronted with the crisis raised in media debates

The study of New Zealand is important in comparing the changes here and those happening globally. Results of the interviews show that New Zealand is not in isolation or is not immune rather from the changes that are taking place in the media. Migration of the media online, loss of advertising revenue in television, dwindling numbers of journalists in newsrooms, falling newspaper circulation and the increasing changes in television news content are all global issues being experienced by different media in

different countries. A point of difference is that citizen journalism in New Zealand is still very much pedestrian as compared to countries like the United States or to say South Korea for example. There is no clear answer as to why, but perhaps given the small population of New Zealand, there is potentially lesser events happening here that are falling under the radar of mainstream media to the extent of warranting vibrant citizen journalism.

## **11 Areas of Future Research**

### **11.1 IPTV and non-linear television**

With broadband speeds getting faster and uptake of broadband increasing, services like IPTV are going to be common and popular. This means more TV channels delivered via the Internet, to a computer but increasingly delivered to a TV screen. IPTV is usually mostly Video on Demand, which means it's unscheduled and non-linear. Just how much of an effect will this have on traditional TV, the one- to-many formats versus the one to one format? Will online pose a threat by taking viewers away from regular TV?

### **11.2 Online Newspaper subscription and new newspaper technologies**

Most content produced by media companies can be read online for free. With the media looking at recouping costs, an idea that has been floated around for a while is changing newspapers to subscription models. Now that the idea has been picked up by Rupert Murdoch, how is this going to develop?

While there's a general belief that circumventing pay-per read online newspapers will be easy as anything can be found on the web by running a 'Google' search or using any other searches, a little known fact is that there is the invisible Web, deep Web, Deepnet, or dark web and these are terms which all relate to websites that cannot be searched using search engines. These technologies could be applied to online subscription only newspaper websites<sup>23</sup> Other devices that could be potential used for newspaper subscriptions are hardware like the Kindle Wireless enabled E-Book Readers which has embarked on a global drive by making their reader available in 100 countries<sup>24</sup>

The US show business title Entertainment Weekly magazine featured the first-ever video advertisement in a traditional paper in their September 18 2009 issue

The chip technology used to store the video - described as similar to that used in singing greeting cards - is activated when the page is turned. Each chip can hold up to 40 minutes of video. Could this save newspapers? Could this be the future on news, with videos clips of news? What is the impact of this technology?<sup>25</sup>

### **11.3 The Other 3 Billion Global Wireless Broadband Project (o3b)**

Will giving everyone access to the internet have some effects on the media in Africa and in Third World countries?

O3b Networks, a Channel Islands-based telco backed by Google, HSBC and U.S. cable-TV operator Liberty Global unveiled plans to offer cheap, high-speed Internet access via satellite to developing regions like Africa by the end of 2010<sup>26</sup> and eventually to make to make the Internet accessible and affordable to everyone on the planet. <sup>27</sup>

Long before the project is launched, the American technology research and development leaders at Silicon Valley honoured O3b founder and CEO Greg Wyler by naming him Number 25 out of 50 of Silicon Valley silicon.com agenda setters of 2008<sup>28</sup>

## 12 Conclusion

One major point arising from this research is the difficulty in predicting the future of the media, particularly the role of citizen journalism. The benefits of citizen journalism are not in dispute, what is uncertain is whether citizen journalism should be factored in as an essential pillar of the media or something that's should only be used in times of crisis. Interviewees had very different opinions of citizen journalists; Dan Gillmor sees citizen journalism playing a large role in news but not necessarily with mainstream news, while Glyn Jones at TVNZ saw citizen journalism as a limited activity and sees it happening more in social networking and not in mainstream media.

Although the media has always been driven by technology and has always evolved, creating new audiences and new media formats among many changes and effects, the pace of change in the Internet era is faster than most media can plan for. In reference to this pace, Paul Norris says the timeline is now "thoroughly compressed"

It's therefore an oxymoron to write a conclusion on the news media like broadcast news in the Internet era given that the media is in a state of transition and changing all the time. This has not stopped researchers however from drawing up conclusions, which this study raised.

In *'Internet and the mass media'*, Kung et al. conclude that in terms of its current status, the Internet so far represents little more than a new medium for "delivering what appears to be very familiar old media content"<sup>29</sup>

These conclusions could very well be correct but as long as the media evolves, these can only be developments or trends. The Internet is less than two decades old and as such is still in its infancy compared with other communication formats. The true potential is still unknown, so rather than conclude that the Internet will not eclipse traditional media, a more cautious approach is necessary. Looking at the trends gives a better understanding of the Internet.

A study by Bob Papper, commissioned by Radio-Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF) says Interactivity is set to play a more important role for the future of TV news

The research, "The Future of News, A Study by The Radio Television News Directors Foundation," by Ball State University professor of telecommunications Bob Papper, found strong interest among viewers - particularly younger viewers - in new ways of interacting with TV news.

According to Papper, 40 percent of respondents like the idea of assembling their own newscasts, not just on the Internet, but on television as well.

With IPTV technology, providing this level of interactivity on television is possible, but it's difficult and time-consuming, and broadcasters have to come to terms with that and figure out a way to deal with it, Papper said<sup>30</sup>

The future of the Internet and its effects on the media are widely contested. As discussed earlier, 'conclusions' on the potential or future of the Internet limits research and debate as exemplified by Hans Durrer. Writing on the future of journalism, Hans Durrer posits:

“The Internet that many hail as the revolution will in no time at all be relegated to where it belongs — next to the TV, the video, the record player and the radio. It will become an electronic gadget among others. We will get rid of the quantity thinking, the more-is-better consumerism, because we will all experience what all major religions have always been preaching us: that less is more.”<sup>31</sup>

Other researchers try to offer some balanced assessment on the future of news in the Internet era, but do it in a way that tends to overrate the profession of journalism

“Regardless of how delivery times change over times, skilled information gatherers and storytellers will never go out of style. Democracy is not possible without journalists who can obtain, analyze and give the public an accurate accounting of their government at work. And our sense of humanity is elevated when we are made-through reporting and deft writing, editing, camera work and creative packaging-to understand the experiences of people who are not like ourselves. Sure, anyone can post information online in the form of a blog. But journalists help sift through the volumes of information out there, give it a sense of order and make judgments about whether the information is reliable and how important it is to the people in their communities.” Amanda Janes, formerly of the Washington Post, the Arizona Republic and The Record of Bergen County, N.J.<sup>32</sup>

This study has shown that in the New Zealand context, access to enabling technology by consumers has not translated to or given rise to the phenomenon of citizen journalism or led to a rise of user-generated content or news video footage from non-professionals in television news broadcasts or mainstream media. In social media perhaps, but then that was outside the focus of this study.

There were several observations from this study, regarding the limited participation of citizen journalists in the media. The lack of remuneration for citizen journalists has been

cited as one of the possible reasons for the limited participation and quantity of content submitted to mainstream media both in New Zealand and internationally.

Another observation was the lack of a dedicated citizen journalism platform, a ‘walled off platform’ if you like, similar to iReport or even Indymedia for example which offers easy of use and enables contributors to publish themselves with the minimum of fuss. Such a platform could be the real “enabling” platforms that potential citizen journalists in New Zealand could submit their material easily to.

The study found that while newsrooms have invited audiences to “participate” or be “part of the news”, contributions coming from audiences for online newspaper websites and broadcast media have not changed much over the years from news-tips and photos, primarily of weather events, essentially materials that go towards stories as has always been the case. In the New Zealand media, citizen journalists do not write or piece together a video story for television for example.

This research found that there was resistance or reluctance by the media to use copy from citizen journalists. The main reasons cited were technical quality, mistrust, no need to, and the economics to pay for content.

Like the rest of the world, the New Zealand media is undergoing massive transformation mostly due to the online migration of the media and changing news consumption habits and fragmentation of the news. Internationally and in New Zealand, the internet has become the defacto news platform and has become a source of free news to the detriment of circulation figures for newspapers like the New Zealand Herald for example.

Globally, traditional media has embraced online technology and have established a very strong online presence. In New Zealand, TVNZ and TV3 are heavily marketing their websites as sources of breaking news 24/7. Even on their main television news, most stories don’t end on the television screen; they end on their websites-“for more on this story, visit our website”.

Further research, particularly in the areas of mainstream media’s online platforms and the effect they will have on their traditional platform will be beneficial to the news industry and scholars. In New Zealand, both TVNZ and TV3 believe that online is just a promotional platform where viewers check out what’s on offer on TV and then go back to the TV screen. However the online platform is increasingly offering full news stories and video clips of important news stories. The platform lets viewers choose the order of stories and allows them to view in their own time. These two main points make online more attractive

## 13 References

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis: *We Media: How Media Are Shaping the future of news and information*. The Media Centre At The American Press Institute, Thinking Paper
- <sup>2</sup> Crisford Chogugudza , Doctoral Candidate and Social Work Manager, London, UK, Freelance journalist for 20 years, interview with Vincent Murwira, 20 June 2009
- <sup>3</sup> Rawdon Christie- Television Producer and Presenter, TVNZ (Television New Zealand), former Broadcast Journalist/Presenter, BBC, London , interview with Vincent Murwira, 12 June 2009
- <sup>4</sup> Meagan Ellwood : Communications Studies Graduate, AUT University, New Zealand, interview with Vincent Murwira, July 2009
- <sup>5</sup> Russell Brown, Journalist and writer of Hard News a blog on PublicAddress.net, interview with Vincent Murwira via email, 12 August 2009
- <sup>6</sup> Gavin Ellis, Former Editor In Chief of the New Zealand Herald, Doctoral Candidate and Lecturer at the University of Auckland, In interview with Vincent Murwira June 14 2009
- <sup>7</sup> [http://www.nztc.co.nz/news/story.php?story=story\\_130109.inc](http://www.nztc.co.nz/news/story.php?story=story_130109.inc)
- <sup>8</sup> Shayne Bowman, co-writer, *We Media, A whitepaper on Citizen Journalism and how audiences are shaping the future of news and information*. Commissioned by The Media Center at The American Press Institute, In interview with Vincent Murwira 25 May 2009
- <sup>9</sup> [http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online\\_mobile/record-high-tv-use-despite-onlinemobile-video-gains/#more-4528](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/record-high-tv-use-despite-onlinemobile-video-gains/#more-4528)
- <sup>10</sup> Keith Slater, Auckland Bureau Chief, TV3 New Zealand In interview with Vincent Murwira 4 June 2009
- <sup>11</sup> [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10528866](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10528866)
- <sup>12</sup> Randall Rothenberg, President and CEO, Interactive Advertising Bureau IAB, [http://www.pwc.com/en\\_GX/gx/global-entertainment-media-outlook/assets/iab\\_pwc2008.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/global-entertainment-media-outlook/assets/iab_pwc2008.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> [http://www.pwc.com/en\\_GX/gx/global-entertainment-media-outlook/assets/iab\\_pwc2008.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/global-entertainment-media-outlook/assets/iab_pwc2008.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> [http://www.iab.org.nz/images/uploads/Insight-Q2-2009%20Fact%20Sheet\\_Final.pdf](http://www.iab.org.nz/images/uploads/Insight-Q2-2009%20Fact%20Sheet_Final.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Jeremy Rees, Publisher, <http://nzherald.co.nz> in interview with Vincent Murwira 13 Feb 2009

- 
- <sup>16</sup> Glyn Jones, Editor News Plus, TVNZ (Television New Zealand), In interview with Vincent Murwira 5 June 2009
- <sup>17</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special\\_report/1998/clinton\\_scandal/50031.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/clinton_scandal/50031.stm)
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/01/10/national/main665727.shtml>
- <sup>19</sup> Dan Gillmor, Journalist and author, In interview with Vincent Murwira May 30, 2009
- <sup>20</sup> Dr Paul Reynolds, CEO Telecom New Zealand, In interview with Vincent Murwira 23 February 2009
- <sup>21</sup> Paul Norris, Head, New Zealand Broadcasting School, Christchurch, New Zealand, former Head of News and Current Affairs, TVNZ (Television New Zealand) In interview with Vincent Murwira 6 Feb 2009
- <sup>22</sup> Lauren Mentjox , interview with Vincent Murwira, June 24 2009
- <sup>23</sup> [http://library.rider.edu/scholarly/rlackie/Invisible/Inv\\_Web.html](http://library.rider.edu/scholarly/rlackie/Invisible/Inv_Web.html)
- <sup>24</sup> [http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9139063/Amazon\\_takes\\_Kindle\\_global\\_lowers\\_price?source=rss\\_news](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9139063/Amazon_takes_Kindle_global_lowers_price?source=rss_news)
- <sup>25</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8211209.stm>
- <sup>26</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1841175,00.html>
- <sup>27</sup> <http://www.o3bnetworks.com/index.html>
- <sup>28</sup> <http://www.o3bnetworks.com/>
- <sup>29</sup> Kung, L., Picard, R. G., Towse, R., & (eds). (2008). *The Internet and the mass media*. Los Angeles ; London SAGE.
- <sup>30</sup> *Interactivity to play important role for the future of TV news*, Broadcast Engineering (Online Exclusive) Oct 18, 2006, A study by Bob Papper, commissioned by Radio-Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF)  
[http://broadcastengineering.com/news/archive/interactivity\\_play\\_role\\_future\\_TV/](http://broadcastengineering.com/news/archive/interactivity_play_role_future_TV/)  
[http://www.rtdna.org/pages/media\\_items/future-of-news-survey-2006493.php](http://www.rtdna.org/pages/media_items/future-of-news-survey-2006493.php)
- <sup>31</sup> Hans Durrer, The future of journalism, 2004  
 Soundscapes <http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/EDITORIAL/oped0701.shtml>

---

<sup>32</sup> Amanda Janes, formerly of the Washington Post, the Arizona Republic and The Record of Bergen County, N.J, cited in Lieb, T. (2009). *All the news: writing and reporting for convergent media*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.