CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

CAN BIG MEDIA DO ‘BIG SOCIETY’?
A critical case study of commercial, convergent hyperlocal news

Neil Thurman, Jean-Christophe Pascal, and Paul Bradshaw

Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff University, 8-9 September 2011
Find your local site

We have sites throughout the UK. Find your nearest site on the map below.
What's the Latest Buzz in Dorchester? Tell Us Here...

Tired of the traffic? Cranky at the Council or just loving the locality? Whatever your view, tell Dorchester here!

Award winning pub throws Charity Poultry Auction event.

It is a busy time for Mark and Emily at The Gaggle of Geese Pub in Buckland Newton near Dorchester.

Story updated by Dorch_People, at 13:05 on 27/08/11

Bank Holiday Music Event at Dorchester's Maumbury Rings

Dorchester's Maumbury Rings, our very own Roman Amphitheatre is home the annual Music Event this bank holiday Monday.

Story published by Dorch_People, at 13:02 on 26/08/11.
‘the Big Society’

- “Personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility” promoted over “state control”
- Devolution of power “from politicians to people, from the central to the local”

Source: Conservative Party Election Manifesto 2010
‘Local Media Action Plan’

- Commercially-funded (TV broadcast) model
- “Existing media sector” would play a prominent role
- Encouraged by the removal of “the final local cross-media ownership rules”

Source: DCMS (2011)
‘Big four’ stand to benefit

- Newsquest, Johnston Press, Trinity Mirror and...
- Northcliffe Media
- whose ‘Local People’ network is our case study
- A commercial local news network that leverages economies of scale
- Compared against independent local news websites that have developed without Government support
## Results: user penetration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Local People’ Site</th>
<th>Jan ’10</th>
<th>June ’11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dalston</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Registered users as a proportion of local internet population
Results: ‘for local people, by local people’?

- Vast majority of ‘stories’ written by ‘community publishers’, e.g.:
  - 75% in Chippenham
  - 73% in Dalston

- Comments on stories & discussion posts low:
  - 70-90% news items not generated a single comment
  - 54-81% discussion posts not replied to
Results: The Issues that Matter

- ‘Soft news’ highly represented (‘Entertainment, Sport etc’):

Analysis of News stories on ‘Dorchester People’, Dec ‘09
Results: Politically engaged?

- ‘Politics’ stories / discussions featured infrequently:

Analysis of News stories on ‘Dorchester People’, Dec ‘09
Results: The Issues that Matter

- Practical information popular:

Bideford

- Local politics: 14%
- Local economics: 10%
- Amenities: 18%
- Housing: 1%
- Security/Safety: 15%
- Social services: 15%
- Sports: 1%
- Entertainment: 21%
- Lifestyle: 4%

Analysis of News stories on ‘Bideford People’, Dec ‘09
Results: A “local version of Facebook”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Local People’ Site</th>
<th>Registered users with no ‘Linked Local’ (‘Friend’)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dalston</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of user interaction at four ‘Local People’ sites, Jan 2010
Discussion

- Dominance of print paradigm
- Community management not a priority
Summer Drink-Drive Campaign: Wilts Police Test Thousands

By Lois_Avery | Wednesday, July 20, 2011, 17:11

In Wiltshire and Swindon 3,740 drivers were breath tested as part of the campaign, which ran throughout England and Wales last month. Of those, 94 (2.51 per cent) tested positive.

Seven hundred and twenty drivers under 25 years of age were tested in June with 13 (1.8 per cent) testing positive, significantly lower than the 3.2 per cent last year.

Acting on their suspicions, officers also tested three people believed to be under the influence of drugs whilst driving. But all three tests proved negative.

Inspector Nick Elton, Operations Manager for the Wiltshire Police Road Policing Unit, said: "This has been the most productive summer drink and drug drive campaign to date with the number of breath tests carried out locally having increased since last year, and nearly five fold since 2009.

"The 94 drink drivers who were breathalysed and arrested is still 94 too many and demonstrates that some drivers are still not heeding our advice.

He also thanked the 3,646 motorists who have been stopped and were tested negatively for their co-operation."
“They say to me: ‘if I write it can I send it to you and then you tidy it up?’”

- Community Publisher
This website is here to help people find and run social media surgeries to support their local community and voluntary organisations. If you just want to run one on a voluntary basis get cracking - if you want to run several and find out just how well you're doing then please contact us.

Find your nearest Social Media Surgery

enter your location here... Search

The more detail you enter the more accurate the results. So if you put 'Sheffield' we will measure from the middle of Sheffield. If you tell us your street name or postcode as well then we can usually be fairly accurate. If you get weird results then add your country to the search. i.e. Sheffield, UK.

There's a Social Media Surgery in...

Digbeth

Coming Up

Wed 31 August at 5:30pm
Central Birmingham Social Media Surgery

Mon 5 September at 5:30pm
Shrewsbury Social Media Surgery

Tue 6 September at 5:00pm
Dudley CVS Social Media Surgery

Wed 7 September at 5:00pm
Canton Social Media Surgery

Tue 13 September at 5:00pm
Nottingham Social Media Surgery

Tue 13 September at 6:00pm
Darlington Social Media Surgery

Wed 14 September at 6:00pm
Leeds Social Media Surgery

Sign up now
As soon as you sign up you can register

View all events
Conclusions

- Ability of “existing media sector” to revive local journalism?
Conclusions

- Ability of ‘existing media sector’ to revive local journalism?
- Commercial model unproven
Signing off from Guardian Leeds: The final post

* A big ‘thank you’ as Guardian Leeds comes to an end
* What next?

The old and the new in Leeds. Time to regenerate I’m afraid Photograph: John Baron guardian.co.uk
Tony Walley

Personal Information

First Name
Tony

Home Page
http://www.pitsnpots.co.uk

Twitter
@pitsnpots - @Tony_WAlley

Politics
Conclusions

- Traditional commercial publishers and independent operators have complementary skills
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- Decisions on future of local media need to be based on solid research
THANK YOU

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