THE FUTURE OF BREAKING NEWS ONLINE? A study of live blogs through surveys of their consumption, and of readers’ attitudes and participation

Dr Neil Thurman and Nic Newman

Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff University, 12-13 Sept. 2013
Sportsday - transfer reaction LIVE

Reaction to a record-breaking transfer deadline day, including high-profile moves for Mesut Ozil and Marouane Fellaini.
Birmingham's £189m library opens

The £189m Library of Birmingham, which holds one million books, is officially opened by Malala Yousafzai, the schoolgirl shot by the Taliban. ‘A city without books is a graveyard’

Refurbished Rep theatre reopens
Malala Yousafzai to open new library

Crews tackle Jewellery Quarter blaze
Fire crews tackle a blaze at an abandoned three-storey building in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter.

Refurbished Rep theatre reopens
Birmingham’s Rep theatre reopens after a two-and-a-half year redevelopment.

Tribute for ‘generous’ crash victim
‘One in four’ share single cells

Sikh ‘code of silence’ over grooming
Videolink evidence ‘to save £309k’
• Higher reader engagement
• Higher levels of trust
• Reader preference for public-affairs topics
• Higher willingness to participate
• More original sources used
1. Levels of reader **engagement**
2. How **popular** with news consumers across 9 countries
3. Particular types (e.g. breaking news, on-going political stories) more **popular**?
4. Readers’ **attitudes** to live blogs’ usability, balance, accuracy, and convenience
5. More **inclusive** of facts and opinions from citizens?
Time spent on 4 news formats, coverage of Royal Wedding, Guardian.co.uk, April 2011

Minimum aggregated mins. on page over 24 hours:

- Live Blog: 600,000
- Picture Gallery 1: 200,000
- Article: 100,000
- Picture Gallery 2: 50,000
Time spent on 4 news formats, coverage of protest march, Guardian.co.uk, March 2011
Engagement per visitor / visit duration (mins)

Total unique visitor numbers=49 million
Online survey. Excluded respondents who’d not accessed news in previous month!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1024</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>2170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil*</td>
<td>1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field work January 2013
Popularity of live blogs by country

Q11: Thinking of the way you looked at news online in the last week, which of the following ways of consuming news did you use?

Base: All markets UK (n=2078) US (n=2028) Spain (n=979) Japan (n=978) Italy (n=965) Germany (n=1062) France (n=973) Denmark (n=1007) Urban Brazil (n=985)

January 2013
Minute-by-minute guide

2 mins Roberto Baggio is at the hub of good passing from Inter down the left. The move ends harmlessly.

2 mins Ronaldo's first significant touch puts Baggio through but he's well offside.

4 mins Ronny Johnsen's short backpass forces Peter Schmeichel out of his area to hoof clear from the onrushing Baggio.

5 mins Ryan Giggs swings the ball into Dwight Yorke, who loiters on the penalty spot. But the ball is slightly too high for the despairing forward's dive.

6 mins Ronaldo's first run down the inside left channel is snuffed out.

11 mins Diego Simeone feeds Ivan Zamorano who has the edge on Jaap Stam. But Stam recovers to clear for a corner.

13 mins Zamorano again finds some space: Gary Neville concedes a corner.

- Non-sporting events like the Oscars or X Factor: 13% (US) vs 12% (UK)
- Unfolding political stories like an election or budget: 75% (UK) vs 58% (US)
- Breaking news stories like natural disasters: 80% (UK) vs 74% (US)
- Sports events like the Olympic Games: 33% (US) vs 54% (UK)

- **Non-sporting events like the Oscars or X Factor**
  - US: 13%
  - UK: 12%

- **Unfolding political stories like an election or budget**
  - US: 58%
  - UK: 75%

- **Breaking news stories like natural disasters**
  - US: 74%
  - UK: 80%

- **Sports events like the Olympic Games**
  - US: 33%
  - UK: 54%
Usability, balance, accuracy, convenience: UK readers’ attitudes

- LIVE news pages are more balanced than article pages because they give a range of opinions and routinely link out to sources and supporting documents.
- LIVE news pages can be difficult to understand because the story is broken into short updates.
- LIVE news pages are a convenient way of following news while I am at work.
- I worry about the accuracy of the information on LIVE news pages.
We'll try to link to our sources on stories as much as possible, whether it's a police press release or a local government report.”

BBC on their ‘Local Live’ initiative, April ‘13.
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Strikes over performance-related pay 'disappointing'

"It is disappointing that the NUT and NASUWT are striking over the Government's measures to allow heads to pay good teachers more.

In a recent poll, 61% of respondents supported linking teachers' pay to performance and 70% either opposed the strikes or believed that teachers should not be allowed to strike at all.

- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION SPOKESPERSON

UK · Unions · Teachers
The article isn’t dead … there are some stories that don’t necessarily stream in themselves”

— ITV News Web Editor, Jason Mills (personal communication, July 2013).
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“For the first time continuous TV news has come in second. … Now, essentially, Twitter is first”


“We will need to make sure we are seeking the best user generated content … *and providing our own verification and context*”

Steve Herrmann, Editor BBC News Website, personal communication, July 20, 2013.
Likelihood of users to participate in news formats at Guardian.co.uk

Source: Thurman and Walters (2012), n=189
% user-generated content

Boston Marathon Bombings (n=3)
2012-13 Egypt protests (n=2)
Birth of Prince George (n=3)
Wimbledon 2013 (n=3)
Guardian.co.uk (Thurman & Walters, 2012)
Virginia Tech (Wigley and Fontenot, 2009)
Tucson, Arizona shootings (Wigley and Fontenot, 2011)

Guardian live blog
Newspapers & TV news websites

ScribbleLIVE
Eurozone crisis live: Italy faces 'billions of euros of losses' on derivative contracts

Italy risks losing around €8bn over debt deals made as it tried to improve its finances before joining the euro, the Financial Times reports.

Details
Early reaction
German confidence hits six-year high
Commodities pioneer Marc Rich dies

Graeme Wearden
guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 25 June 2013 10:44 BST
Jump to comments (120)

Open for comments. Sign in or create your Guardian account to join the discussion.

119 comments. Showing 50 conversations, threads collapsed, sorted oldest first

Antie hypocrite
26 June 2013 9:23am
Let me guess..... Goldman Sachs was advising

kizbot > Antie hypocrite
26 June 2013 8:30am
@Antie hypocrite 26 June 2013 9:23am. Get cliffFix for Firefox. Lol... boat me to it.

Gelion > Antie hypocrite
26 June 2013 8:31am
It's only €8 billion.

The UK lost about £750 / €900 billion to the bankers since 2008 in QE, unemployment and loss of taxes, loss of SME loans, the devaluation of sterling, directly propping up the banker balance sheets (at least that money might come back).

Scaff1 > Gelion
26 June 2013 8:38am
Iran Elections: Iranians Vote for the Islamic Republic’s Next President

Friday’s presidential election in Iran is unlikely to bring significant change to the Islamic republic, whose supreme leader has ensured hard-line candidates dominate the field. But the sole moderate could upset the race. Reuters World brings you live coverage of the elections, including in-depth reporting, analysis, photography, interactive graphics, video and more for this event.

READER COMMENT: I've been at odds with whether to VOTE or not, and I did eventually at 10:45pm. There are still people queued in order to vote. Honestly I couldn't believe it. I feel relieved right now. I think it was worth another shot.

by MiAd Frqn edited by Margarita Noriega (Reuters) June 14 at 7:52 PM
Non-official sources

Official sources

Non technology-mediated source interaction

Technology-mediated source interaction

ScribbleLIVE

The Guardian
• 61% did not share Live Blogs by email, word of mouth or by using social media.
• Respondents less likely to share a Live Blog than other types of article.

(Thurman & Walters, 2012)
“There is still a need for structured reporting … its relationship with the live stream is still developing. We are working to understand how they can best complement one another … and the implications of trying to do both”

Steve Herrmann, Editor BBC News website, personal communication, July 2013.
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