

News in the mobile era

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Gabriela Lemionet reports on the inaugural Online News Association conference: [ONA London: Mobile on 6th March 2015](#)

We often hear there's a crisis in journalism. Some complain: "Nobody cares anymore." A couple of weeks ago, I read on my Facebook feed that a friend was accusing people for being more interested in the colours of a dress rather than following up on the terrorist threats in the Middle East.

However, through conferences like [Online News Association \(ONA\): Mobile 2015](#), where journalists from around the world meet to discuss and share their experience on mobile news, we get to see the other side of the story.

"We are in the mobile era", said Farhad Manjoo, State of the Art columnist for The News York Times. News has to be fast and according to Stacy-Marie Ishmael, BuzzFeed news editor, it's important that they introduce the reader to a delightful experience.

Journalists are aware of the challenges that come with the mobile era. They are facing the turnover by curating the narrative with one main goal: keep catching our attention. According to the Reuters Institute digital news report, 37% of the consumers access news from smartphone each week in the United Kingdom; 20% use mobile as a primary access point to news. Joanna Webster, Global Editorial Director from Reuters TV explained that the structure in her team had to be reorganised in order to respond to these changes.

We consume news through our phones and if we further engage with the provider, we get their app. Ishmael expounded that if journalists are serious about their mobile audience, they have to think about it at the time of commissioning: e.g., things like the page load speed for image should be considered when the reporter starts the story rather than at the end. Push alerts, the length of a headline, the format that has to fit all the main different screens (iPhones and Androids), the duration of audio-visual content, the sound: all these details become crucial when it comes to mobile news.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties mobiles are presenting to the newsroom, further opportunities are coming along. BuzzFeed, the paramount platform we access to see pictures of 25 Raccoons You Won't Believe Actually Exist or take a quiz to know Which Famous Cereal Mascot Are You? Is on the verge to launch an app for BuzzFeed News –a news wire for the social web. Ishmael explained that the current BuzzFeed app is geared for the entertainment audience, so this will be a turnover. "This news app is a focused experience for the people who want news –and as the editor pointed out– the only cats in the BuzzFeed News app will be newsworthy cats".

Finally, this might be a technological determinist approach, but it's hard to believe that all this attention to delivering news is a response to users who are rather just using their phones to amuse their selves to death (Postman, 1984). We might be putting forward social themes on the agenda but the news plan is not falling behind: we should keep expecting great scoops guarded by the next digital release.

This article is by LSE MSc student Gabriela Lemionet

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