

A rolling news gathers no mass

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It is a decade since I was part of the vast launch team for *BBC News 24* and thankfully it has got a lot better since then. We spent six months idealistically planning for an all-singing all-dancing news channel that would embrace every inch of the globe and every subject under the sun. The result was editorial chaos. We soon learnt that what news channels do best is deliver simple, straight, live news as it happens – again and again, around the clock. Now *News 24* is as good as *Sky* or *CNN*. But [questions](#) remain about the viability of rolling news in face of tiny audiences and competition from online news.

One problem is that people like me are more likely to watch *News 24* online, or only click on to [Sky](#) if we are in a newsroom, or peek at [Aljazeera](#) only if there is a major Middle East story. It's very useful to have that option but it does not build a mass audience, even when you take the numbers across the day.

With RSS feeds and the increasing use of video by online newspaper and other websites, you can get tailored news or the particular story that you want without having to sit through a section of the 15 minute news wheel of TV News Channels. And if you want a proper run through the day's news packaged in to a coherent programme then it doesn't take much effort to tune in to the many 'appointment to view' offerings from ITV, BBC, Channel 4, or More4 – especially as [Channel 4 News](#) is now available twice via [Channel 4+1](#).

None of this matters if the News Channel niche is big enough to sustain the service they provide. But to compete they are having to integrate themselves more with their online offerings. That's why it is clever of Sky News, for example, to turn Political Editor Adam Boulton's [blog](#) in to such an entertaining and informative offering that complements his on-screen offerings.

24 hour News Channels are now a bit like airlines used to be in the 1970s. Every little nation on earth feels they need one to justify national pride. But if they are to keep providing what is a very useful service they will need the support of every platform and product they can lay their hands on – and that will include the citizen journalist and viewer.

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