

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Video journalism in the time of coronavirus: Digital newsgathering practices in Filipino newsrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This research used the hierarchy of influences approach's routine level of analysis to deconstruct how digital newsgathering techniques shaped the journalistic processes of video journalists during the coronavirus pandemic. The project presented narratives from four television journalists gathered using in-depth interviews about their experiences in producing video reports during the pandemic. Five themes emerged in the project: 1) Social media as source of Stories, 2) "First-person journalism," 3) A lack of human interaction and the limits of technology, 4) The challenges of information access, and 5) A new normal, new routines. These themes revealed how video journalists are forced to embrace new routines and practices brought by the pandemic, the critical role of social media and video messaging platforms in their video production workflow, the lack of human interaction with sources, and the limitation of information from government sources during the pandemic.

Keywords: video journalism, news production, media routines, hierarchy of influences, digital newsgathering

Introduction

It has been more than a year since the COVID-19 pandemic has shocked the world and yet it continues to alter people's lives, with its effects likely to be with us for years to come. The pandemic has foregrounded the value of newsrooms that could report and visualize complex stories about the health crisis in an accessible way (Newman, 2021). Newsrooms across the country have prioritized reporting about the novel coronavirus because it is important to keep the public informed during these uncertain times.

However, because of the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, news organizations in the Philippines have adopted safety protocols like the work from home set up for its video journalists and public affairs producers. COVID-19, along with the ensuing quarantines, poses challenges to existing journalistic practices that typically require fieldwork, and encourages journalists in the Philippines to reimagine news production (Bernada & Ilagan, 2020).

Video producers who gather "raw materials" on the field for their story have been forced to adopt remote working practices, using video messaging platforms like Zoom, Facebook Messenger, Skype, and Google Hangouts. Prior to the pandemic, journalists collected information, video, and audio elements that helped them tell their story from the field, but now they rely on User Generated Content (UGC) and social media for story generation and materials. Several studies illustrate that social media are not just tools connecting journalists to the audience, but rather they are a network of actors affecting news production on all levels of influence (Lewis, 2012).

Covering the news in the time of lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic draws attention to changes on journalistic routines, and this project argues that those routines also affect news content (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). Ladrido (2017) posits that this journalistic content contributes to discursive constructions of nation, influences what viewers think, feel, say, and do regarding the nation that is presented to them. And news production activities may be seen as media rituals that preserve and reproduce journalists' symbolic power, as they are repetitive actions that journalists do, becoming the basis of the authority of the news report or broadcast (Ladrido, 2017).

Thus, this research empirically deconstructs and analyzes the production process of video journalists in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic using the Hierarchy of Influences approach focusing on routines as level of analysis. This research project explored the routines and professional roles of video journalists that shape media content during the coronavirus pandemic and the immediate environment within which individual media workers carry out their jobs. This paper seeks to answer these research questions:

What are the digital newsgathering techniques video journalists used while working from home due to quarantine and how did it shape the journalistic processes of video journalists during the coronavirus pandemic?

Literature Review

This section discusses the influence of routine, practices, and procedures embedded in media work in producing journalistic contents. More so, it also highlights the impact of the coronavirus pandemic to journalists, their role during the pandemic, and how technology has altered and enhanced the practices of journalists. This section is divided into three themes: media routines, journalism under lockdown, and digital newsgathering.

Media routines

Bantz et al. (1981) argued that the world of television news contains organizational and environmental pressures that have fostered a trend toward the routinization of work. Television newsroom is similar to a “news factory” that divides tasks into chunks at different stages (Bantz et al., 1981). Thus, Bantz et al. (1981) proposed that the “news factory” can be best illustrated by these five steps: detection, task assignment, selection, production, and dissemination of news stories.

An examination of routines and news processes fosters a better understanding of television journalism. Reese and Shoemaker (2016) explained routines as those patterned, routinized, repeated practices, and forms that media workers use to do their jobs. These routines are the ways of working that constitute journalism practice, including those “unstated rules and ritualized enactments that are not always made explicit.” These routines not only affect the media and content that reached the audience (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016), they also indicate discipline, that news workers know the “rules” of their respective newsrooms and their routines and practices reflect those rules (Ladrado, 2017).

Sociologists Molotch and Lester (1974 as cited in Ladrado, 2017) argue that there are no free-standing newsworthy events “out there,” but rather occurrences promoted to the status of “events” by either sources or the media. That is why it is important to look at media routines because journalism discourse is vulnerable and dependent on media rituals that news workers use to organize the newsrooms and “re-present” the nation (Ladrado, 2017).

Researchers have directly observed journalists to better understand their routines and practices. The “gatekeeper” study by David Manning White (1950, as cited in Reese and Shoemaker, 1996) is one of the earliest and most frequently cited efforts to describe how journalists select among the day’s events those that will become news. It did, however, focus on

individual judgment rather than routinized decision-making, beginning a long tradition of examining the criteria used by media “gatekeepers” or decision makers in selecting the story (Reese and Shoemaker, 1996).

Reese and Shoemaker (1996) discussed that routines are designed to help news organization cope with physical constraints. “The very term gatekeeper suggests the idea of adapting to physical limits” (Reese and Shoemaker, 1996). The gatekeeper must select from many news event down to a few because of the number of stories and the limited space. The routine of news organizations help ensure steady supply of news. For example, beat reporters are assigned at institutions “where reliable news can be gathered such as the police and fire departments and the courts.”

A public affairs or news documentary usually takes an investigative or problem-solving approach, and includes exposition with narration and, on occasion, a host. It has established itself “as more seasoned thoughtful version of news”, akin to a feature magazine for news headlines (Aufderheide, 2021). Those who produced documentaries for news often regard themselves as investigative journalists. Television news reports, on the other hand, are video packages in evening news bulletins to 24-hour news channels. Moreover, television news is still a widely used and important source of news (Nielsen, 2020).

Journalism under lockdown

The velocity at which the stories are needed and demanded during the coronavirus pandemic is extraordinary. The interest in the story and the consequence of how it is presented is also massive. According to UNESCO (2020), the soaring demand for verified information about the coronavirus pandemic and the ever-changing nature of COVID-19 data have left journalists with challenges in providing accurate information to the public.

The pandemic also comes at a time when the media are ill-prepared to handle the crisis because of the loss of advertising revenue (Natividad, 2020) and the mass circulation of falsehood that has spread as fast as the virus itself. Journalists serve as a key source of credible and lifesaving information and help people by detecting and debunking the lies of the ‘disinfodemic’ (UNESCO, 2020). Because of this, journalists are facing a huge amount of pressure and strain and are often potentially exposed to the infection through travel, interviews, and the locations where they work (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020).

While the media must respond to urgent and developing news, it is important to ensure that reporters remain safe in doing so. News organizations in Metro Manila implemented remote work set up for their personnel covering the pandemic after the government announced the

enhanced community quarantine in Luzon and other parts of the Philippines in March 2020. Journalists are forced to work from home to avoid the health risks the coronavirus poses not only to them but also to their families. Only those with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF) accreditation ID were exempted from home quarantine.

Journalism values are founded on human interaction, the way most information is obtained. Journalists are supposed to be out in the field gathering information. However, the lockdown made it difficult for reporters to ask questions because they are not in the press conference physically. Some of them found it hard to adjust in the first few weeks of the lockdown, being solely reliant on gadgets and technologies. The pandemic has changed the way journalists covering the public health crisis report the news and posed a new set of challenges for them (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Digital newsgathering

Technology has had a significant impact on the way journalists work (Pavlik, 2000). Social media has emerged as a news-breaking tool with the advent of user-generated content (Silverman, 2013). People are using social media and their own smartphones to shoot what they see and upload it to Facebook, YouTube or Twitter (Silverman, 2013). The vast majority of User Generated Content was sourced via the social web, mostly Twitter or YouTube, as well as some from Facebook (Wardle et al., 2014).

Numerous studies revealed that over the last decade the media have developed engagement with active audience (Bolin, 2012 as cited in Palomo, et al, 2019) and social networks (Singer et al. 2011 as cited in Palomo, et al, 2019). Jarvis (2006) uses “networked journalism” to refer to the collaborative relationships between journalists and citizens in creating new information. In networked journalism, the public can be involved in news production by contributing facts, raw materials like photos and videos, asking questions, and giving suggestions. Networked journalism emphasizes understanding and addressing community concerns from a citizen perspective. Further, contributors may offer alternative perspectives from ordinary citizens, which may not have been covered by mainstream news media; thus “citizen journalism simultaneously competes with and complements professional journalism” (Nah et al., 2017).

Aside from user-generated contents, many journalists and news media have created Facebook groups to encourage users to share stories they wouldn't otherwise hear, and to build new audiences for their journalistic experience (Newman, 2020). Digital tools available in social networking sites can “alter the traditional relationship between journalism and its

audience” (Loosen and Schmidt 2012). The public is now producing content, a role limited to journalists before. Numerous studies also reflect how over the last decade the media have developed a great dependence on active audiences (Bolin, 2012 as cited in Palomo, et al, 2019) and social networks (Singer et al., 2011).

The rise of mobile devices as an ubiquitous journalistic tool to produce and publish multimedia news stories (Westlund, 2013) has led to the making of the “mobile journalist.” The term “mobile journalist” encompasses video journalist, multimedia journalist, backpack journalist, and a journalist who does everything single-handedly (Blankenship, 2016). Westlund (2013) posits that contemporary research should study how news organizations make sense of mobile media, how the use of mobile media alters the way journalists perform their tasks and further becomes institutionalized in the newsroom.

Another notable change in the newsgathering process is the use of online video messaging applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, and Messenger (Virtudes, 2020). Video conferencing platforms for interviews and roundtable discussions, as well as virtual press briefing, where in some case questions from the press are asked in advance and sometimes ignored by those holding the briefings (Virtudes, 2020).

Throughout the years, technology has altered and enhanced the contents, routines, and practices of working journalists. Digital technologies have also expanded the range of opportunities afforded to journalists (Bivens 2008; Westlund 2013 as mentioned in Perrault & Stanfield, 2018). In the Philippines, technology has also altered the methods journalists use to cover stories like disasters (Zafra, 2016), whereas backpack journalists use light digital equipment to report and humanize stories on disasters.

But introducing a new method of newsgathering isn't easy because “news media are an institution where ritualized journalistic practices govern the production of news content” (Peer & Ksiazek, 2011). The production of media such as television programs is not only seen as a process in which a product is made (Schudson as cited in Walvaart, et al., 2018), but also as a specific context within which producers work and share certain norms and values (Caldwell 2008; Havens and Lotz, 2012; Jensen, 1984 as cited in Walvaart, et al., 2018). It is important to look at practices in news production because the variability of news contents in Philippine newsrooms is due to variations in media rituals employed by news workers in government and commercial news organizations (Ladrado, 2017).

Previously, news programs used film in their productions. However, film takes time to shoot, process, and edit; and the cost of film constituted a substantial expense for the organization. Then, portable video cameras and

videotape machines emerged, offering news departments faster production exemplified by instant playback capabilities and lower expense because of reusability of tapes. Subsequently, another technological development in television news had brought live, on-the spot reporting into reality: the microwave transmission.

Several studies have taken points that there are different factors to look at in the study of the newsroom's adaptation to new practices and technologies. Aviles & Leon (2004) noted that shared belongingness to a journalistic values can improve the use of technology and make newsgathering and processing more efficient because there is a general acceptance that the new skill and practices are necessary. It is also important to study not just the journalists, but also other actors including managers, technologies, audience, and outside entities when researching news in news production (Lewis and Westlund, 2015; Nielsen, 2012 as cited in Kalogeropoulos & Nielsen, 2018).

Overall, the coronavirus pandemic has transformed not just the media landscape but also how journalists do their work. It is important to analyze the coronavirus media content by looking not just at the journalists who create the content but at other variables that influence the news production process, including routines and practices. There is much research on the impact of digital communication technologies on newsrooms but little scholarly examinations on how the shift to digital newsgathering during this pandemic has affected the media practices that influence media content and how the viewers appreciate the nation presented to them.

Methodology

In order to address the research question, in-depth interviews with four television journalists were conducted. The sample size was decided despite the variability of the suggested minimum number of participants in a qualitative study (Dworkin, 2012). Morse (2000) said that in selecting sample size for a qualitative study numerous factors are said to be important including the "quality of data" and "the amount of useful information obtained from each participant". Fewer participants will be required to reach saturation if data are on target, and are rich and experiential. Referring to this, the participants selected for this study are senior video journalists with more than a decade experience in researching, producing, directing, and reporting for television.

Apart from interviews, artifacts of the digital video production process in the time of the pandemic such as organization guidelines and protocol of news organizations in the time of COVID-19 were also collected and analyzed.

Building on the hierarchy of influences framework, the project aimed to unravel the practices of journalists while taking the broader context into account. However, this project focused on the individual characteristics and news routines of Filipino broadcast journalists. Other variables/ levels such as the interplay of their roles with others in the news organization, social institutions, and social systems were anecdotal. Reese and Shoemaker's model is one that is grounded in media sociology, which promotes an ethnographic approach. Thus, artifacts related to the different levels of media production were utilized as well. Data collection and analysis followed these steps:

- The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participants via Zoom using open-ended questions.
- The researcher transcribed interviews and examined the texts for keywords, phrases and themes.
- The text was then read and reread and culled for like phrases and themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013).
- From these clusters of meaning, the researcher identified general themes that describe digital newsgathering practices of Filipino video journalists during the pandemic.
- The resulting themes are presented and discussed within the framework of past literature and through the lens of hierarchy of influences.

Results and Discussion

Five themes emerged in the project: 1) Social media as source of Stories, 2) "First-person journalism," 3) A lack of human interaction and the limits of technology, 4) The challenges of information access, and 5) A new normal, new routines. These themes revealed how video journalists are forced to embrace new routines and practices brought by the pandemic, the critical role of social media and video messaging platforms in their video production workflow, the lack of human interaction with sources, and the limitation of information from government sources during the pandemic.

Social Media as a Source of Stories

During the first few months of the quarantine, the participants took advantage of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and even Twitter to continue gathering and presenting news. They used different social media features such as groups, marketplace, search engines, hashtags, and keywords to follow trends and spot stories online.

When the government placed Metro Manila under community quarantine on March 16, 2020, GMA 7 suspended the production of its public affairs programs. According to a statement the network released, it did this to ensure the safety and well-being of its talents, production team, employees, their families, and the general public.

Several weeks after suspending production, the staff were asked to organize their teams and produce online public affairs series. Bryan Brazil was one of the executive producers tasked to produce digital content for GMA 7. He handled “Frontliners: A Brigada Special Online Series,” an online series that features the experiences of healthcare workers in battling the pandemic. His team was tasked to produce a digital documentary while on quarantine and working from home. They relied on stories that were already viral on social media and available online.

The participants reported difficulty in looking for stories while working from home. They also relied on stories from their newsgathering counterparts in the news departments who were allowed to continue working on the field. Further, they maximized viral videos for stories and raw material.

Tristan Nodallo of CNN Philippines admits that story generation was difficult when he started newsgathering from home because his team was used to interviewing and gathering information and video materials on the field. He highlighted vetting and verification as crucial aspects of his work as a journalist and how important it was for him to see and check what is happening on the ground. But this was not possible in the first few weeks of the pandemic because his news organization asked his team to produce the news while working from home. For his daily news stories, he gathered content from virtual press conferences of different government agencies he covers on Zoom and other video messaging platforms. Reliance on government agencies for access to Zoom meetings can lead members of the press to adapt the source’s own bureaucratic structure and rhythms (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

Nodallo used social media in looking for case studies that would give soul to his stories. In one of his story assignments on unemployment due to the pandemic, a post on a Facebook group led him to a compelling case study. He found the story while looking for Facebook posts of people selling their bicycles.

Nodallo sent a private message to the person who wrote the post and asked for his background. In this situation, social media served as his gateway in finding stories for news reports. It has to be noted that Nodallo has been used to doing digital newsgathering even before the pandemic. He handles stories about overseas Filipino workers and uses social media platforms like Facebook to find their stories and even to coordinate with interviewees.

Gladylene Alvero of GMA 7 used this same story-gathering approach of searching on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for interesting stories for their program. The “search bar” on Facebook and YouTube became a useful tool for her. Her team also looked for content creators and vloggers who upload their video stories online.

Before the pandemic, video producers like Alvero conducted ocular visits and face-to-face interviews and held brainstorming sessions to produce documentaries and public affairs segments. The “raw materials” for the story were gathered out in the field. Reporters and producers collected information, interview, video, and audio elements that helped them tell their story. Those elements are “assembled” into a cohesive video news story, and then presented to an audience, usually as part of a larger newscast or a segment to a documentary program.

According to GMA 7 segment producer Jonh Paul Seño, his team did not stop looking for compelling, unique, and interesting stories even though the whole video production operations are done from home. They also follow the same pitching process as before the coronavirus pandemic. But the participants reported that they are less strict in approving pitches from their researchers and in accepting video materials because of the limitations in video production due to the pandemic.

“First-person Journalism”

The participants noted that the public is now producing content, a role limited to journalists prior to the lockdown. The availability of digital tools and the familiarity of the audience in creating their content helped the participants in this research in producing their reports while working from home.

From March 2020 until now, news organizations maintained a skeletal workforce and work-from-home scheme for their news production teams. The participants relied on social media and their subjects for video materials needed in their reports because they could not go on the field to shoot and interview. The participants used video materials taken by the subjects themselves as video inserts in their reports. They had to rely on the videos of their subjects taken using their cellphone cameras.

Bryan Brazil of GMA 7 produced a story about a Filipino nurse in the UK who became critically ill because of the coronavirus. Most of the materials he used in the documentary were taken by the nurse himself and the healthcare workers taking care of him while he was inside the hospital. The video materials from the case study served as the B-roll/video support for the whole documentary. The materials provided them an inside look at the hospital which they were not able to film because of travel restrictions.

Video and photo contributed by the subject was made possible by the rise of mobile devices as an powerful journalistic tool to produce and publish content (Westlund, 2013).

Content from subjects themselves may offer alternative perspectives that otherwise may not have been covered by mainstream news media. According to the participant, content from case studies and subjects of the reports make the story more intimate and personal. That is why one factor in approving a subject for a report is that the subject should know how to use a cellphone camera and have available visual materials. This emerged as another filter for stories to be selected as news. News organizations are slowly doing away with the traditional newsroom, and most news production processes happen online (Lewis, 2012).

Brazil even tapped the services of wedding videographers and content creators to shoot for his team because of the limited movement of his production team due to the quarantine. The program researchers coordinated with wedding videographers or content creators living close to their subjects to take footage for the team.

The participants revealed that the case studies are not mere subjects of the video reports; they have become participants in the production process. "Citizen journalists simultaneously compete with and complement professional journalists" (Nah et. al, 2017). COVID-19 encourages journalists in the Philippines to reimagine news production (Bernada & Ilagan, 2020). The subject's familiarity with video messaging applications like Zoom, Hangouts, and Facebook Messenger is now a requirement in producing their stories.

Furthermore, a potential TV documentary subject is now required to know how to use a cellphone camera. During video production, they ask the subject to shoot B-rolls and video inserts for them. Production and newsroom studies say subject participation is hardly a central concept to producers, certainly not in a manner that increases democratic possibilities and shifts in power balance.

On December 15, 2020, the news and public affairs arm of GMA Network issued guidelines on the use of third-party materials, stopping its usual practice of asking free photos and videos for its award-winning programs following a public backlash on social media stemming from complaints about its practices. To be fair, however, other media organizations also use sourced content for free to some level as well, especially when crowdsourcing (Elemia, 2020). Financial incentives will be given to subjects who contribute their footage, audio, and photos materials for GMA Network's news and public affairs programs. However, network researchers need to ask permission from subjects to air personal photos and home videos of featured individuals

sharing their story for free. Because of this policy, journalists interviewed in this study had to be very careful in sourcing materials for their video reports.

Lack of Human Interaction and the Limitation of Technology

Journalism values is founded on human interaction because that is how journalists get information. The participants noted that they felt disconnected from subjects when they conduct interviews using video messaging platforms. They also stated their thirst for face-to-face contact with their subjects and sources.

They also mentioned the difficulty in asking follow-up questions in Zoom press conferences or virtual press conferences. Producers and reporters are used to coming in close contact with subjects and sources, gathering raw materials in the field such as audio and video, and weaving them into video reports.

The participants described their video production process in the time of the pandemic as very limiting. Part of their process as producers is to apply their perspective in the story, to put texture and style on the story using their senses or how they see the situation. But because they are limited to interviews via video messaging applications and cannot meet the subjects personally, their reports tend to be straightforward.

For Nodallo, there is also a feeling of detachment when he uses the digital newsgathering technique. He finds it easier to appreciate the emotions of a subject who faces the interviewer in person. The reporter's skill of knowing and identifying a compelling and well-spoken subject helped him in producing reports during the pandemic. A source who is a good storyteller is his priority before determining whether the story has available B-rolls, photos, and graphics.

On the contrary, the participants revealed that the new setup made it easier to get inputs from experts because scheduling interviews is more convenient for resource persons. Subject matter experts help reporters and producers in explaining the stories of their news reports or segments. The new setup is flexible for both the journalists and the experts.

Challenges of Information Access

The video journalists also mentioned the limited and low quality information from government sources in the interview. They mentioned that statements from official sources are generic and cannot be used in the report. One of the participants resorted to messaging the source via Twitter and the reply will depend on whether or not the source recognized his tweet.

“Access to information has generally been limited”, according to Ilagan (2020), because government offices have not been in full operation while

virtual press conferences do not allow for a more open discussion between journalists and officials. The Philippines is among many governments in the world that had to suspend the processing of freedom-of-information (FOI) requests because of the pandemic (McIntosh, 2020 as cited in Bernada & Ilagan, 2020).

Some official sources give regular press conference for reporters. One of the participants reported that he gets statements from officials via phone calls. In the Viber or WhatsApp group of official sources, the statements tend to be generic. Other Viber groups like those of the City of Manila have more detailed press releases.

New Normal, New Routines

On one hand, digital newsgathering has complicated the work of video journalists because they need to learn new skills and techniques. Television news is “technically uniform,” “visually sophisticated,” “easy to understand,” and “fast-paced,” and requires careful coordination of complex technologies (e.g., videotape editing, microwave, and satellite transmissions) necessitating specialized roles, scheduling, and other routinized procedures to bring it off smoothly (Reese and Shoemaker, 1996).

Network documentaries were highly crafted institutional products. They were professionally produced, using lighting, editing, and scripting techniques drawn from Hollywood filmmaking (Aufderheide, 2007). However, the television journalists interviewed for this research project had to learn how to use video messaging platforms and maximizing user-generated contents in producing their video reports. The video materials obtained online have lower resolution than those obtained before the pandemic. The participants also had to learn a different workflow to save the raw files from the video messaging application. They created a Facebook group where they share tips on how to effectively use video messaging applications such as Zoom.

Introducing a new method of gathering news and information isn't easy because the news media are institutions where ritualized journalistic practices govern the production of news content (Peer, 2011). Learning the ropes of video production using a digital workflow means additional work for video journalists interviewed in this research project. According to Alvero, they spent more time pre-interviewing their subjects before the actual recording of the interview because they need to make sure that the subjects are comfortable with them and with the video messaging platform that they will use. Subjects do not open to them when they are not used to the tools and platforms. For the participants, it's easier to do face-to-face interviews, because online interviews via video messaging platforms require

them to be concise and to enunciate the words clearly so that the interviewee can understand.

For Brazil, it is challenging to include producer's perspective to stories when raw materials are gathered online. It is difficult to make a sense of a story when the interviewer cannot be present or visit the location where the story happened. For example, in his stories about frontline healthcare workers, Brazil reported that he did not know how it feels to be inside the emergency room. In the field, producers decide on what perspective, angle, and visual treatment will be used to tell the story.

Television programs used plenty of B-roll and symbolic material, and as the tempo of TV picked up, they began to use interview footage as story elements, clipping out remarks and inserting them into the storyline. The sound was king; both narration and soundtrack led the viewer through the analysis. But this was no longer possible during the onset of the pandemic. The interview with the participants also highlighted the challenge in maintaining the visual sophistication of television reports. Brazil revealed that they had to teach the subjects how to properly frame the camera during the interview. The participants also had to accept the fact that audio quality in video messaging platforms had to be sacrificed because it is of poorer quality compared to audio recording from professional cameras and microphones used in television production.

However, an interesting finding that surfaced in the interview was how the participants embraced and adapted to the limitations of user-generated content and video messaging applications in video news production. All of them have noted that they did not adhere to the production standards that they follow before the pandemic when fieldwork was possible. The participants recognized the limitations and adjusted their video production routines.

For Jonh Paul Seño, GMA News and Public Affairs Senior Segment Producer, the technology and digital infrastructure are not yet ready for a total shift to digital newsgathering because of the slow internet connection in the Philippines, which has caused problems in audio and video during their interviews. Sometimes the lack of internet connection in an interview becomes part of the story.

Another problem is the premium subscription of video messaging platforms. At the beginning of the pandemic, the network was still processing the Zoom premium subscriptions of the produces. The producers had to use the free version of the application and interviews got cut short after the 40th minute.

On one hand, digital media has enabled journalists to help Filipinos make better sense of the pandemic – from reporting infections and deaths

regularly to covering press conferences organized by agencies at the frontlines of COVID-19. Many previously resistant journalists found they liked the new flexibility, while news organizations found it was possible to create newspapers, websites, and even radio and TV news programs, from bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchens (Newman, 2021). The digital-first policy of CNN Philippines has prepared reporter Tristan Nodallo in the total shift to digital newsgathering. The training he received on multi-platform reporting made him familiar with the ropes of digital journalism that include story generation using digital platforms.

The process of reviewing and approving video content has become faster because most of the time, the most airable video material is the one that is available. Journalists have become reliant with videos contributed by subjects or with videos available online. With this, newsroom leaders like executive producers and managers must deal with this limitation when approving stories or segments to air. One of the participants questioned whether the visual sophistication in video segments required before the pandemic remains important after the adjustment to the pandemic.

This experience has accelerated the shift to digital newsgathering for most of the participants. It required them to do additional work and to learn new skills and technology while facing a health crisis.

One year after the lockdown, the video journalists interviewed in this project still follow the work-from-home set up as the default mode. However, they have started to do fieldwork following strict health protocols implemented by their news organizations. Which have also limited the number of reporters and production staff allowed in their newsrooms. Production staff were encouraged to film outdoor to minimize the possibility of virus transmission. Production staff were also required to undergo swab test before doing on location shoot. But according to the journalists, the subjects that they will interview and the people that they will interact with on location were not tested. According to Seño, the safety guidelines need improvement.

Aside from the issue of safety, video journalists also worried about their employment. GMA Network had to limit the production of public affairs programs due to the COVID-19 restrictions resulting to suspension of contracts of their contractual production staff. Contractual television journalists had no project during the first few months of the lockdown. Contractual video editors had to buy their own editing units to get video editing assignments because they were not allowed to go inside GMA Network Center. According to Brazil, they had to invest on video production equipment for them to survive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has drew attention to how the lockdown and digital media use have challenged the routines and the video production workflow of the video journalists. Journalists were forced to embrace changes brought by the pandemic such as the use of video messaging applications as platforms for interviews, the limitation of information, and relying on user-generated content and contributors.

On the routines level, as noted by previous studies, utilizing social media is now an integral part of almost all journalists' daily work life. This also means that new common news routines have altered not just the workflow of the journalists but also the quality and variability of news contents presented to the public. This has a wider impact on how the public perceive the events regarding the nation as presented and interpreted by video journalists.

Journalism was once synonymous to fieldwork and being on the ground, reporting on events and stories they themselves witnessed. However, the video journalists in this study practiced a more sedentary journalism relying on content and contributions from citizens for their video production. Jarlbrink (2015) emphasized that the transmission of texts and images produced by non-journalists always runs the risk of reproducing the voices of the elites. The study also featured a more complex media dynamics when journalists rely on its subject and the public for the raw materials for their video reports.

The increased participation of citizen in news production, as highlighted in this study, may influence the maintenance of journalistic authority. Ladrado (2017) asserted that the emerging media landscape enabled by the internet presents new challenges to journalism authority. Trust in the news has declined in many parts of the world that's why journalism authority must be maintained as media's symbolic power is in flux, fluid and ever changing (Ladrado, 2017). This prodded us to investigate where journalists get the credibility considering that the audience are already creating contents for them.

The limitation of information from government sources also surfaced in the interviews. Due to this, journalist tried other ways of getting information from government sources like tagging the source in a tweet in the hopes of getting a reply. These new routines can be viewed as an adaptation by media to the constraints imposed by a more powerful source, in this case the government. Constraints imposed by the government hinders media's performance of its role in providing critical information needed by the public to help build a civic culture and a tradition of discussion and debate. It also

hinders media's role as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between governors and the governed.

Moreover, as society starts to open from the yearlong lockdown, the researcher recommends further studies on how physical and digital newsgathering will coexist in new ways. It is also interesting to look at the other layers of the hierarchy of influences such as the organizational level, social institutions, and the systems level, and see how they help shape media contents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research can also use a larger number of interviews and do a focus group discussion with television journalists to better understand how they produce content during the pandemic or conduct a cross analysis of the video production practices of different news organizations.

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