The mobile platform: Challenging traditional models of presenting and distributing local news in England

by

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Abstract

This is a multi-method study (content analysis further illuminated by a single case study of large newspaper publisher Johnston Press) which explores how the mobile platform is challenging traditional models of presenting and distributing news at England's local newspapers. It creates a foundation for exploration by examining the print, desktop and mobile platforms of four daily and five weekly titles, within the wider context of financial pressures and community demands.

This thesis examines the lack of mobile specific content and the reasons behind it – arguing that what appears to be an industry failure to thoroughly adopt a new platform was actually a deliberate decision forced by challenging circumstances including an increasing number of competitive platforms, difficult economics and less staff. The findings provide insights into how the demands of the mobile platform have and will continue to change news - altering what local newspapers offer and how they operate. It argues that ultimately mobile is likely to end local titles' traditional role of informing audiences through a mix of news based on geographical boundaries.

This study's contribution to knowledge includes recognition that all local journalism in England is now community journalism. It concludes that the increasingly important 'community glue' of local journalism is not location-based because mobile extends it beyond geography. Also, community and platform demands are increasing at a time when local newspapers are least able to respond because they are fundamentally hampered by lack of resource. The research's access to the top decision makers at one of the country's largest newspaper organisations allowed the thesis to demonstrate how mobile is highlighting the complexity of balancing needs within the industry.

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Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Research aims

More people are reading news on their mobile phones than ever before. The emergence of another media platform brings challenges, both good and bad, for newspapers and the communities they serve. This is a study of how England's local newspapers are adapting to the mobile platform, and its wider influence. It examines how mobile is challenging existing models of daily and weekly newspapers, as well as the community role of journalists in England's local newspapers.

The study aims to do the following:

a) To analyse how local news is created, presented and distributed on the mobile platform. The thesis specifically focuses on the

- o design differences on the mobile, desktop and print platforms
- o content differences across the three platforms
- o content specifically created for, or adapted to suit, mobile

b) To examine how mobile is challenging the traditional models of England's weekly and daily newspapers. To this end the thesis examines

- o differences across the three platforms – mobile, desktop and print - of weekly and daily titles
- o similarities in the convergence of content across the mobile and desktop platforms

- impact of external influences on traditional working patterns and the community roles of journalists

c) To use as a case study the large regional newspaper group Johnston Press to examine the impact of the mobile platform on local journalism. This research investigates the following:

- The advance of the mobile platform within Johnston Press and decisions influenced by the industry's challenging circumstances
- The impact on content and newsrooms of group-level decisions and economics
- The likely effect of mobile growth and attitudes towards it

1.2 Original contribution of this study

There have been considerable investigations into the effects of 'new media' on the print industry and one constant criticism has been the lack of research in relation to England's regional newspapers despite them facing an uncertain future (Nielsen, 2015:2). This is reflective of a general research trend focusing on national papers based in London at the expense of local issues reflected nationwide (Bromley, 2005:159). Furthermore, the little research on local news that does exist has had a tendency to focus on daily newspapers, ignoring the majority of titles which print weekly (Lacy et al., 2001, 2012). These matters are exacerbated further by the dearth of research into news accessed by mobile. The originality of this work lies in its focus on local newspapers and the content used for an increasingly technology savvy audience on a popular and dynamic communications platform during a period of immense technological and societal change. At a critical point in the history of both

local newspapers and mobile phones, with one declining almost as fast as the other expands, such research is vital. Ling and Donner conclude: "After the boom is complete and mobile use becomes the worldwide norm, it will become harder once again to discern these interactions between mobile communication and society. If we squander this chance to study mobile use, it will not come again (2009:4)." This study had the timely opportunity to record the local news industry on a platform that was quickly becoming increasingly important.

This research had unique access to the most senior managers at Johnston Press. They shared information which had not previously been made public. In order to better understand the mobile platform within the context of local news in England, many of the issues which have historically faced print journalism must be examined against the backdrop of emerging research around mobiles and mobility. This was initially addressed in the literature review (Chapters Two and Three) and the findings were used to guide the interviews (Chapters Six and Seven). Traditional media debates such those on as the digital divide, newspapers' diminishing gatekeeper role, the effect of personalisation and the shrinking media agenda were re-examined within the context of Johnston Press's adoption of the mobile platform. This study also analysed issues around mobile growth and community journalism within the context of the emergence of new communities no longer based around location.

Having established the aims and contribution of this thesis, the rest of this chapter gives more detail about the background of the research and its relevance. It starts with the definitions that will be used within this thesis. All elements of the local newspaper industry, and therefore research into it, have been affected by extremely challenging financial times. Section 1.3 describes the economic and historical context behind the mobile platform's birth. It also provides an indication of why traditional models could be influenced by the fast-paced change of recent decades, including mobile's role within that. The next section provides a cursory overview of mobile news, briefly explaining how two communications 'revolutions'

– mobile and the internet – collided to create a new platform for news (1.4). The structure of this thesis is then outlined (1.5).

Definition of local newspaper within the context of this research

A local newspaper is defined by The Newspaper Society[1] as being in written form on newsprint, published at regular intervals, containing news of a general nature and "available regionally rather than nationally i.e. not available throughout all or most of the British Isles" (Newspaper Society, 2014). It must immediately be acknowledged that this limited definition makes no reference to other platforms for which local newspapers now produce content. Content produced locally, even if intended primarily for a local audience, is no longer only available in one geographical area once it is published on the internet. However, for the purpose of this research and clarity, the term 'local newspapers' will continue to refer to news traditionally distributed in print and within a specifically defined geographic location. It is important to recognise that these traditional constraints have been altered by the internet. However, the vast majority of articles contained within these papers and websites continue to focus on the neighbourhoods which they are specifically targeting for readership. This is also where many are still produced. While arguments which seek to differentiate between local and regional newspapers have some merit, this research will refer to local news as that produced by newspapers which are only available to buy in print within a specific geographical area, largely because of the content found in these papers. Accordingly and somewhat ironically, these associated websites are still universally classed as 'local' regardless of their worldwide reach. Again this is largely due to content and the historical dominance of the print products with which they share a masthead.

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[1] The Newspaper Society was renamed News Media Association in November 2014 following a merger with the Newspaper Publishers' Association.

All local newspapers are composed of different sections - predominantly news, features and sport. For further clarification of the definitions used within this research, this project focuses solely on the articles and elements produced for the news sections. The decision was taken to focus on news because it remains the most prominent section across all platforms i.e. it occupies the front page in print and the top positions on homepages[2]. It is also most relevant to the arguments examined during this research. It was unfeasible to include other sections due to time constraints.

Definition of mobile(s) within the context of this research

Mobile technology has developed at record speed and it is apparent that what we describe today as a mobile phone may look and perform profoundly different functions in the future. It remains important, however, to identify exactly what will be defined as a mobile phone within this study. At the most fundamental level, telephones which do not need to be physically connected to a landline, are easily transportable and rely for reception on radio frequency signal, are known in England and the vast majority of the world as mobile phones. A minority of countries, notably the United States of America, refer to them as cell phones because the signals they rely upon pass between zones or cells. However, throughout this research they will be referred to as mobiles, most importantly because the portability is more relevant to this investigation than how the signals work, but also because the project is based in England. Mobile news has become well established during the research period. The number of users has increased dramatically and, as examined in Chapter Two, an increasing number of readers now routinely access news on their mobile. However, it is still in its infancy for most local newspapers.

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[2] The focus on news of this thesis is not a reflection on the importance of sport on mobile. It is acknowledged during the case study that sport often counts for up to half of all traffic on daily titles and is increasingly viewed through mobile (see Section 7.6.2).

Mobile refers, unless specified, to all types of mobile phones regardless of model. Initially designed for telephone conversations, the mobiles at the heart of this research also had internet access in order to access mobile news. The rapid increase in the number of people accessing the internet via tablets, e readers and other devices which can be used on the move, i.e. they are mobile, must also be acknowledged. Such technology is similar in many ways to mobile phones and the differences between them have diminished drastically since this research started. It will continue to do so over the coming years as smaller devices capable of performing more functions are designed. However, since the primary focus of this research is mobile methods of communicating news and not a detailed examination of individual devices through which news is received, a guiding principle will remain that the mobile devices have telecommunications as their primary purpose. Mobiles are at present the only electronic device capable of constant communication and are carried by the vast majority of the English adult population. It is in this regard that they continue to differ from other types of electronic devices, even those which are also mobile. Therefore mobiles remain the devices through which users have constant access, are crucially constantly accessible and are most likely to consume news while on the move.

That basic definition does little to encapsulate the sophisticated applications of which these devices are capable. While the majority may not prove relevant to this study it is important that they are acknowledged at this stage. Without internet capabilities mobile news would be impossible, and the wide range of functions is in part responsible for making mobiles so popular. The phones themselves have transformed over the last three decades from large, unwieldy and expensive objects derided by the vast majority of Western society (itself a remarkable transformation without many comparable recoveries), to something most people carry at all times. Despite the name mobile phone, these devices are capable of far more than telecommunications. Mobiles are used for phone calls but also text messaging, internet

access, and as clocks, alarms, calculators, diaries, cameras, entertainment, sat navs, books, speed calculators, fitness support, fashion accessories (Campbell, 2000) and even as status symbols (Glotz et al., 2005:119). It is also worth noting that the threat posed by mobiles is not unique to newspapers. For example, Nokia claimed in April 2010 that cameraphone technology would make regular cameras obsolete (Reuters, 2010) and in 2015 that was already partially true (Arthur, 2015). There are, indeed, so many applications and possible uses that a single, global, unified explanation of mobile's impact becomes "impossible and perhaps undesirable" (Ling and Donner, 2009:135). Some researchers, notably Gordon and de Souza e Silva (2011:179), have gone as far as labelling mobiles "as much cultural and social objects as they are technological objects" because of their seismic influence. However, although this research will look at such effects, the definition will remain technology based for clarity. While this research examines how the platform is changing the production, presentation and distribution of news, it is the content of the news selected for the platform and not the specifics of the communicating device which lies at its heart.

In 2011 there were five major mobile network operators in England: 3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone, as well as numerous service providers (UK Mobile Coverage, 2011). There were 33.1million 3G[3] mobile subscriptions in the UK at the end of 2010. This picture changed dramatically during the course of this research. In 2015 there remained the same five operators, although EE, the parent company of Orange and T-Mobile, had combined both networks (UK Mobile Coverage, 2015). Services, signal reception and mobile internet speed continued to improve at breakneck speed with the introduction of 4G[4]. This was illustrated by the fact that the proportion of people who used their mobile handset to access the internet

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[3] 3G is the third generation wireless network, allowing a mobile device to access the internet wirelessly.

[4] 4G is the fourth generation wireless network, requiring a mobile device to exchange data at faster speeds than 3G and expected to supersede it.

rose from 57 per cent in 2014, to 61 per cent a year later. There were 89.9 million mobile subscriptions in the UK by the end of 2014 and 66 per cent of adults owned a smartphone – including 23.6 million 4G subscriptions, compared to just 2.7 million at the end of 2013 (Ofcom, 2014b). The definition of mobiles is able to remain constant for the purpose of this research despite the extraordinarily rapid growth of the market and regardless of provider and network. Neither of these elements has a significant impact on mobile news, other than the speed and cost of the mobile data or Wi-Fi through which it is sourced.

Definition of mobile news within the context of this research

It is necessary to define precisely what is meant by mobile news in this thesis. Put simply mobile news is news articles which are on the internet and viewed via a mobile. As well as traditional websites, there are sites specifically designed to suit mobile handsets. These are usually known as mobile sites or m-sites and are often found by adding /mobile to the website's regular uniform resource locator (url). In other cases the 'm' replaces 'www' on mobile sites (Trinity Mirror Plc, 2013). Most mobile handsets now automatically direct users to mobile sites, with varying degrees of success. There are also software programmes which have been developed for mobiles and offer a specific programme or function. These are known as applications, widely referred to as 'apps', and must be downloaded to a specific smartphone. Often there is a charge for usage or a one-off fee to download. For the purpose of this research, unless specified, 'mobile news' will refer to all editorial information accessed via a mobile of any model or make, from a newspaper website or via an app.

1.3 Research context

Local newspapers face the challenge of adopting the mobile platform at a time when many are fighting for survival[5]. Circulations continue to fall so drastically that some believe the print industry is at crisis point (Sweney, 2012). However, the online reach of these same newspapers keeps increasing so delivering via multiple platforms, including mobile phones, is viewed as making 'economic sense' (Ward, 2002; WAN, 2009)[6]. The newspaper business model had long been regarded as needing to adapt to survive (Hinton, 2009). This research examined the mobile's relationship with other platforms within the midst of a new media revolution, or at least a dramatic stage in evolution (Winston, 1998).

In 2009 the World Association of Newspapers described local newspapers as being "at great risk" and indicated that as many as half of the industry's 20,000 jobs could be lost in the near future (WAN, 2009:12). The decline in circulation had been so dramatic that in 2007 the Project for Excellence in Journalism stated that newspaper readership and credibility had fallen to record lows (Tryhorn, 2010; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007). That situation has not improved. At least 300 local newspapers closed between 2005 and 2015 – leaving areas of England without regular cover from journalists or a local newspaper (Turvill, 2015). Newspapers have been forced to adapt to survive but, as technology altered how local journalists worked, many experiments were also launched which had a dual aim of cutting costs and improving news coverage (Greenslade, 2014a). It was amid this turbulence that mobile news emerged as the latest test of the industry's ability to adapt and survive.

Since I have spent my career to date within local newspapers they are clearly of interest to me. Notwithstanding personal significance, the local press remains the UK's most popular print medium, read by 40 million people and accessed online by 97 million a week (News Media Association, 2015). The well documented battle for survival in the newspaper industry

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[5] This point was made even clearer by the closure of the Oldham Chronicle in August 2017.
[6] For more in-depth discussion around this point and the assumptions behind this thesis, see Page 80.

is arguably most dramatic for local titles. Local newspapers have played a key part of life in England's towns, cities and villages for centuries. Local journalists are in an enviably strong position to continue providing that news, particularly "where the population is stable and local attachments most powerful" (Engel, 2009:56). In 2011 there were 1,200 regional and local newspapers with 1,000 associated websites in the UK (Newspaper Society, 2012). That meant 71 per cent of adults read their local newspaper (Hansard, 2012). By 2015 the number of newspapers had shrunk to 1,100 yet there were 1,700 websites (News Media Association, 2015). The combined circulation of the UK's local and regional newspapers dropped by almost 30 per cent between 2007 and 2012 (Greenslade, 2013).

A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers predicted that globally newspaper revenue would start to climb again in 2015. However, Western European countries including England were expected to see continued decline for a further five years with publishers "unable to fully monetise their readers' migration to online and mobile news" (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2014). This could prove crucial for local newspapers as they develop business models suited to the mobile platform. Declining circulations, changes to traditional channels of communication and falling profits are affecting all traditional media; the biggest impact, however, is on local newspapers (Barnett, 2010). I am examining the English system because I am based here and familiar with it, but these research findings may be equally useful in other countries. This content analysis and case study investigates the mobile platform within large, well-established newspapers at the cutting edge of a domestic industry which is held in high regard internationally. The way it adapts to mobile news is likely to be of relevance to similar markets overseas as well as the international research community. Local newspapers are undergoing a complex series of changes and the rapid growth of mobile is a major part of that.

1.4 A brief overview of mobile news

Mobile news is just one element affected and created by the collision of two simultaneous "technological revolutions in communication" which have been taking place over the last decade in the form of mobiles and the internet (Glotz et al., 2005:12). Glotz et al. predicted that society was heading towards the convergence of these elements and a decade later we are much closer to that. Modern lives have been shaped by centuries of technological developments from cars and planes to televisions and phones. However, it is widely acknowledged that society's acceptance of, followed by dependence on, mobile and the speed of technological advances within the industry have been remarkably fast in comparison. Mobile telephony started to rise to prominence in the social consciousness in the mid-1990s (Ling and Donner, 2009:13). To understand the contemporary experience of mobiles we need to be aware of how its historical developments are linked to today's industry and markets. To be able to examine news on the mobile platform it is necessary to understand not only the history of how newspapers adapted to other multimedia, but also the rise of mobiles and how the two came together. This includes how titles adapted to online news, the rise of news websites and issues along the way. This must run alongside a focus on the history of mobile devices, establishing a clear picture of their role in today's society. These two distinct histories converged as the first newspapers launched mobile websites, and temporarily pause where both the newspaper and mobile industries find themselves today.

In 1999, 80 per cent of local newspapers were producing content for different platforms yet by 2010 both the types of platforms and the numbers of newspapers going digital were changing rapidly (Paterson and Domingo, 2008:31). The first local newspapers to take tentative steps into the mobile news market were Newsquest and Trinity Mirror titles in 2008.

Two years later many major publications still did not have either mobile-friendly sites, specifically designed mobile sites or mobile applications. What had changed by 2010, arguably a transformation more rapid than the local newspaper industry was equipped technically and attitudinally to cope with, was reader expectations. By 2010 a large section of English society expected to get news in different forms and on a variety of platforms. They no longer relied on the limited, traditional sources of previous decades. Communities, which had depended for centuries on periodic newspapers for information, were liberated by the arrival of news programmes on radios, then terrestrial television, followed by 24-hour satellite television stations, internet access via desktops and more recently their mobile phones. They were equipped to make choices previously unavailable – they were able to decide not only what to read, watch and listen to but also where and when to do so (Greenslade, 2006). They were no longer a passive audience unable to respond to the mass media or find alternative sources of information. Improved internet access, enhanced mobile handsets and the rise of social media changed how people consumed news more radically and faster than at any point previously. In what McQuail labelled 'the communications revolution', the balance of power shifted from the media to the audience simply because there were so many new outlets and ways for readers to actively get involved (McQuail, 2005:39). It was against this uncertain future that the newspaper industry began to acknowledge the importance of mobile news.

1.5 Structure of thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. This first chapter has sought to establish the aim and objectives of the project, the rationale behind an investigation into local mobile news, and the

contribution it will make to related academic fields. It also explains the context within which the term mobile has been used in this research. The following chapters review relevant literature to establish research questions within the context of previous projects. Two levels of analysis are then undertaken. The first examines the wider context of the mobile platform and content within England's local newspapers. The second seeks a more in-depth understanding of the industry through a case study of Johnston Press.

Chapters Two and Three form the literature review and bring together relevant aspects of mobile research within a framework suitable for focusing on content and news. Chapter Two discusses the history of mobiles and mobility in greater depth as well as newspapers' first ventures onto the platform. Chapter Three examines present day impact, incorporating digital and community arguments which can be extended specifically for mobile. Together these chapters provide a comprehensive overview of existing research and guide the design of this thesis. Chapter Two starts with the introduction (2.1) followed by a focus on society's widespread adoption of mobile and its rapid growth (2.2). The next section (2.3) establishes a foundation for the study of a specific aspect of mobile, i.e. mobile news, by focusing on how mobiles generally influence individuals and society. It then probes the extent to which technology is to 'blame' for the existing state of the newspaper industry (2.4). The focus then falls more specifically on how some newspapers first embraced the mobile platform while protecting their existing models and infrastructure (2.5). The following section examines mobile's increasingly important role within England's local newspapers (2.6), before the chapter's conclusion (2.7).

Chapter Three starts with an introduction (3.1) then focuses on weekly newspapers (3.2). It examines differences between weekly and daily newspapers; how both are interconnected and how new platforms challenge the traditional models of all titles. The following section develops this theme by examining how local communities and therefore newspapers adapt to

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being part of a global mobile network (3.3). It examines the concept of a networked society, consequences of the constant flow of information and the growing importance of 'local'. Section 3.4 focuses on community and the role of location. Section 3.5.1 examines definitions of community and section 3.5.2 explores the present roles and challenges facing it. The mobile digital divide is the focus of the penultimate section (3.5). This project highlights previous studies into digital barriers created by, for example, class, geography, age and skills, and re-examines them for the mobile field. The conclusion (3.6) shows how and why all these elements matter in the debate about mobile news and its adoption by local newspapers. It also clarifies how they establish a framework for the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Four details the methods used for this research and why they are considered the most appropriate. It relates the project aims and objectives to the methods, with a particular focus on case study. It firstly provides context by examining the history of case study (4.2.1) and then explores a range of views about the methodology's strengths and weaknesses (4.2.2). There is discussion around the different types of case study (4.2.3) and the rationale behind the structure of this research (4.4). It then focuses on the most relevant areas such as the number of cases (4.5) and adaptations of a constructed week sampling (4.6). The next section (4.7) describes how the three platforms of each title were analysed and a tangible sampling framework created (4.8). Finally, in preparation for the Johnston Press case study, the strengths and weaknesses of interview techniques and their interpretation are examined in 4.9, before the conclusion (4.10).

Findings from the cross platform analysis form Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five examines the mobile content of four daily local newspapers. Chapter Six focuses on five weekly local newspapers before both are compared. The presentation of each platform is examined, as is the content. These findings are then further developed through interviews at Johnston Press, which makes up the content of Chapters Seven and Eight. These start by

exploring the interview methods (7.2), the selection of interviewees (7.3) and the contextual history of the firm (7.4).

The findings from Johnston Press are divided into two parts. The first highlights the past and present status of mobile at the firm's newspapers. This is then extended to explore the platform's future within Johnston Press including the impact on traditional newspaper models. Through a historical perspective section 7.5 focuses on the initial adoption of mobile, 7.5.1 looks at how decisions were taken to develop the platform, 7.5.2 examines the speed and problems of adoption, and similarities with other emerging platforms make up section 7.5.3. Chapter Seven then turns its focus on present day challenges (7.6) and the need to balance the demands of platforms in busy newsrooms. It starts by examining the priority given to mobile (7.6.1) and the design of the platform (7.6.2). It then focuses on the role of social media (7.6.3) and the bid to grow audience through analytics while avoiding click-bait (7.6.4). This is extended to how traditional news values are challenged by the drive for digital growth (7.6.5) and the continuing importance of traditional journalism and journalists (7.6.6). All these elements are combined to question the need for mobile-specific content (7.6.7) before the conclusion at 7.7.

Chapter Eight explores the future of mobile at Johnston Press (8.2) while addressing wider issues that arose from the literature review. The mobile divide and community are of particular relevance (8.3). Findings from the platform and content analysis are then developed, starting with differences between the digital output of Johnston Press's daily and weekly newsrooms (8.4). This is followed by an examination of attitudes and approaches to and at the different titles (8.4.1) as well as interviewees' opinions on reader expectations (8.4.2). The differences between daily and weekly titles but also individual newsrooms form 8.4.3. Section 8.5 is a discussion around the case study findings. The conclusion is in 8.6.

Chapter Nine pulls findings together from the preceding chapters to expand the overall conclusions (9.1). A summary of findings is at 9.2 and contradictions highlighted by them form 9.3. The chapter examines the limitations of researching such a rapidly developing platform (9.4) and looks at how findings (9.5) and methodologies (9.6) can be applied more widely. It ends with reflections from the researcher around the possibilities of a more united approach to future research between industry and academia (9.7).

Chapter Two: Continuing evolution: The complex nature of mobility and news' relationship with a nascent platform

2.1 Introduction

The following two chapters combine to form the literature review. This chapter establishes mobile as the next stage in the continuing evolution of newspapers - presenting a complex platform with many challenges for the industry. Chapter Three focuses on the challenges to traditional newspaper models created by these circumstances and the role of community journalism within that. The first section of Chapter Two focuses on the rapid rise of smartphones and the reasons behind it (2.2). It looks at the reach and domestication which allows news to be delivered via a handset. The next section offers a more in-depth examination of existing mobile and mobility research (2.3). It investigates areas attracting increased academic interest including mobile attachment, impact on society, usability and language. Against this backdrop of a transformative communication tool, the following section (2.4) questions what role technology has played in the declining state of the newspaper industry. It then examines the impact, reach and growth of mobile news internationally, before looking at the first steps towards mobile news within England (2.6). The conclusion is 2.7.

2.2 "Too vital not to adopt": The remarkably rapid rise of smartphones

To offer a clear picture of mobile news' rise in popularity it is important to look at the surge in interest around mobiles with internet access. Providing up-to-date figures on mobile use and subscriptions is virtually impossible as statistics have often been superseded by the time

they are publically issued (Baron, 2010:24). However, there are historical statistics which indicate the phenomenal rate of growth and domestication. Motorola chief executive Martin Cooper made the world's first call from a portable handheld phone in 1973 (Goggin, 2006:29). The five billionth mobile subscription was added on July 8, 2010 (Ericsson, 2010). Mobile subscriptions rose to 4.6 billion at the end of 2009 meaning there were more mobile phones in Europe than people. In the 12 months to August 2011, six million people went online via their mobile for the first time and 45 per cent of internet users were using their mobiles to do so (Office for National Statistics, 2011). In the United States of America, figures from publishers which specifically track traffic generated by mobiles showed that by the end of 2009 mobile news accounted for up to five per cent of total internet traffic (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2009:7). The growth of digital activity was such that it accounted for 30 per cent of the Audit Bureau of Circulations' revenue[7] (ABC, 2011a). In the words of Mobile World co-founder John Tysoe: "It took over 20 years to connect the first billion subscribers, but only 40 months to connect the second billion" (Ridley, 2007). There were 3.6 billion unique mobile subscribers at the end of 2014, with an additional billion predicted by 2020 - an increase that would take the global figure to approximately 60 per cent penetration (GSMA, 2015).

People are now constantly connected with other individuals or communities, the internet and numerous media through their mobiles. Where people would once turn to a newspaper, radio or television station for news, they now also hear about major events from other sources such as via a text or social media message from a friend (Bird, 2009:293). Of those who regularly use their mobiles for news, a third are constantly 'on alert' for breaking information (Pew, 2010:38). The dramatic rise of mobile introduced new ways of receiving breaking news ranging from alerts from traditional news sources to information shared directly by celebrities

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[7] The Audit Bureau of Circulations is the industry body for media measurement.

or citizens. By 2014, Pew Research found that Facebook was the "obvious news powerhouse" of the social media sites - 30 per cent of the American adult population accessed news there (Anderson and Caumont, 2014). This was followed by YouTube at ten per cent and Twitter at 16 per cent. Mobile technology offers great advantages because it can deliver news "personally, directly and powerfully" (Perigoe, 2009:248). It has also led to the creation of sites in direct competition with traditional news sources. Mobiles connect with readers, specifically younger generations which are often regarded as beyond the reach of newspapers. A positive note for the future of news comes from a study which found that 62 per cent of US internet users aged between 12 and 17 go online for news (Bunz, 2010). This is reinforced by Jim Chisholm who states the consumption of all news media - newspapers, television and social networks - is highest when people are younger and consumption declines as they get older (Chisholm, 2010:15). WAN gives this advice to newspapers wanting to succeed with their mobile sites: "Gain insight on the audience you want to reach. You might decide not to please everyone. You might find it not feasible to serve the 'lost generation' - those still holding on to their Nokia 6110 (2009:41)." Mobiles create opportunities for newspapers to reach new audiences. They allow us to communicate in ways not previously possible. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 saw a 44 per cent increase in the number of text messages sent as the victory was announced - 1.4 billion messages were flashed around the world that evening (Castells, 2009; Hewlett, 2010; Perigoe, 2009). Pop singer Beyonce's pregnancy announcement in September 2011 prompted a record 8,868 tweets per second on Twitter (BBC, 2011a). Both of these news items originated from a traditional news source, television, but were spread by individuals on social media. There were 672 million Tweets sent related to the 2014 football World Cup, again fuelled by television and newspapers but widely shared by other platforms (Rogers, 2014). Perigoe believes the implications of this are clear: "Individual messages short circuited conventional

news delivery systems; it shows how eager we are to share 'the news' and take ownership of it (2009: 247-248)." Although news is being consumed in small 'bites' and on new platforms, people are still connected to what is happening and social media can be a channel for local newspapers to reach audiences (Nel and Westlund, 2012a).

Schmolze argues that, while the internet allowed freedom of access it took away the freedom to move, which mobile is able to give back. However, he also stresses that another basic freedom is "not having to communicate all the time" (Schmolze, 2005:186-187). Journalists must not overuse their ability to directly contact readers with news alerts. Mobiles present newspapers with the opportunity to become the first port of call for people wanting instant news in a way that did not exist with print or desktop. However, to do this in the right way, newsrooms have to adapt. The Johnston Press case study examines how newsrooms adjust to the demands of mobile and what that means for the future. It looks at the capability of the technology available to journalists but also at how they actually make use of it. It raises these questions within the context of falling numbers of journalists and increasing demands on time.

As this research explores the past and future, it is important to look for similarities between the adoption of mobiles and mobile news. The remarkable rise of the mobile market has ensured that what could have been dismissed as over-hyped predictions, in fact turned out to be in some cases remarkably accurate and in others, actually understated. In 2009, market research firm The Kelsey Group predicted that the mobile advertising market would increase from $160 million in 2008 to $3.1 billion in 2013 (Burkitt, 2009). Over the same period the number of people accessing the internet via mobile phones more than doubled, according to technology analyst IDC (Shah, 2009). Global mobile advertising value is expected to reach $195.55 billion by 2019, accounting for more than a quarter of total media advertising

spending globally (Emarketer, 2015). Internationally, Klemens believes the importance of mobiles is highlighted by the fact they have not bypassed the world's poorest areas, unlike many other technological advances. They quickly became "too vital for developing countries not to adopt" (Klemens, 2010:1).

Such figures illustrate that technological change is so quick it is virtually impossible to give an accurate account of mobile figures and usages. The numbers change on a daily basis as summed up by Thurlow et al.: "The tough reality we faced … is that many of the figures we give will already be out of date by the time you read this sentence (Thurlow et al., 2004:3)." However, statistics remain valuable even if not absolutely current as they establish benchmarks against which future developments can be measured (Barron, 2011:24). Yet they should also be treated with caution. For example, subscription or handset data provide context but exclude factors such as individuals with multiple subscriptions or shared handsets. What they do illustrate is the present and past speed of mobile adoption as well as giving indicators for the future.

Many academic projects contain strands relevant to this research yet do not have a specific focus on mobile news. A brief summary of the most relevant ones follows. The internet and mobiles emerged as mass markets around the same time in the mid-1990s. Mobiles were instantly far more visible in society and their uptake was much faster (Katz, 2008:15). However, they generated far less research interest for a surprisingly long time (Ling and Donner, 2009:9; Glotz et al., 2005:12). It should be acknowledged that research will always lag behind technology. Developments must be used by a reasonable proportion of the population before being deemed worthy of investigation. Mobiles proved no exception and as they reach domestication, the amount of research increases (Ling and Donner, 2009:32). The mobile field that began to emerge showed a tendency to focus on social and cultural effects such as relationships between technologies, mobility, mobile interaction within different

relationships including peer and parental, as well as the emergence of varying linguistic habits and patterns. Researchers also charted early experiences of new technology alongside the history of the device, market growth, meanings and symbolisms, and health concerns. Several studies have examined the constant connectivity of mobiles and the effects on society. Goggin highlighted the challenges of mobile consumption and wider impacts in communities (2006); Castells found that mobile technology was redefining a range of important relationships beyond basic communication (2009); Creeber and Martin used case studies to describe both positive and negative effects on culture (2009); Klemens discussed the ramifications of mobiles on law, health, communication, individuals and wider society (2010); Buscher et al. concluded that people experience mobiles in a range of different ways in the modern world (2011). Gackenbach and Bown found that boundaries of self and reality shift radically online due to digitally constructed realities (2017); Hoflich described mobiles' 'delocatedness' within private and public communication (2005:133)**;** Hulme and Truch highlighted constantly shifting boundaries in public spaces and social identities (2005:145). Moll (2007), Goggin (2006) and Ling and Donner (2009) have written about the impact of mobiles on society, cell phone culture, the challenges presented by mobiles and the social consequences. This research will draw on many of these studies although it remains more specifically focused on the local mobile news platform.

As the number of people accessing news via the internet and mobiles has increased so too has academic interest. However, despite a phenomenal rise, little research has been undertaken on mobile news and the absence of such studies in England is striking, particularly within a local context. This is despite a growing body of opinion that local plays an increasingly important part in the global role of the web. Gordon et al. are among the most adamant that meaning is produced locally (2011:179-180). They state that the web needs to be understood in its local context because people have chosen to adopt the technologies for their own local purposes.

They argue that people do not leave the context of their locality to interact within digital networks, concluding the global networks that enable these interactions shape the conditions but do not produce meaning - meaning is produced locally. In this context, research into local news and the role that local newspapers play on the international mobile platform is all the more relevant.

2.3 Mobiles' explosive impact on society: Devices that are immediate, constant and create expectation

The fact that mobiles are portable is perhaps the least remarkable thing about them in terms of accessing news; after all newspapers have always been easy to carry around. What is unusual is the attachment people develop to their device, keeping them close at all times (García-Montes, 2006). This section examines the more general impact of mobiles on society, to ensure this research is placed within the wider, relevant research field. By 2009 mobiles had already reached 'emblematic status' with models offering an insight into the owner's characteristics and social position (Ling, 2009:15). In 2016 young people spent more time online than watching television and mobile was almost 'universal' as the method of accessing the internet (Coughlin, 2016). Mobiles create an expectation that people are immediately and constantly available to communicate and as many as 85 per cent of calls are answered straight away (García-Montes et al., 2006:71). This access leads to an increasing demand for information and instant news (Karlsson, 2001). That level of connectivity is also shrinking the distinction between public and private places (García-Montes et al., 2006:72). "People are glued to their screen 24/7" and they want to know what is happening as it happens, regardless of their location (WAN Ifra, 2009:26). Other specific qualities of mobiles are those of

immediacy and intimacy (Baker et al., 2009:101). Mobiles can even have emotional implications such as a sense of intimate connectedness to the message, its subject and the author (Baker et al., 2009:119). This offers a unique opportunity for newspapers that can find the right ways to harness this constant form of access.

The work of Rich Ling and Jonathan Donner, two of the world's leading mobile researchers, is particularly relevant to this thesis' examination of community and journalism on the mobile platform. Ling and Donner investigate how mobiles affect the way people relate to each other; differences in the way people treat each other over the phone; and the impact on those in the immediate vicinity. Ling and Donner are convincing that mobiles have changed the ways in which people relate to each other. However their focus remains mainly on how people relate to each other with less emphasis on the written word and none on reactions to news received via mobile from official news sources. While some researchers believe reliance on mobile technology can lead to isolation and end social networks, Ling and Donner argue that mobiles strengthen immediate links and can help work out new and wider relations and groups (Ling and Donner, 2008:81). Ling and Donner stress that mobiles enhance interactions between small social groups but accept that it may be tipping the balance "in the direction of the peer group at the expense of the broader social scene" (Ling and Donner, 2009:183). They highlight counter-tendencies against what many say is a move towards individualism (Ling and Donner, 2009:186). Ling and Donner believe that while mobiles do improve social cohesion among groups, they also create barriers for those not part of these groups (Ling and Donner, 2009:81). Their conclusions are similar to those of Peter Glotz et al. that mobiles connect individuals with small and personal social networks but ignore the larger society (2005:13).

Such research links mobile debates with community and the role of journalism in both. For example, news focusing on a specific area has traditionally been seen as improving

cohesiveness and community (Robinson, 2017). However, if conveyed on mobile it could alienate less technically able groups, while at the same time bringing others closer together and even creating new online communities. These ideas are expanded in Section 3.4 for more in-depth discussion on journalism and community.

James Katz is another leading authority on the rise of mobiles and one of the most vocal supporters of the idea that mobiles are a 'transformative technology'. He says they will have, and are having, a massive impact on individuals and groups of all sizes, in many ways. Katz (2008:181) explains: "Therefore, we have an opportunity to structure services and social practices in a self-aware way that should be conducive to outcomes that are better than would otherwise be the case." Newspapers are now in a position to make decisions about how news is produced, presented and distributed on the mobile platform to reach as many readers as possible. Mobiles mean news can be presented in a new way yet the opportunities also contain hurdles. A report produced by news publishers' association Ifra looked specifically at the market offered by mobile phones and came up with this stark warning: "If newspapers found the internet a challenge when it arrived, the business opportunity within the mobile services sector are considerably harder to get your head around" (Campbell, 2004:1). Despite such predications, marketing director for Oslo-based More Mobile Relations Anders Borde, believes that newspapers simply cannot afford to miss out on the chance to capitalise on the new market whatever the obstacles. He said: "I believe newspapers, as well as any other type of company, cannot take the risk of not communicating with customers over the mobile platform. It will simply be expected (WAN Ifra, 2009:41)."

In 2009 usability expert Nielsen said that vast improvements were needed on all mobile sites, and that inevitably meant newspapers were no exception. Nielsen (2009) highlighted design as so bad the mobile web could 'remain a mirage'. He went as far as labelling the phrase 'mobile usability' an oxymoron. In 2002 Ward (173) argued usability was the big issue for

the web because "expectations have risen and choice has been extended. Sites must deliver". Usability is the most important element of mobile design; however, assumptions carried over from desktop do not hold for the mobile platform (Vaataja, 2015**:**219). Lacerda et al. (2015) identified a lack of research into developing mobile usability heuristics and concluded that most fail to take mobile's unique characteristics into account. They argued that designs remain too similar to those created for desktop: people use their mobile for convenience and speed so it is important that readers using mobile sites can access the information they want quickly and easily. They also added that if a site is hard to navigate, has features that don't work or other problems, people will quickly stop using it and find alternatives. When designing mobile sites it is important to remember Thurlow's advice that 'ordinary' people make their own decisions about whether they want to use the technology, based on their own needs and values (Thurlow et al., 2004:26). In an industry that has always had to consider easily accessible design, albeit for another platform, the challenge is stark but not new.

The analysis of nine websites in this research focuses on content, if mobile-specific content is being created and whether it is desirable. This links into Naomi Baron's study of how mobiles are affecting language use in Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World (2010). The research is most relevant when discussing what society and individuals are doing to language by virtue of new communication technologies and the potential impact of these linguistic changes. Baron shows how the cumulative experience with communication technologies continues to gradually alter behavioural and social norms, even leading to the creation of new rules (2010:5). Focusing on the differences between print and electronic newspapers, Baron defines online content which can constantly be changed or updated as 'vapour text' (2010:207). In what is described as the 'print culture sans print' she believes writing will continue to be culturally valuable as print declines in importance. Baron concludes that while mobile use is creating new terminology, overall language remains

stable. However, she acknowledges the existence of 'linguistic whateverism' which challenges the fundamental principle of language as rule-governed behaviour. Baron describes it as less a display of linguistic defiance than natural change. Baron also highlights how people like consistent access to others via their mobiles but don't always like being constantly contactable themselves. As with elements of mobile research, these findings have aspects which are likely to prove useful when analysing the impact of mobile news and the wider aims of this research project.

Carrying a newspaper or being seen reading particular titles brings it own connotations. The same is true of mobiles. Arthur (2011), Geser (2005:33) and Waterlow (2012) all warn of the pressures to have the latest mobile technology but also that just as mobiles can be used to improve social standing. In the future they could become a 'negative status symbol' or more specifically certain apps or brands could. Reliable mobile sites will give local newspapers an advantage at a time when "technology allows information overload" (Quinn, 2003: ix). As Peter Preston states, "The internet can keep most of us in touch, but it doesn't carry the full stamp of community approval (2013)." Local newspapers are well-established brands. However, mobiles arrived at a time of extreme challenges for the industry, which is explored in the next section.

2.4 Defensive not proactive: Is technology to blame for the state of the newspaper industry?

To understand mobile news within the wider history of the media, more specifically developments in new media, it is important to examine the nature of similar historical changes and their impact. The newspaper industry has been the focus of much research in recent years and advances in technology have often proved the most contentious. The history

of news arguably dates back to when Ancient Romans carved messages on stones and left them in public places. It faced its first radical transformation with the arrival of the printing press in the 17th century which allowed mass production and distribution. In this context multimedia platforms and the internet, with histories dating back to the 1950s, are new. It took many years for the internet to develop into the network we recognise and use so widely today and what has become known as the internet age only truly began in the mid-1990s (Hinton, 2009:15). This section questions how the rise of the internet may be connected to the demise of print news.

Technology will not stop developing new ways for people to communicate and news will continue to change as new methods are developed. It is not the first time one form of media has faced problems because of competition from another. Winston highlights the phase when advertisers started to promote their goods on radio and television instead of newspaper pages (1998:262). In fact, there are many comparisons that can be made with key stages in the development of news, media and communication over the centuries, not least the printing press (Hinton, 2009:17). Change brings with it advantages as well as disadvantages and existing media must develop, as it has always done. Katz is one of several academics who believe newspapers were caught short when it came to the internet and, as with other developments in the past, were left struggling to catch up rather than leading the way (Katz, 2008). Oakley also suggests the industry failed to fully recognise the competitive pressures created by the internet and highlights missed opportunities including within property, motors and job sections (Oakley, 2012).

The decline of print newspapers and rise of the internet raises questions over whether technology could be to blame for the state of the industry. However, that is over-simplistic as Preston explains:

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> We're used to seeing the decline of newspapers generally as a straightforward consequence of internet growth. News on paper goes down; news on screens goes up. But it has always really been far more complex than that – especially when you factor in the changes that began washing around us half a century ago ... Circulations were wilting long before the full bloom of the internet. (Preston, 2013)

Mitchelstein and Boczkowski believe some newspapers saw websites as a way to stop competitors, rather than expand ways of communicating and "conquering new territories" (2009:564). Using a similar premise Paterson and Domingo argue that many titles created websites as a back-up plan based "on perceived threats" rather than a clear vision to develop journalism (2008:208). They also blame the industry for allowing an online gap to grow, which was quickly filled by new content producers. This they put down to the industry's failure to update its products and attract new, younger audiences (Paterson and Domingo, 2008:173). Engel agrees that local newspapers initially chose to ignore concerns about the future of print (Engel, 2009:59). He states that they only later invested in the internet because of false assumptions about the growth of online advertising revenues.

Research by Nguyen in 2010 showed that online journalism had entered a second phase of development and was starting to attract more resources. However it was still primarily viewed as a defensive attempt to prevent newspapers being driven out of business and a continued lack of innovation stopped it reaching its true potential (Nguyen, 2010). That situation has changed dramatically in recent years, in particular for the larger and more profitable titles. Local newspapers now regularly use audience data analysis as well as reallocating resources to focus on digital. This is evidenced by a project in 2014 which analysed national newspapers The Financial Times and The Telegraph as they migrated from print to digital. Instead of examining the "journalistic labour process" it showed how production was being reshaped and driven by data analytics (Schlesinger and Doyle, 2015).

Any data-driven approach to news is likely to encounter resistance "with journalists fearing that the daily use of audience analytics will undermine the quality of their work" and lead "editors to pander to audiences and orient stories towards click-bait" (Cherubini, 2016). Dhyana Ziegler writes: "Shaping news in a big data world challenges the foundation of journalistic principles and practices but the credibility and integrity of the news product must be maintained (2015)." Newsroom analytics can inform short and long-term decisions but will always need editorial expertise. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism concluded: "Analytics and data metrics will continue to evolve, and if journalists are not part of that process, the tools and techniques developed will continue to reflect and empower commercial and technological priorities more than editorial priorities (Cherubini and Nielson, 2016)." Schlesinger and Doyle analysed how production was being reshaped and driven by data analytics at The Financial Times and The Telegraph but no research has so far examined the impact on local newspapers (2015).

Targeted approaches to increasing audience ran alongside the need to make online news more economically viable. Although the internet is not truly free, as discussed later, there has been much debate around the practicalities of charging for something which was originally seen as 'free'; i.e. local news online. However, the expense of smartphones, monthly data and apps means the discussion around charging for mobile news has a significantly different background than that of charging for the internet on desktops. Charges for mobiles, a desire for the latest handset and constant alterations to pricing systems make the cost of mobiles arguably more visible than desktop. This also links back to the perception of mobiles as status symbols. Newspapers are desperately exploring new ways to make money as print declines and mobile is one option. Whether local mobile news is truly monetizable, or can make enough commercial gain to offset lost print revenues, remains to be seen.

This thesis relies on several assumptions, detailed on page 80. They include the assumption that it is positive for newspapers to grow their audience through an emerging, popular and influential platform. Ward believes the driving force for change has and will continue to be economics because the more ways newspapers have of reaching readers the more chance of making money. In 2002 he pointed out that the most expensive part of news production was actually gathering the information in the first place (Ward, 2002:22-23). Once content is in the newsroom the sensible thing to do is get it out to as many readers as possible on all platforms[8].

> Delivering the same story to multiple platforms (e.g. PCs, mobile phones and web television) will become more commonplace because it makes economic sense. News is an expensive commodity to generate, so you should get it out to as many people in as many forms as possible. However, the same story will need different constructions to make it function effectively on different platforms. (Ward, 2002:126-127)

Increasingly challenging economic conditions make this approach particularly relevant with the rise of smartphones. This project investigates the extent of articles' 'constructions' as news is produced, presented and distributed on the mobile platform. The Johnston Press case study examines what newspapers are doing to reach the mobile audience without further expenditure.

2.5 Protecting tradition while embracing change: International appropriation of mobile news

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[8] The economics and viability of paywalls are worthy of note but beyond the remit of this thesis.

To understand England's existing local mobile news market it is astute to examine the wider foundations of mobile news. The world's second largest newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* in Japan started delivering news through mobiles in 1999 (Loechner, 2003). It was an important move but also a logical next step in a country with a population among the world's biggest users of mobile internet (Gomez-Barroso et al., 2010:10). When mobile internet was first launched by Japanese telecommunications company Nippon Telegraph and Telephone in February 1999 it gained 23 million subscribers in 26 months. News was the second most popular subject after entertainment (Quinn, 2003:88-89). Scandinavia has also gained and maintained remarkably high mobile use and ownership:

> In 2006, there were about 10 internet and 32 mobile phone users per 100 persons in the world ... In 2006 the ITU reported that Norway had 108.6 subscriptions per 100 persons. (Ling and Donner, 2009:6)

Scandinavia also boasts companies which lead the international market with new mobile technologies, particularly Sweden's DagensNyheter and VG in Norway. Swedish national phone company Televerket established Europe's first mobile phone firm in 1955 and Sweden is home to Ericsson, while Nokia is based in Finland. Finland became the first country to make broadband a legal right for every citizen (Klemens, 2010:48; BBC, 2010). A passion for technology and newspapers offers the ideal mobile news combination. As well as being technological leaders, Sweden and Japan have among the highest newspaper reaches in the world (Westlund, 2010:95).

The United States of America is another mobile world leader in terms of penetration. At the start of 2015, 39 of the top 50 American news websites had more traffic to their sites and associated apps from mobile devices than from desktop (Mitchell and Holcomb, 2016). In 2000 New York Times Digital created NYT Mobile offering mobile updates 24-hours a day from *The New York Times* including the latest international, political, technology, finance and

sports news (Quinn, 2003:16). A decade later, 59 per cent of adults were accessing the internet wirelessly turning news into a 'social experience' (Pew, 2010:1). The internet had already passed newspapers in terms of popularity, in second place behind television (Purcell et al., 2010:3), and 38 per cent said they wanted more news from their neighbourhood or local community (Purcell et al., 2010:4). In 2009, 17 per cent of senior newspaper executives had a smartphone application in production while another 56 per cent planned to develop one within two years (Audit Bureau of Circulations[9], 2009). In 2015 some British news websites were attracting larger audiences than their American competitors in both the US regional and national markets[10]. It has produced interesting scenarios. The Guardian balances a struggling print product with a successful website (Orton-Jones, 2012). MailOnline is so successful it launched United States and Australian versions, taking its number of unique monthly visitors to 53 million in 2015 (Ebizmba, 2016). The increasing importance of mobile news at a national level was emphasised in June 2011 when MailOnline become the first media owner to report iPhone app traffic as part of its ABC Certificate. That followed ABC's launch of app traffic metrics the previous month (ABC, 2011b).

It took almost a decade from the launch of the world's first mobile news site in Japan until England's regional newspapers began moving into the market with their own mobile sites and applications for iPhones. Trinity Mirror was among those to test the water and had 13 mobile sites on titles including the Birmingham Mail and Liverpool Echo by the end of 2008 (Trinity Mirror Plc, 2008). In April 2008, Newsquest launched a breaking news and sports service for mobiles. Hundreds of people signed up during its first week at the *Lancashire Telegraph* (Oliver, 2008). Midland News Association began mobile versions of websites for its daily newspapers, *Express & Star* and *Shropshire Star*, the following August (Oliver, 2008).

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[9] The Audit Bureau of Circulations became the Alliance for Audited Media in 2012.
[10] Thurman credits this to traffic generated by international indexes such as Google News (Thurman, 2007:285).

Increasing numbers of readers were already accessing their main websites through their phones. The new mobile sites were described as offering "an exciting opportunity to better understand the dynamics of this channel" (Oliver, 2008). *Manchester Evening News* became the first regional newspaper to have its own app (Greenslade, 2009) and it was quickly followed by others. Newsquest Media Group launched 148 mobile websites for its newspapers at the start of 2009 (Jaques, 2009). At the end of the same year Archant tested the market with three mobile sites (Amos, 2009). *The Scotsman* became the first Johnston Press title with an iPhone app in 2010 offering "the best of both worlds" with access to the website as well as the ability to electronically leaf through newspaper pages (Newspaper Society, 2010a). In June 2010 *Rotherham Advertiser* became the first newspaper to launch a births, marriages and deaths app. Commercial director Nicky Holt described the balance between electronic and print news: "We are a traditional weekly newspaper group, but that has not prevented us from identifying opportunities in new media and technology to capitalise on a key pillar of a traditional printed product (Newspaper Society, 2010b)." What could have been regarded as initial apathy towards mobiles was replaced with descriptions such as 'exciting and important'.

In October 2014 Trinity Mirror, which was getting more than half its web traffic through mobiles, announced it was launching a new app-mediated, hyperlocal mobile ad platform that "intelligently targets" smartphone users (Trinity Mirror Plc, 2014). The *Birmingham Mail*, owned by Trinity, also trialled improvements to its content management system to make journalists think more about mobile and help make their reporting more mobile-friendly. For example, a mobile preview function allowed reporters to see how articles would appear on mobile (Smith, 2014). In October 2014 the weekly Cleethorpes Chronicle launched its first mobile app which allowed readers to download the title on a subscription basis. Editor and joint owner Nigel Lowther highlighted industry reservations:

> The app enables readers across the globe to keep up-to-date with their Cleethorpes news every week at minimal cost. Since we began publishing the paper more than six-and-a-half years ago people have asked us about going on line. But we've always resisted giving content away free on the web when it costs us money to produce it. We don't believe traditional regional newspaper sites have worked. They have not achieved projected revenue streams and have also had a dramatic downward impact on newspaper sales. This is our answer. (Ponsford, 2014).

Many would disagree that news is ever 'free', as has already been touched upon, but there is no doubt that newspapers failed to make the predicted profit from online news. In 2015 mobile advertising spend was expected to overtake print and television – increasing by 45 per cent to £3.26 billion and by another 35 per cent the following year to £4.4 billion (Sweney, 2015). At the same time Johnston Press was averaging 6.5 million mobile users a month across its titles, a figure which had doubled in a year (Sweney, 2014). A range of experiments were also taking place on the mobile platform. For example, in June 2015, LocalWorld reinvented the traditional late final editions of ten of its newspapers by publishing them on its mobile platforms. The move was described as restoring "the spirit of the evening edition newspaper" as free downloadable apps and included the day's biggest news stories alongside "the most social, snackable and shareable stories" (Linford, 2015).

All of these changes combined with a rise in the popularity of social media sites to allow local newspapers to rapidly reach wider audiences. A large percentage of traffic to mobile news sites arrived via social media[11]. This is through official pages fed by mainstream media outlets and links to news websites shared among friends and other interested parties. It is worth noting that readers referred from social media spend far less time on the site (Mitchell et al., 2014). All of these sites are increasingly accessed on the go through mobiles; indeed, the importance of being mobile is crucial to Twitter. The social media site describes itself as a "real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories" (Twitter, 2015).

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[11] See Chapter 7 for a more in-depth discussion around social media within the Johnston Press case study.

Twitter is one of several social media sites which direct traffic to newspaper sites and research into this area is relatively well developed (Lasorsa et al., 2012). The extent to which local newspapers now rely on social media to communicate news or use it to promote their own products is examined as part of the content analysis (see Chapters 5 and 6).

This research took place during a time of great growth and change for mobile news. It is not possible to predict how existing efforts to maximise the potential of mobiles will be viewed, particularly against historical accusations that newspapers have an "antediluvian" attitude to change (Waugh, 2011:45). However, this research offers a snapshot in time and an insight into an evolving situation which will provide context for future research. Theorist Paul Saffo believes it takes around 30 years for emerging technologies to fully "seep" into culture and this has been the case for the past 500 years (Saffo, 1992:18). On that scale, mobile news is only in its infancy and will continue to develop and change for decades to come. Saffo also warns that when a new process is being adopted, people stick to elements of their old ways despite them not being 'relevant or necessary' (Saffo, 1992:20). During the Johnston Press case study, this thesis will examine to what extent traditional ways of working may have to change if mobile is to be fully adopted.

2.6 Mobile's increasingly important role in newspapers' digital plans

Although business, commercial and technical reports exist, there has been only one major mobile news study examining how local newspapers in the UK are using the mobile platform. The Preston Report, led by Francois Nel, was a longitudinal data audit of 66 local newspapers in the United Kingdom which monitored the mobile activity of each publication, starting in 2008 (2011). The results showed that newspapers were slow to make use of the mobile

platform and offer news on platforms specifically designed for mobile news. Annual audits revealed pioneering local newspapers started experimenting with a range of mobile technologies in 2008 in the form of proprietary SMS sport alert services. The following year, 23 per cent of the newspapers under examination used SMS alerts for news and sport. In 2010 that figure dropped to three per cent with those remaining focused on specific sporting events. In 2011 none remained. The project first audited the newspapers' mobile news sites in 2009 when 15 existed, rising to 23 in 2010 and remaining static in 2011. The findings revealed most of the mobile sites were automatically generated from the main website, although they offered less content and features. In 2010 two of the papers had created downloadable news apps, increasing to four in 2011. The study found no evidence that any publishers were creating original content for mobile, from which Nel concluded that newspapers had to rethink their current approach if they were to have any more economic success with mobile than they had online. A similar approach in 2012 showed traditional and commercial models were still being duplicated without changes the researchers regarded necessary to sufficiently improve mobile news (Nel and Westlund, 2012).

The audits conducted by The Preston Report offered the first insight into how local newspapers were approaching the mobile platform in England. Its findings made it clear that while the newspapers had taken their first tentative steps even the most innovative were not fully embracing mobile. Importantly, this research did not investigate content in any detail. Other than to specify general categories, e.g. news or sport, no analysis was made of the articles, headlines or imagery. The audit was also conducted externally, i.e. without any contact with the companies involved other than through public articles. Another drawback is that although 66 newspapers were included in the audit, they were owned by just a handful of companies. It therefore follows that the approaches and developments of all papers owned by

one corporation will be at least similar and most likely identical. Therefore the findings, when expressed in percentages, could be unrepresentative of the industry as a whole.

In 2009 the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), based in America, published a strategy report on 'Shaping the future of the Newspaper' called Winning Mobile Strategies. In it the authors stressed that people are still interested in local news. They acknowledged that mobile was at that time just a small part of newspapers' digital plans but believed it would become increasingly important and urged newspapers to prepare. In the report Anders Borde stated its significance: "There is no doubt a future-proof newspaper channel strategy means a strong mobile presence (WAN, 2009:40)." The report urged newspaper companies to become key players in moving mobile internet forward (WAN, 2009:39). It was described as time to invest in mobile channels "knowing" that the number of people viewing newspapers on mobiles would continue to grow and the market would become more lucrative (WAN, 2009:19). Some sections of the report were overtly biased towards mobile news and, because it focused solely on mobiles, it undertook little comparison with other platforms. It did however acknowledge that mobile sites cannot exist on their own and urged newspaper executives to do all they could to integrate mobile with other platforms for cross enhancement (WAN, 2009:28). This links back to Ward's assertions that it makes economic sense to get content across all available platforms (see Page 14). The following quote sums up the subjective theme running through the report yet also emphasises that content is key:

> Mobile has been part of some newspaper companies' digital strategies for years, while others are just getting started. Yet, all are united in trying to create the best mobile experience tailored to the needs of their users, all while carving out new revenue streams and mapping future growth. As newspapers evolve and grow in the 21st century, the opportunities for success are still hinged on content, as they were hundreds of years ago. Today, however, they also depend on smart digital strategies that can engage audience, and turn a profit. The opportunity mobile holds for newspapers is vast, and grows more important each day. (WAN, 2009:54)

The report looked at different forms of advertising; for example, barcodes printed in newspapers to enter into mobile phones for special offers. It argued that such initiatives were able to "extend the experience in print, and give life to the brand on another channel" (WAN, 2009:24). The authors seized on the fact that most mobiles are on 24 hours a day and declared it the only medium open to newspapers that "is host to the entire purchasing process" (WAN, 2009:54). While the report acknowledged that the large revenues which could be created through mobiles by newspaper companies had not yet come to fruition, it stated that the forecasts were slowly coming true (WAN, 2009:28). Even if one takes those points into account and acknowledges the obvious bias, the potential importance placed on mobile news remains noteworthy. It argued that mobile was the electronic newspaper which could save the industry, adding: "Go mobile. It's the closest thing you'll get to the pre-heliocentric age where quantum physics is on the verge of redefining even what a universe is (WAN, 2009: 51)." Seven years later several of the predictions in the report had been proven correct yet also became remarkably dated. Some of the examples given, such as advertising across platforms, now appear old-fashioned. There are also scores of other initiatives which have come and gone in that short amount of time, or have become widely accepted yet are not mentioned in the report simply because they didn't exist. The speed at which mobiles and mobile news are developing is striking. While the desire to capitalise on mobile remains the same, the methods and tools are remarkably fleeting. There is also not yet sufficient evidence to suggest that local newspapers can make enough money from the platform to make its future viable as print continues to decline.

Another piece of relevant yet quickly dated research was conducted by the Journalism Research and Development Centre at the University of Tampere in Finland (Villi, 2000:156). It looks at what types of information people want to access via their mobile phones. Not surprisingly, those they questioned chose the content they viewed "according to what they

think is personally interesting". In summary, when people look for information on their mobile phones they want it quickly and concisely, reflecting their personal interests. Mobile technology allows them to select information related to a topic or even specific to a city, neighbourhood or street. The impact this has on the traditional roles of local newspapers such as gatekeeper and informer is examined later in this thesis during the Johnston Press case study, as are the potential commercial advantages it can create.

Oscar Westlund argued that newspaper owners felt pressured into developing mobile news and described it as a costly challenge (2012). He added that the task of making profit from mobile appeared insurmountable to traditional news outlets. Westlund's research highlighted a move away from journalists repurposing articles across platforms and towards technology performing the role for mobile. His model suggested that newspapers were relying on machines to automatically repurpose articles rather than using journalists to craft unique mobile content. He argued that this was content altered to suit the device, but without human input. Westlund described mobile as pushing journalism towards technology-led customisation and away from traditional methods of journalism. He acknowledged two main possible reasons for this shift. One was a perception of there being no need for journalists to customise news when technology could offer more useful presentation services. The other was the prohibitive costs of human input. Westlund's conclusions link with The Preston Report's findings that newspapers are not creating or repurposing content for mobile. This will be examined during the content analysis and the reasons behind it will be questioned during the case study. Lewis and Westlund later argued for more research better acknowledging how journalism is becoming interconnected with technological tools, processes, and ways of thinking (2014).

It is worth acknowledging that several researchers have examined how journalists use mobiles in the production of news. Most notably, in 2011 Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara

examined the importance of mobiles within every day journalism practice in Zimbabwe. The study focused on how mobiles were used by journalists, concluding that mobiles were one of many "contextual influences" which impact on news (Mabweazara, 2011:694). These findings are limited but go some way to confirming the wide-reaching impact of mobiles on news production within one particular country, yet again do so without regard to content. Heli Vaataja touched upon two elements with an investigation into readers' perceptions of mobile systems based on 12 Finnish case studies (2015). The study concluded that perceived impacts of the system, news and journalism were all important when assessing mobile news. The project also researched the pros and cons of journalists uploading stories directly through a mobile handset, without regard to content. Motilola Akinfemisoye also focused on how Nigerian print journalists use new media technologies, in particular mobiles, in their news-making practices (2014).

Some projects focus on issues surrounding readers on the mobile platform but again at the expense of examining content. MacGregor et al. examined news readership diversification in a project which took in four European countries, including the UK, and compared three platforms including mobile news services (MacGregor et al., 2011). Wei and Lo sampled 719 Chinese users of mobile news to empirically test smartphone interrelationships (2015). They concluded that mobile news consumption is an engaging and participative behaviour but carries both theoretical and social implications in a country which is regarded as media-rich but information-poor. Wei et al. explored how Asian college students used mobile news to stay informed about current events, with a particular focus on how this news-getting behaviour is related to the level of press freedom (2014). It focused on dramatic rises in mobile news accessibility and press freedom was found to be negatively related to reading and following news via mobile phones, although the content and types of news was not given much attention. Martin focused on a range of issues connected with mobile news during the

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2010 United States election including whether mobile news was associated with voter turnout (2015). The research highlighted a link between race and mobile use, and how increased mobile news was connected to an increased likelihood of voting. The findings add weight to arguments that the unique qualities of mobile devices and the ability to access news on them are contributing to new and different kinds of political activity and inclusion.

Bird and Perigoe have both examined how news is received through mobiles but focused on messages from friends not news outlets (2009). This is representative of the research trend which at present favours social media and mass communication at the expense of traditional news sources. Again the focus is on the technology used to convey the message, with scant regard for the content. The Pew Internet Project went some way to tackling this issue with its findings that of those who regularly use their mobiles for news, a third are constantly 'on alert' for breaking information (2010). However it did not go as far as looking into the type of news, reasons behind its selection or possible impact. Several commercial reports, mainly from the United States, have also been produced on how newspapers can capitalise on mobiles (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2009; Gomez-Barroso et al., 2010; WAN, 2009; Pew, 2010). They focus on business models and finance, not content or editorial decisions. All of these projects contribute to understanding how the mobile platform is changing the way in which local news is produced, presented and distributed. Together they give insight into the impact mobile news has and is likely to continue having on news in all its forms. However, they also reiterate the lack of analysis of the content available on mobile and the platform's impact on local newspapers' traditional models.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the importance of mobiles in today's society and newspapers' first steps onto the platform. It has established the aims of this thesis within the numerous strands incorporating mobility and journalism. Many researchers believe mobiles should be evaluated not merely as agents of change but as a culmination of advances stretching back over centuries of mass media and communication history. Goggin, for instance, argues that while mobiles are altering the way news is consumed, they are themselves consequences of historical change and part of wider communication advances (Goggin, 2006). History shows that the vast majority of people will only make use of technology if they can see clear benefits. People do not or will make full use, if any, of the majority of applications and facilities available on their phone (Thurlow et al., 2004:42). As the demand for instant news grows, so does the need for news accessible on the mobile platform.

Smartphones are so successful because they combined the rise of the internet and expansion of mobile in terms of both popularity and technological possibilities. Guy Klemens also argues "society had to change in order to demand the cellular phone" (2010:2-3). Mobile technology adapts to meet wants and needs, but journalists have already and will continue to have their lives altered by the functions on offer. The biggest innovations have always brought "profound social and economic alterations, and even whole new lifestyles" (García-Montes et al., 2006:68). As such, mobile is a consequence of social processes but also a device that has social consequences (Ling and Donner, 2009:135). As Goggin highlights, ordinary people "do have considerable power to shape technologies" (2006:209). This creates both opportunity and challenges for local newspapers.

This thesis fills a gap in research through its focuses on content and local newspapers. No matter the platform, content will always remain important when studying news. As global networks grow, people remain interested in their local area and access news from the location of their local area. Local newspapers can capitalise on the fact that local plays an increasingly

important part in the global role of the web and meaning is produced locally. Mobiles allow local stories to be accessed internationally which widens the potential audience. Readers can access the latest news as it happens wherever they are, but that also creates new expectations and demands from the audience. The constant and immediate nature of mobile news presents new opportunities but technology can also alienate and divide. Local newspapers are balancing the demands of an increasing number of platforms against a background of shrinking newsrooms and decreasing advertising revenues. Mobile must make money if it is to play an important part in the future of news and, while there are many opportunities, there is little evidence of newspapers being able to financially capitalise on the platform so far.

The next chapter further investigates how transformations created by mobile are threatening existing newspaper models and how the platform sits within existing theories of print and desktop.

Chapter Three: Threats to traditional newspaper models and divides emphasised by mobile

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established how local newspapers found themselves facing a new, increasingly important platform while battling plummeting print circulations and growing digital demands. This chapter focuses on the challenges to traditional newspaper models created by these circumstances. It creates context by examining the existing research field around newspapers which are printed weekly rather than daily (3.2). It then focuses more specifically on mobile and elements particular to the platform which could potentially also challenge traditional models across daily and weekly titles. The formation of global networks and the impact on local communities is examined in the context of local news being created, shared and received on an international platform (3.3). The following section (3.4) examines links between mobility, communities and the traditional roles of local newspapers, which can now be performed regardless of location. It first establishes the characteristics of community (3.4.1) then explores what community journalism means in an era of mobility (3.4.2). Finally, this chapter examines the digital divide on the mobile platform (3.5) and questions how this may affect the potential impact on mobile news both on individuals and local communities. All of these elements were used to focus the interviews within Johnston Press, to interrogate challenges to newspaper models, and to a lesser extent guide the content analysis across platforms. The conclusion is section 3.6.

3.2 "The weekly press was an umbilical part of the whole scene": Failure to acknowledge the importance of weekly newspapers

England's local weekly newspapers date back to the 1700s and have played a vital role for communities since then. As print circulations continued to decrease in recent decades, new trends started to emerge including using the web and mobile platforms to increase reach and ease lost revenue. Some daily titles became weekly or bi-weekly print newspapers while still offering online news daily. In 2014 Ray Tindle, owner of Tindle Newspapers which publishes more than 220 weeklies, argued that the weekly industry had "a long and happy future" (Greenslade, 2014b). He said forecasts of the early demise of newspapers were mistaken. Peter Preston argued that it was actually England's daily newspapers which became very sick, very fast and that affected weekly titles too. He said that "weakened British evening papers affected local papers in general because the weekly press was an umbilical part of the whole reading and ad-selling scene" (Preston, 2013). Such arguments make it clear why it is important for more research to focus on daily and weekly titles, rather than the present trend which excludes weekly newspapers. Despite the importance of weekly newspapers, even within the previously discussed lack of research into local newspapers generally, there remains a remarkable dearth of studies. This thesis addresses dailies and weeklies; examining the differences, similarities and changing models of both. The future is likely to see less frequent print editions. This makes the need for research into weekly titles even clearer.

 Stephen Lacy et al., during an American study into content analysis sample sizes, concluded that weeklies had rarely been studied as a source of information even when increasing circulations (1995). Coulson et al. analysed 1,027 weekly newspapers and highlighted not

only the importance of weekly newspapers but also the lack of research into the field (2001).

They propose:

> Despite the growth in weeklies, media scholars have tended to ignore them.
> Unlike the daily newspaper industry that has been described in published research,
> no published studies have looked at the nature and extent of the entire weekly
> newspaper industry. This failure seems odd because people obviously are
> interested in reading weeklies and because there is evidence that weeklies and
> dailies compete for readers. (Coulson et al., 2001:16)

In the same year Lacy et al. researched the impact of competition on weekly newspaper

advertising rates (2001). More than a decade later a similar team headed by Lacy and

Coulson focused on how weeklies in America were moving online (2012). It provided the

most exhaustive comparison between dailies and weeklies in recent years. Coulson et al.

explained:

> Weekly newspaper industry trends are not regularly documented in scholarly
> publications. Indeed, the last scholarly examination of U.S. weekly newspapers
> (published in 2001) used 1997 data. (Coulson et al., 2012:2)

It concluded that the weekly newspaper industry had changed dramatically between 1997 and

2011 yet weeklies had "not adapted the internet to the degree that they could have"

(2012:20).

Before that research, one of the few projects to examine weeklies took place in 2007, again

focused on the US, and saw Jennifer Wood Adams conclude that most saw the internet as the

future of publishing with online editions as complementary to print (Adams, 2007:36). More

research into weekly newspapers has taken place in the United States prompted by a rise in

circulations compared with a continued decline for dailies. However the focus remains

primarily on dailies, a move which academics such as Lacy et al. argue is difficult to

understand (1995). In Newspaper Competition in the Millennium, Hugh Martin examined

6,700 weekly newspapers with particular focus on their role in communities and the economic conditions "that foster weekly growth as an industry" (Bridges et al., 2006:ix). A study examining citizen journalism sites as information substitutes within the US included 86 weekly and 138 daily newspapers (Fico et al., 2013). Despite being one of few projects to include weeklies, it still had an imbalance towards dailies. The same weekly/daily balance was used by the team during a project which concluded that "articles in dailies contain more sources with greater diversity than do articles in weeklies". Other US research focused on weekly newspapers includes Jennifer D. Greer and Yan Yan who examined the use of social media (2010); Jennifer Wood Adams on the websites of weekly newspapers (Adams, 2007); and Jack V. Karlis, Kelly A. Mitchell et al. who concluded the weekly newspaper industry's websites didn't "live up to potential" (2012).

Outside the US, with notable exceptions[12], there are few examples of projects focusing on any aspect of weekly. Nagel concludes:

> Though challenges facing daily newspapers in urban centres have been well documented, comparatively little is known about how smaller newspapers are responding to changes brought by the Internet. (Nagel, 2015:ii)

This research's comparison of how dailies and weeklies work across three platforms in England is unique and goes some way to address the lack of research into weekly publications, particularly with regard to new developments online and mobile. It will also add to the international picture of how local newspapers, both daily and weekly, deal with new platforms. Such research offers a snapshot in time during the early stages of mobile news, an

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[12] Weekly newspaper research of particular note includes Jordaan's work on Facebook and Twitter on newsroom routines and cultures at two South African weeklies (2013); Dyson's focus on classified ads in Britain (2011); Esser and Umbricht's research into political coverage in the US, British, German, Swiss, French and Italian newspapers (2013); Taylor's examination of local press reporting of opposition to the Iraq war in the UK (2014).

opportunity which cannot be repeated. It captures many of the challenges for local

newspapers, regardless of their print frequency, on global platforms.

3.3 Challenges of creating local news within global communities on multiple platforms

Local newspapers boast many attributes which have proved ideal for transferring online.

Campbell describes them as having strong brands, expertise, trust and already have the

necessary infrastructures such as lots of content and large existing customer bases (Campbell,

2004:1). They are also powerful advertising platforms which can easily and cheaply promote

their own online products. They benefit from the fact people remain interested in what is

happening locally even though international news is available in many forms. Devereux

states that individuals still care what goes on in their own neighbourhood despite the fact that

"local lives are increasingly lived in the shadow of global phenomena" but they (2008:49).

People who drive past a police cordon on their way to work want more information and one

of the first sources they turn to is their local newspaper. In the past that meant waiting for a

printed copy of the news, now it means carrying out an online search, checking social media

or logging onto the website of their local newspaper for instant information. Steenson

describes breaking news as having always been among the most popular online articles and is

clearly something which lends itself ideally to mobile news (Steenson, 2009:822). There is an

ever growing expectation of wanting to know what is going on right now (Harvey, 1990:59).

Ward describes these modern-day readers as the "'I know what I want and I want it now'

news consumer market" (2002:27). Local news can be instantly accessed on global platforms.

Considerable research has been undertaken on mobile networks and location. Of most relevance is work by Gordon and Souza e Silva which looks at a growing need for local information, evidently an area where mobile news by local newspapers could excel. Statements such as "the concept of the web as a metaphorical city has given way to the reality of the web as part of the city" illustrate the importance of good sources of local online news and their role in society (2011:9). The authors argue that mobility and networks make us connect more with the things around us; that physical location determines the types of information retrieved online; technology has made people more aware of their location and able to make use of their location thus transforming the nature of physically situated social interaction:

> Net locality changes the meaning and value of the web, not because the technology has determined that to be the case, but because people have adopted networked technologies for local purposes. After roughly 20 years of existence, it is clear now that the web needs to be understood in its local context. The time has passed for comparing virtuality and physicality. We do not leave our bodies, even momentarily, for digital interactions. And increasingly, we do not leave the context of our locality in order to interact with and within digital networks. We exist in communities, neighbourhoods, networks, and spaces. The global networks that enable these interactions shape the conditions, but they do not produce meaning. Meaning is produced locally. (Gordon and Souza e Silva, 2011:179-180)

Gordon and Souza e Silva highlight the arguably equal influence of local knowledge and information on shaping global networks. They are also clear that technology develops in response to social change. No matter how internationally connected and globally networked an individual may be, their digital interaction could increase interest in their immediate surroundings. Thus increasing the desire and need for local news.

3.4 Local news that builds communities regardless of location

3.4.1 What is community?

A vast array of online sites keep people in touch anywhere and at any time through mobiles but cannot perform roles credited to local newspapers. They are not trusted in the same way by communities (Preston, 2013). This section looks at the growing research field examining journalism and community. It focuses on arguments relevant to the mobile delivery of information potentially extending the reach of local newspapers, and the challenges that could create. It starts by examining definitions of community, as most relevant to this project. Difficulties in defining community have led to individual characteristics being singled out, highlighting its complexity. They include commitments, identity, culture, affect-laden relationships, social ties, family roots, nostalgic connections, "a means to an ends", a "nearness to people", intimacy, care, stories and leadership (Barney and Feenberg, 2004; Hess and Waller, 2017; Lowrey et al., 2008; Robinson, 2017). It is in this sentiment that journalism is embedded and this powerful series of relationships that come into force as mobiles connect communities beyond geographical boundaries.

Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined community has been made more relevant by technological developments, 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined' (1983: 18). Guibernau and Rex took this further in 2010 with the notion that communities are always imagined and limited as even the smallest villages will not all know each other and the largest nations are finite (Guibernau and Rex, 2010:57). Degrees of virtuality have and will always exist in community life. The internet is just the newest in a long line of mediums through which communities have been imagined or created through history (Feenberg and Bakardjieva, 2004:36). Marshall McLuhan first created the concept of the 'global village' in 1962. Its relevance has increased

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with every technological advance, alongside fears around the erosion of society (Aldridge, 2007). In 1996 Schuler put rebuilding community as humanity's most pressing issue highlighting concerns around disempowerment, isolation and powerlessness. He said wider solutions must be found within the networked society, with the need for new communities fashioned from the old. Most relevant to a debate around local news is the academic discussion around the importance of physical location, and even political boundaries. As Aldridge states, "... for most people, most of the time, their immediate locality is very important. Here social change and political decisions become real: it is in actual localities that people function as citizens (Aldridge, 2007:2)." The next section focuses on how definitions of community sit within journalism research and their relevance to this thesis.

3.4.2 Exploring community journalism in changing times

Existing definitions of community journalism are rather limited, particularly in the US where the majority of such research has been undertaken. There is a tendency to focus on small communities at the expensive of towns and cities, and weekly rather than daily titles. This research will argue that the majority of roles performed by traditional, local newspapers are community-based and, as location-focused mobile communities grow, the definition must widen. This thesis argues that local newspapers are more relevant and important than ever to community as mobile dominance increases.

The definition of community journalism has been refined over the decades. It originated in the US among tiny villages in the middle of 20th century before being broadened at the start of 21st century to communities outside small towns (Terry, 2011). The term 'community journalism' was first used by Professor Ken Byerly at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the early 1960s (Terry, 2011:72). Traditionally newspapers with circulations

below 15,000 were described as community newspapers, as were weekly titles (Abernathy, 2014:2). Such a simplistic description would now label the vast majority of English titles as community newspapers. Terry is clear the definition must be more about an approach than circulation and this thesis explores that concept in detail (Abernathy, 2011:72). There is a growing interest in community journalism in England prompted by the decline of local newspapers. However, despite an upsurge in interest and projects in recent years there remains a well-documented lack of research into England's local newspapers and their communities (Radcliffe, 2015). Terry says failure to get a detailed grip on community journalism is due to the lack of "systematic studies of the entire weekly newspaper industry" (Terry, 2011:78). Until fairly recently, what little research there was into weekly newspapers tended to look at community journalism and journalists as snapshots of a much larger organism (Terry, 2011:78). They failed to look more widely at the industry or indeed the role traditional titles play in community journalism. This research will address that problem within England and in doing so explores several concepts which began in the US.

The US's National Newspaper Association describes the community titles it represents as joined with their community by "a shared sense of belonging" (Nnaweb, 2017). This is a rather romantic notion but remains relevant. A similar sentiment was captured in the late 1990s when Aileen Gronewold argued weekly journalism was "the last front porch of America" (Gronewold, 1999). Nielsen credits local news with connecting people, binding them together with more than geographical proximity (Nielsen, 2015:1). Altschull draws a sharp distinction between traditional journalism and community journalism, which he saw as a sense of "union" between the newspaper and the community in which it should be an inseparable part (1996). In contrast, Reader and Hatcher believe community journalism is most journalism because the majority is done at a community level (2012). They argue that

journalists connect to the area they cover, often living and working there, and as such are community journalists. They believe it is not just news and entertainment that creates community but also trivial and routine items that are understood by people in that mindset. While methods of working and the attachment of journalists are important to community, this thesis argues that the content they create is of primary importance.

Shrinking teams and the closure of offices as well as titles have created a new lens through which scholars are examining community journalism. Williams highlights the closure of offices, large numbers of titles with few owners and increased pressure on decreasing numbers of journalists to claim local news is now less local (2017). Such ideas have prompted a renewed focus and, in some cases, an increased divisiveness, but not fundamentally changed the definition of community news. Robinson describes it thus, "... while techniques and circumstances around traditionally local newspapers have morphed with globalization and digital technologies, community journalism's fundamental emphasis on the citizen and on community remains intact (2017, 1)." He stresses that the primary focus must always be on the people who make the community but questions whether virtual connections are as meaningful as physical ones. Robinson believes "new technologies have reconstituted the very notions of not only "community" and "journalism" but also such fundamentals as what constitutes "nearness and locality" (2017:2). He calls on journalists to "nurture and expand what it means to belong to a home" with an understanding that place can transcend geographic boundaries (Robinson, 2017:3). This links with the increasingly important role local newspapers could play in more transient communities and the realisation that people remain connected to communities even when they are not physically there. As Terry concludes, how readers connect with their communities may no longer be tethered by newsprint but may exist through the internet (Terry, 2011:73). This allows readers who

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identify with a given community, represented by a local newspaper's traditional patch, the ability to remain connected while thousands of miles away.

Some definitions of community journalism include "accidental journalists" who are creating content on social media (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016). Wahl-Jorgensen et al. also highlight what they describe as an emerging trend for rural communities to be covered by citizens after the closure of newspapers. They particularly refer to the increasing use of non-professional photos taken through mobiles. It could be argued that some media are actually replacing old means of communication which local newspapers have always relied upon. For example, people who would have once visited a newspaper office or phoned to pass on information, now do the same thing through social media. Hess and Waller conclude that much of the appeal and relevance of hyperlocal news is that it taps a deep and old news culture. However, they do so in the context of lamenting cuts at local newspapers, highlighting that there are fewer journalists and it is difficult for them to find time to spend in the community (Hess and Waller, 2016:191). The internet has provided more information at a time, perhaps not unconnected, when there are fewer journalists to go through it. However, Hess and Waller stress that the creation of new platforms is not the same as the creation of new content. They state, **"**Facebook's 'buy, sell and swap' pages serve much like snazzy, digital versions of the 18th-century newspaper - an era when shipping notices, properties for lease and goods for sale dominated front pages (Hess and Waller, 2016:188)."

3.4.3 Mobile lines between citizen, community and professional journalists

Cardiff University set up its Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) in 2013 offering support to hyperlocal news producers. It encourages new forms of local digital journalism

and explores new, sustainable models for news (Centre for Community Journalism: 2017). It focuses specifically on local news but works particularly in areas no longer served by newspapers. Work is being done around how 'neighbourhood news websites' interact with traditional media in a bid to better understand hyperlocal blogs (Creative Citizens, 2017). In 2015 Williams et al. carried out the UK's largest survey of hyperlocal news to date. It found that they carried out many of the same roles as 'mainstream local news' and gave members of the public more of a say. The sites produced news on community activities, politics, civic life and business. While official news sources were given a strong platform, there was no examination of how much news was 'created' through journalism rather than press releases. The project found that alternative strategies had been developed to inform debate rather than traditional balanced coverage. The majority of findings have little relevance to this research, regardless of definitions and titles, in that it focuses on a different kind of media. However it is worth noting that it reflects a wider interest in how or if an emerging strand of community journalism can or will replace local newspapers.

Sue Robinson's research into community journalism again emphasises citizens and the role of journalists who are also members of their local community. She maintains that despite change brought by globalization and digital advances, "community journalism's fundamental emphasis on the citizen and on community remains intact" i.e. journalists focusing on members of a community from within their community (Robinson, 2014:113). By that definition, the journalism is information exchanged within a town or community's physical borders. However, Robinson acknowledges that changes are happening so fast they affect "our very understandings of what is community" (2014:114). This research's assertion that the newspapers within this project should not be excluded from 'community journalism' is an extension of Robinson's belief that definitions of 'community' are challenged by changing

times (2014:114). As she explains: "The very notion of place can transcend geographic boundaries because of transient populations and virtual connections even as we continue to feel psychologically tied to certain physical communities" (Robinson, 2014:115). This research maintains a focus on local newspaper platforms i.e. geographically based news. It asserts that the rise of the mobile platform is strengthening communities defined by location - where people presently live, once lived or have a particular interest in. As Robinson states: "Today we must consider for a moment that community-based journalism should emphasize the 'local' in all of us: that is, the idea that we can be among community as long as we are connected in some way to others (Robinson, 2014:114)."

A number of academics have focused on differences between the roles played by traditional and community journalists. That includes findings that community or citizen journalists have a tendency to focus on their own interests and "relied on official and corporate sources to write about harder news" (Robinson, 2014:116). Franklin has long warned against replacing professional journalists with poor substitutes (Franklin et al., 2010:202-13; Franklin, 2014:482). Fico et al. describe them as "imperfect substitutes at best", particular with regard to traditional journalism covering local government (2013:116). There has also been emphasis on a perceived importance of information flowing both ways, in contrast to traditional gatekeeper models. An example of this was Robinson's study of mainstream press and citizen journalists after Hurricane Katrina (Robinson, 2009). A further study in 2011, focused on Madison, involved interviews with citizens and professional journalists. It revealed convergences between the groups of news writers as well as dichotomies. Robinson concluded: "By returning to our core understanding of community journalism as centred round the citizen and journalist the media revolution at hand can reinvigorate feelings of belonging and connectedness to home (Robinson, 2011:118)." This research maintains that

movement and the flow of information between the digital world and geographic locations are inextricably linked to any modern definition of news communities. News and its production can remain local even when its readers are not. Hess and Waller argue that 'geo-social journalism' eschews theoretical universalizing and instead demands fine-grained analyses of the specific dynamic of each 'geo-social' publication, its setting and the practices which shape it and it in turn shapes (2017:9). The belief that local titles operate in different ways is examined in depth by this research and is one of the reasons why content analysis is carried out on weekly and daily titles in different regions. However, every title cannot be the focus of specific research due to the constraints of time and reality. Thus this project examines one of the country's largest newspaper groups in order to highlight similarities created by ownership, but also differences prompted by geography and local editorial teams. This research highlights that existing theories around community are not sufficiently robust for the digital era. It evolves the concept of community news within the mobile context.

3.4.4 Shared threats to journalism and communities

As journalism, communities and technology evolves, so too must theory. Nielsen challenges perceptions of the gatekeeper role within modern journalism. Journalists have long been regarded, and regard themselves, as holding the powerful to account and acting as watchdog. However he believes readers expect much more than merely challenging those in powerful positions. One of the primary demands of local journalists is that they not only understand and appreciate their community's values but also care about it. Nielsen found that they want local journalists to act as glue that helps bind the community together and as such provide solutions, rather than just raising problems and issues in the area. This highlights the significant connection between local journalism and local community. Readers are looking

for something that sets their world apart "from the seeming boundlessness and openness of the wider world" (Nielson, 2015:18). Journalists do this by orienting people "towards each other with a shared geography", offering a common set of references with news and more (Nielson, 2015:16). Nielsen concludes that as threats to local journalism continue, newspapers will do less to foster community integration than they have traditionally. He accepts this even while acknowledging that digital advances could offer individuals and communities more benefits than ever. This research will investigate that belief further through its examination of local mobile news. Portable, instant news means members of a community, created through a joint interest in a specific geographical place, can be connected quicker and without regard to their existing location. It challenges Nielson's assertion by examining if community integration could be strengthened beyond the confines of an area traditionally only served by a print product.

Terry also advocates for journalism which fights for and unites its community. He believes future success will be decided "at the nexus of reader and newspaper" (Terry, 2011:74). He theorises that community journalism now includes all local journalism, particularly because of shrinking circulations. He splits local journalism into two types: vertical, larger media which cover and cut across entire communities from top to bottom, and horizontal, niche media which specialize in particular topics or audiences. This thesis argues that, because print audiences are now much smaller, targeting a specific physical area, as they all do, makes them niche and horizontal. Terry maintains that even the largest local newspapers must connect with their community to survive.

> In the past, larger, urban daily newspapers may have been able to be detached, even isolated, from their audiences and communities in ways that community newspapers simply could not get away with and still flourish. It is a lesson those larger newspapers are painfully learning now. Declining circulation numbers and

ad revenue at large daily newspapers demonstrate there is a need for journalism of different sort at the metro level and that things are proceeding in the right direction at the community level, assuming a sustainable financial model can be put in place. More than a method or a theory, community journalism is an attitude that journalists of any stripe can adopt. The future and the present are hyperlocal and hyperlinked. (Terry, 2011:79-81)

This hyperlocal approach, no matter the area covered, is a concept that only emerged among scholars relatively recently. This thesis will argue that as the number of local journalists shrinks, it is more likely that the smaller remaining teams on the trusted and established titles will be able or have to play that role. Terry's belief that titles must connect better at a grassroots level with their communities will be examined within the context of mobile news. This research will question if, rather than being a new phenomenon, this is in fact a return to the style and standard of local journalism before the cuts of recent decades. Terry also agrees with Friedland (2001), Nielsen (2015) and Robinson (2017) that journalism is no longer just about reporting, but about serving and building communities. For local journalists the challenge is "melding physical and virtual communities" while finding business models which will allow them to survive (Terry, 2011:78). Terry believes many of the problems facing local journalism are caused by the changing consumer habits, e.g. the loss of independent stores, rise of large malls and online shopping. Although he focuses solely on the United States, this direct correlation between changes to towns and the financial fortunes of newspapers is worth noting (Terry, 2011:79). He argues that the loss of small stores has weakened communities and that has also hit the newspapers or websites which "draw a circle around a community" and define them. His inclusion of websites at this juncture is interesting as it is often noted that community websites fail to survive for long.

Terry believes the scale of changes affecting all media are widely misunderstood and misinterpreted. He sees trends as being driven "by the media choices of readers and not by

pundits, technology, demography or finances" (Terry, 2011:78). Barney and Feenberg examine to what extent technological determinism created communities online, including how social groups were able to adapt the internet for their own uses as the technology advanced (2004). They define an online community as a relatively stable, long-term group and conclude there is evidence that technology can actually support community. They also acknowledge that there are often examples where a lack of necessary technology prevents community, or at least the progression of a community in the manner to which members envisage. They call for projects to examine how to improve and support communities online, rather than judge the internet in its present state. They want more "community-friendly networks". They do not seek to redefine communities because they are online but argue that "where groups seek community, they find the means to create it". They argue that some communities have adapted from physical meetings to online. Therefore, while the internet remains a communication model, it can also lead to a way of life. Feenberg goes further as he explores the connections between technology and society, challenging the view that they are separate: "Insofar as we continue to see the technical and the social as separate domains, important aspects of these dimensions of our existence will remain beyond our reach as a democratic society (Feenberg, 1999:vii)." This thesis' will use an extended definition of community journalism to look at how mobile can or has changed local news within communities. That is within a framework of threats to both community and newspapers.

3.4.5 Mobility's challenge to connections between identity and physical location

Friedland believes society is so fractured and complex that place and face-to-face interactions are no longer sufficient for maintaining strong communities (2001). He highlights increased mobility and migration, as well as the use of communications technologies for personal

networks. Thus making it increasingly necessary for people to "maintain community and its

meaning through shared culture" (Friedland, 2001:364). He concludes that community is

necessary for democracy to be plausible (Friedland, 2001:349).

> As the binding ties of traditional community have dissolved, new forms of
> communicative connection have developed to take their place. Furthermore, the
> patterns of ties that these new forms of connection create are simultaneously
> networks of communication and social structure. It is no longer possible to
> separate social structure from communication (if it ever was). This moves
> networks of communication to the fore in a dual role. They bind and constitute
> fundamental social groupings, including communities (traditionally understood
> through the concept of integration), and they also provide new, more flexible, and
> complex pathways of social change. (Friedland, 2001:361)

People build identities and groups that are often intrinsically linked to the physical areas

where they live, work or know best. While Friedland believes the boundaries of these

communities are not fixed (Friedland, 2001:376), established local newspapers have decades

of shared experiences to help readers frame social groups based on location. This thesis will

expand that notion through mobile.

Nicodemus reasserts the importance of local news in community because of its ability to

facilitate the democratic process. He describes journalists as highlighting common interests, a

shared sense of purpose, transcending opposing views and uniting communities (Nicodemus,

2004:161). He believes this is when communities are most likely to be successful, aided by

local journalism.

> A collective identity or solidarity is a "we-ness" that characterizes its members. It
> occurs when people successfully overcome many of the personal and cultural
> differences that separate them and share thoughts and feelings as though they are
> one. Local media foster this sense of collective identity when they offer the
> community a clear, well-focused set of values, beliefs, or goals with which its
> members identify. Those residents who can identify with one another on the basis

of some perceived common interest have the greatest potential to act. (Nicodemus, 2004:166)

Support for and belief in the future of local journalism often comes from within such ideas of community. This thesis will expand on that and argue that geographical common interest becomes more powerful when it is removed from the confines of location. Hess and Waller are positive about the survival of local journalism (2016). They have conviction in the power of journalists to do more than simply report on an area and argue that place still matters, perhaps more than ever, in the digital world. This concept is extended further through mobile journalism which creates more than 'place-based' news.

Hess and Waller maintain that 'sense of place' helps to conceptualize individuals' physical connections to a place without assuming they are actually there (2017). They believe journalists need a clear understanding of how that area and its people fit in a globalized world in order to interpret the impact of wider issues on the local community (Hess and Waller, 2016:6). They say local news even goes as far as nurturing "understandings of the 'local'", an argument which extends local from being simply geographical to a sense of belonging. In an increasingly mobile society, they might also share sensibilities about more than one place (Hess and Waller, 2016:7). Hess and Waller fuse cultural studies and political economy to suggest the power of local journalism comes from it being based in people's everyday experiences. They believe many of the most traditional newspaper roles, e.g. the placing of death notices, help readers not only engage in community but also create a sense of place. They focus on how news is made and used as well as stories being offered to readers as tools to actually create meaning. They even go as far as arguing that what many would describe as the key journalistic attribute of objectivity stops journalists bringing people together, facilitating conversations online and fighting for the interests of the local area. They urge

journalists to generate legitimacy rather than profits (Hess and Waller, 2016:192) and blame

powerful media conglomerates for journalists losing sight of their roots.

> There is a need to rethink the notion of what is news and look towards how local media connect people across business, economic, social, cultural, political and apolitical levels. We have highlighted that in a complex, globalized web of information flows there remains a basic need for human order. The ability to help generate the rules, direct the traffic or serve as a shining beacon in digital information flows and nodes generates immense power. In other words, the ability to be perceived as the legitimate source of all things 'local' to a given audience is arguably the most powerful influence of all. (Hess and Waller, 2016:188)

Hess and Waller focus on established local news platforms and the power they have to

represent "community sentiment" (Hess and Waller, 2016:9), which policymakers and others

understand as "public opinion" because of its reach[13]. While many academics focus on

smaller community news producers, Hess and Waller develop the concept of connecting local

news audiences with the most powerful in society. They use this to insist that journalists must

not only represent their local area but also be advocates for it. Thus benefiting themselves as

well as the area they serve (Hess and Waller, 2016:9). This use of what many would see as

local newspapers' traditional power is an argument which needs more exploration. That is

likely to follow as more print titles are acknowledged as being community journalism, as

argued in this thesis. This concept will be examined on the mobile platform both in terms of

the content created and the future role of local news. It will question what part and

importance the role of mobile has in the distribution and survival of local news. Hess and

Waller argue both local and community can be "multi-layered" (2013:7). This research will

examine a method of remaining connected with places left behind physically but not socially.

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[13] Hess and Waller use the phrase geo-social instead of community. It is defined as having "a solid connection to geographic territory while acknowledging the wider social space in which they play a role, both in holding an influential position in certain social flows and movements and as a node to the wider global news media network" (Hess and Waller, 2013:49).

Hess notes that little work has conceptualized "local journalism's place in a networked society, or how understanding the 'community ties' thesis that has historically underpinned most scholarship on local news could help 'big' news media to maintain its relevance to society" (Hess and Waller, 2013: 2). This research will combine concepts of community to extend understandings of local news on the mobile platform and the theoretical roles it may play in future.

3.4.6 Conceptualizing community journalism in the mobile era

Maffesoli explores the emotional community and the search for others who feel and think in the same way as ourselves. He argues that reason plays a small role when opinions are formed and expressed. Instead it lies with "the mechanisms responsible for the spread of commonly held feelings or emotions" (Maffesoli, 1996:13). He discusses community as a "collective sensibility" which unites people through shared experiences, memories and emotions, leading to a communal drive. It can include many diverse elements but leads to the creation of a whole. The conclusion is that communal tendencies work alongside technological advances and reinforce common bonds (Maffesoli, 1996:15). He argues that community and its bonds are formed by physical closeness, by being together. He acknowledges these are the simplest of foundations, but this idea can be extended to readers who share a bond because of an interest or passion in a geographical place, even if they are not physically in close contact. Thus a community forms through news despite them only be connected by a mobile device and site focused on a specific town or city of interest. It is "because there is a sharing of the *territory* (real or symbolic) that the communal idea and its ethical corollary are born" (Maffesoli, 1996:16). He describes neighbourhood as anywhere but by necessity a physical location: "The detail is unimportant; what matters is that it represents the overlapping of a certain functionality with an undeniable symbolic weight."

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Maffesoli goes as far as describing media "as a simple pretext to communication" i.e. it leads people to discussion and thus strengthens communities (Maffesoli, 1996:26). This widening definition and role of community journalism adds to the pretext of this thesis.

There are some interesting findings from the Pew Internet report 'How people get local news and information in different communities', particularly with regard to how types of communities use mobile news (Miller et al., 2012). However, once again, it is a report from the United States so while its findings are worth noting, they are unlikely to be reflective of English trends. The most relevant point is that interest in local news is consistently high across all community types. People in cities are most likely to have mobiles but have less community ties and are less willing to pay for local news. More than half of urban (53 per cent) and suburban (57 per cent) residents use a mobile or tablet to get local news or information, compared with 35 per cent in rural. People in the suburbs are most likely to use mobiles to get coupons or discounts for local stores, while large city residents are most likely to use their mobile devices to get information on local traffic or transportation. Similarly, a study specifically focused on the meaning of community journalism is worth noting (Lowrey et al., 2008). The results confirm rather than extend previous theories of community. Namely community is a process of negotiating shared symbolic meaning, and the relationship between media and community is usually depicted by news situated in and producing content relevant to a geographic area. Participants created a list of community journalism characteristics - intimate, caring, and personal; reflecting the community and telling its stories and embracing a leadership role. This illustrates what Lowrey et al. describe as a wish to avoid being "big media" rather than having real meaning. The authors conclude that neither location, physical or virtual space are community in themselves but encourage and intensify the process of community. This thesis acknowledges that community journalism is journalism

capable of fostering the process of community, but argues that as such it can be applied to all the local newspapers within this research.

Table 3.1: Community journalism characteristics highlighted in literature review

Characteristics of community journalism
Attitude
Opinionated
Performed at community level
Emphasis on local
Understanding local values
Understanding local references
Providing solutions
Defining collective identity

Community journalism, in all its forms, can have power in both constructive and destructive ways (Hatcher, 2004). Some of these are relevant to this research and summarised here. Hindman examines coverage of community conflict and change concluding that local newspapers contribute to community stability and help with change (Hindman, 1996). A further element of community journalism research highlights that those who read local

newspapers have stronger community ties than those who don't (Emig, 2016). It should however be acknowledged that there has been little research into which community ties are antecedents to and which are consequences of media use[14].

There are, of course, negative connotations connected to community journalism, particular the bonds created online. Communities and affiliations are viewed as more fleeting online and some question if they are personal enough to satisfy what traditionally constituted community (Feenberg and Barney, 2004; Rheingold, 2000). The very act of forming community creates exclusion and initial online communities need the right software (Barney and Feenberg, 2004; Mosco, 1998). Characteristics of online communities can also be interpreted as negative and positive, such as anonymity and universal interconnectedness. Shah et al. argue against the premise that time spent accessing mass media, primarily television but latterly extending to the internet, has adverse effects such as the erosion of real-world ties and community involvement (Shah et al., 2001:465). They maintain the internet actually has the potential to improve relations and cooperation, and must be conceptualized within social context (Shah et al., 2001:465-466). This research advanced the study of contextual effects by using community-level context measures. It found, "community stability as a contextual variable had a significant impact on individuals' trust and participation well beyond the positive influence of its individual-level counterpart, residential stability" (Shah et al., 2001:495). The strength of community is something that can be used positively by local newspapers and even created (Friedland, 2001; Anderson and Caumont, 1991). This research will expand arguments around community cohesion and journalism to include the mobile platform.

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[14] Robert Merton's 1950 view that community integration precedes newspaper readership remains noteworthy (Merton, 1950).

In 1979 Gene Burd declared that "the separation of community from any type of journalism may be a contradiction" (Burd, 1979:3). His assertion was based on the belief that all journalism is community journalism because countries are constructed of a patchwork of communities. He saw use of the term 'community', meaning only journalism within small communities, as deliberatively negative to reflect an anti-urban, anti-big city bias. Burd believes that prejudice is held by 'writers and thinkers' and critics, not by community journalists. That may still be true today. The strength of online communities created around an interest in local news is that it brings an extra dimension to traditional journalism. While online communities are often accused of allowing people to only associate with the like minded, this thesis will argue that interest in a geographical area goes beyond such limitations. Community journalists, including those who employed by the titles in this study, write content that is of interest to many groups. It is only restricted by its geographical focus, within which hundreds of interests can be served. The newspapers which feature in this research are still based in their communities. The journalists are part of the community because they work there. The same cannot be said of many readers who may consider themselves part of a community even though it is no longer physically true i.e. they have moved location. Local journalists research and write about specific localities and the issues most relevant to that area. As such this thesis maintains that they are community journalists. This new way of conceptualizing community and community journalism in the mobile era has been driven by this study's systematic analysis of scholarly literature pertaining to community and media.

3.5 Cost, access, age and the personalisation of news: The digital divide on the mobile platform

The digital divide has become a well used phrase since it first appeared in the 1990s (Golding, 1998; Fuchs, 2010). It generally refers to disparities within online communities including global i.e. access variations between countries; social i.e. gaps between difference economic groups within countries; and democratic i.e. people who chose to or not to use digital resources, particularly to take part in public life (Castells, 2009; Devereux, 2008). There are many aspects which are relevant to people's ability to access local news in print, desktop or mobile. These include financial ability, class, network coverage, knowledge, language, race, age and gender (Halavais, 2000; Livingstone, 2005; Steenson, 2009). Most relevant to this research is a continued refining of community journalism within a mobile specific digital divide. Little research has been conducted on England's regional mobile divide and none within the context of changing communities (Ling and Donner, 2009). Therefore this research relies on evidence from several countries and it must be acknowledged that many aspects including the context and uses will not be the same.

In theory anyone can use a mobile with internet access to view a newspaper's website, even if the site has not been specifically designed for mobile usage. It is little wonder this seemingly unrestricted access has been hailed as the potential international equaliser bridging gaps between communities both in a local context and across the world. Raimund Schmolze believes the success of mobiles is not surprising as it caters to a most basic human desire, "to be free" (Schmolze, 2005:186). If the great freedom offered by the internet was that information could be accessed at any computer linked to any phone line, the liberation signalled by mobiles was that people can and do, go online with just the equipment they

already carry in their pocket (Schmolze, 2005). However as the potential for access grows so too do the differences between those able to capitalise on it and those who cannot, or choose to opt out. As phones metamorphose into mobile media, the question of the digital divide and open access becomes increasingly important (Goggin, 2006:210). The internet was originally hailed through a utopian perspective for its abundance of free information but users always pay, even if the charge is minimal or hidden (Winston, 1996:82). There are the costs of telephone lines or wireless connections as well as the physical computer equipment needed and the less obvious costs associated with advertising (Winston, 1996:82). The extent to which these financial issues impact on local newspapers' mobile audiences is addressed later in Johnston Press case study.

Cost was prohibitive when the mobiles of the 1980s were seen as little more than status symbols of the super-rich. As prices fell, technology advanced and popularity increased, a very different picture was created until today's mass market was achieved. Technological improvements offer better access to more people but the digital divide of the 1990s still remains (Golding, 1998; Hilbert 2016; Klein, 2017; Poushter, 2016; Thussu, 1998). Ling explained, "as long as there are differences in income, skills, literacy and simple personal preference, there is likely to be some kind of 'digital divide' (2009:72)." In 2016 bandwidth inequality was closely linked to income but accessibility issues also remain connected to age, location, education, perceived relevance and gender (Hilbert, 2016; Ofcom, 2016). To access the mobile web it is necessary to be in an area with sufficient and reliable coverage. In 2017, 69 per cent of online mobile users were happy with their service, compared with 56 per cent in 2009 and 78 per cent in 2014 (BBC, 2009; Ofcom, 2014a; Ofcom, 2014b). Transmission speed and better technology has made information more accessible, but not for everyone. Mobile news creates opportunities but also separates and segregates audiences (Karam, 2009).

In 2017, nine per cent of UK adults had never accessed the internet and the largest groups were made up of the disabled and over 75s (ONS, 2017). The number of smartphone owners was 76 per cent (Ofcom, 2017a). The latest smartphones are used more predominantly by adopters i.e. those willing to experiment[15] (Sooryamoorthy et al., 2008:745-746; Westlund, 2008:447). There is a vast spectrum of stages of technological acceptance including a rising generation who view it merely as conduits to content (Hinton, 2009:14). A lack of technological education, skill and confidence can also stop readers from accessing mobile news. As previously established, this thesis defines all local journalism as community journalism, with readers forming a range of multifaceted communities.

As mobile news developed it created the potential for newspapers to target specific audiences. One example is those who have more disposable income and are therefore more attractive to advertisers (Devereux, 2008:54). Devereux believes access to much media is controlled by the ability to pay and audiences are picked as consumers (2008:103). The more money an individual has the more attractive they become and more likely they are to have full media access. He blames this on powerful businesses that have "colonized the internet" (2008:108). Newspapers need to make money to survive and they want to attract a demographic which appeals to advertisers.

The scale of mobile news consumption has prompted this thesis to view the mobile platform and its commercial potential as beneficial for local news (see Page 81). The internet removed geographical limitations and mobile news removes physical context. It allows people to unite around issues and affinities (Reese et al., 2007:236-237). In theory the world is now a global village where everyone can access the same information at the same time yet in reality many overestimate its potential (Devereux, 2008:14). There is an increasing flow of information,

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[15] These are mostly men aged 15 to 49 and well educated who favoured online news media that were constantly accessible

images and content but it is not completely global and does not flow everywhere at a constant rate (Khiabany, 2003). Critics argue it will lead to uniformity and homogeneity (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005:85). Supporters believe it can facilitate the flow of information and empowerment (Thussu, 1998:4). This research will establish the relevance of mobile divides to local newspapers.

One of the great advantages of accessing news via mobiles is that people can pick exactly what they want to read, disregarding all else. In some ways this is nothing new. However mobile readers can select which headlines they want delivered to their phones, meaning they never have to see the stories which they believe may not be of interest to them. Many local newspapers already have mobile apps dedicated to specific interests such as a football team – selected news is delivered straight to them without any regard for other areas such as news or politics. Similar issues have already arisen with the greater numbers of channels and programmes available through digital television (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005). Choice has created division by taking away what Curran describes as 'being part of an audience', sharing an experience, knowing others will be watching and undermining some of the pleasures of viewing (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005:357). This divide sees the control shifting from those who produce the news, to those it is produced for (Schlesinger and Doyle, 2015:149),

> The new media and the Internet in particular have made the idea of the 'personal newspaper' (the so-called Daily Me), in which content is assembled according to individual taste and interest, a realistic possibility (even if not much in demand). The more this happens, and it could apply to radio and television as well, the less the mass media will provide a common basis in knowledge and outlook or serve as the 'cement of society'. (McQuail, 2005:158)

Thus mobile news sites may in fact make certain types of information less accessible, buried behind an increasingly personal selection. Mass media has long been accused of presenting a fragmented picture of reality, referred to as 'The Daily Me' or the 'privatisation' of

experience (Bignell, 2002; Findahl, 2009; Thurman, 2011). The personalisation of news via mobiles is seen as being "especially problematic for the less knowledgeable" (Windahl et al., 2009). Academics including McQuail (2005); Devereux (2008); Thurlow et al. (2004); Thussu (1998); and Herman (1998) believe new technologies have the chance to broaden the dominant media agenda while also highlighting that increasingly personal newspapers could undermine the mass media's role as the 'cement of society', lamenting the marginalisation of the public sphere where an informed public is essential to democracy. Local newspapers have always played an important role in their communities and democracy. This thesis will examine how that could adapt with the growth of mobile news. Online communities created around the physical geography of a local newspaper will see further evolution. As highlighted in this chapter, they can be more inclusive at the same time as being exclusive to specific communities.

The mobile divide could make some readers inaccessible to local newspapers. However, high adoption rates among particular groups, namely the young and ethnic minorities, could make them more accessible (Pew, 2010:1). Divides have always existed when it comes to the mass media, local newspapers and informing the public. The illiterate have always only been able to access information if read aloud and that may now shift to those who are not technically literate. That would leave them excluded not only from democratic discussions but also their 'local community (Lüders, 2008:697). Waisbord points out that television and radio were originally expected to lessen gaps in both social and economic development for different groups of society. Although that did not materialise, similar expectations remain around technology (Waisbord, 1998:157). Patterns of exclusion were apparent in earlier technologies and are also likely to impact mobile news, ranging from quality of reception to cost and speed of handsets (Golding, 1998). This thesis will use the Johnston Press case study to question if this is a concern as the percentage of news accessed on mobile increases.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter started by addressing the importance of the insufficiently researched field of local weekly newspapers. It has highlighted areas of mobile which create opportunity but also threats to traditional models of news, and how this relates to an extended theory of community journalism. Within that fit wider concepts such as the digital divide and increasing personalisation of news. It is from the initial aims (see Page 6) and the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3) that two research questions have emerged which this thesis will explore.

RQ1, How are the traditional models of England's local newspapers being challenged by the mobile platform?

RQ2, How is the community role of journalism within England's local newspapers changing as mobile news grows?

A number of assumptions are made in this thesis, many of which have already been raised and are later explored in greater detail. For clarity they are:

i, Local newspapers benefit from larger audiences: The entire economic structure of newspapers has always relied on the sale of advertisements. The loss of print audience is blamed for the industry's precarious state (see Section 2.4). Larger, targeted audiences increase profitability, influence and stability. This is true online as it always has been in print.

ii, The mobile platform should be embraced by local newspapers: Audiences are moving to mobile and driving the demand for mobile news regardless of what newspapers do. In an era when new sources of news are emerging as competitors to traditional news providers and

challenging the existence of newspapers, increasing mobile audience is hailed as positive by industry and academics alike (Katz, 2008; Chisholm, 2015).

iii, Multiplatform delivery of content makes economic sense: As above, millions of readers already access local news on desktop and mobile, and increasing audience ensures newsrooms are economically viable. The focus of this thesis remains content, how it is delivered on mobile and what could be improved within the existing constraints. However the more in-depth economics of online journalism, including paywalls, and print decline are beyond the scope of this thesis.

iv, Daily newspapers are better resourced and more profitable than weeklies: The case study probes differences between the resources of daily and weekly titles. The researcher was aware of this disparity through her knowledge of the wider industry.

Together Chapters Two and Three establish a timeline which plots technological and local newspaper development alongside each other. Mobile news was created where the two met and they should therefore be studied together for context and greater understanding. The history of weekly and daily newspapers has also been examined. They too are inextricably linked and must be treated as such to gain meaningful insight. Gerald Goggin vociferously appeals for more mobile research bringing together communications, cultural and media history. He emphasises that such research would allow informed decisions to be made by newspapers as the platform is shaped (2006:211).

The mobile platform presents new challenges for community journalism and this thesis argues that includes all local newspapers in England. Chapters Two and Three have touched upon many of the issues and challenges created by the mobile platform as its reach extends. That foundation allows this research to examine local newspapers within this wider

community and technological context. It has also highlighted many aspects of original contribution within two under researched areas - mobile news and local newspapers, particularly weekly editions. It examines how traditional models are being challenged by the platform, including differences between weekly and daily newspapers. It also focuses on external influences such as the mobile divide and local demands of global platforms within a networked society. The next chapter examines the history and advantages of case study and content analysis, looking in detail at why they are the most appropriate methods for this research.

Chapter Four: Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction: Examining a developing platform within a long-established industry

In the wider context of journalism and technology studies, both new media and mobile research are relatively new. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that a satisfactory all-encompassing theory has yet to be developed for mobile news. In part, this is to be expected because both elements are so diverse they are individually open to a broad selection of methodologies, theoretical perspectives and interpretations (Ling and Donner, 2009). This research needed an appropriate way of examining content in great depth. It also needed a methodology which allowed for initial findings to be quickly developed to guide further investigations. It is a multi-method study which is further illuminated by a single case study. The content of nine newspapers was examined before interviews were carried out at Johnston Press. Information gathered during the content analysis was used to formulate questions for the more in-depth study, as described by Gable (1994). This created a greater understanding of the relevant issues and allowed for new findings to be explored.

At the outset it is important to accept that with mobile technology developing quickly; as the medium changes so too must the methods. As Buscher et al. state: "Mobile methods are intrinsically experimental (2011:120)." In a very short space of time mobiles have become central to all our lives and accessing news on the move is becoming increasingly fundamental to many people's ways of knowing, yet it continues to develop. Case study is particularly helpful when examining developing technology as it allows for new trends to be incorporated during the process. It is ideal to examine the changing phenomenon of news. It allows a

multi-method research design which focuses on a specific set of circumstances in a particular timeframe. Another strength is that case studies relate to people's everyday experiences and create an understanding of complex real-life situations (Soy, 1997). Mobile's adoption by local newspapers has many variants and represents a 'complex real-life situation'. The case study method is flexible, produces diverse outcomes and supports all types of philosophical paradigms. At best it can be used to provide "a rich description of social phenomena, generating knowledge of the particular within the interpretivist paradigm" (Iacono et al., 2011**:**57)**.**

This chapter establishes why case study is the most suitable approach for this research, while acknowledging its weaknesses. The first section (4.2.1) sets the scene with a focus on the history of case study, followed by an overview of criticisms which have been levelled at the methodology (4.2.2). It then examines different types of case study, their relevance to this project and examples of best practice (4.2.3). The next section (4.4) explores the methodology used in this research and the rationale behind it. It then goes into further details of specific areas including how the number of cases was selected (4.5) and why constructed week sampling was used (4.5). It explores the logic behind the methodology selected to analyse three platforms of each title (4.7) and how a tangible sampling framework was created for the content analysis (4.8). It then focuses specifically on the interview techniques used with Johnston Press management and methods of interpretation (4.9). The conclusion is 4.10.

4.2.1 The history of case study research

The history of case study methodology is long and chequered. Some academics believe the first case studies date back to 1900 in the field of anthropology and were first formally

studied in the Chicago School of Sociology (Johansson, 2003). Others say it was introduced

by Fredric Le Play in 1829 while researching family budgets. It is now widely acknowledged

that Glaser and Strauss' use of case studies in grounded theory helped establish case study as

its own field and theory (Yin, 2009). Case study theory developed from others, but stands

alone as "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within

single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989:534). Yin combined the experimental logic of grounded

theory with more structured qualitative methods to create a methodology close to that which

most case study academics use today (1994). Yin is widely regarded as the leading expert in

case studies and defines them thus: "An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon

(e.g., a "case"), set within its real-world context - especially when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (2009:18)." Stake goes on to define a case as

"rather special – a noun, a thing, an entity" and case study as developed to explore real cases

in real-life situations (1995). Yin emphasises the method and techniques of case study. Stake

believes the study is defined by interest in cases not methods. Soy also highlights the

importance of questions which are targeted to a limited number of conditions and their inter-

relationships (1997). This is clearly pertinent to this project which focuses on a unique period

of time and circumstances. In case study it is vital to pay attention to contextual conditions,

focus on contemporary events and the experience of those involved.

4.2.2 Flaws and criticism of case study research

Case study is a widely used research method however there remain critics of its validity and

in particular how far such studies can represent anything further than the cases actually

examined. A central criticism is that generalisations are made based upon as few as one case

study (Sarantakos, 2005; Yin, 2009). Bryman believes case studies should not claim to

represent anything other than a snapshot of a contemporary phenomenon (1989). However Johansson describes analytical generalisation as based on three types of reasoning – deductive (create hypothesis, test and compare findings); inductive (theory generated from case data) and abductive (known rule applied to unexpected fact and generalised to similar cases) (2003:8). Levy dismisses concerns over generalisations and argues cases are primarily "vehicles for constructing and supporting broader theoretical generalizations", particularly during case selection and research design (2008:14). Eisenhardt highlights the importance of linking new findings with existing literature for corroboration of generalizability (1989:545). However he stresses that theory building from case studies does not have to rely on previous literature or prior empirical evidence (1989:548). Eisenhardt also dismisses the 'myth' that theory building from case studies is limited by preconceptions. He believes the opposite is true: "This constant juxtaposition of conflicting realities tends to 'unfreeze' thinking, and so the process has the potential to generate theory with less researcher bias than theory built from incremental studies or armchair, axiomatic deduction (Eisenhardt, 1989:546/7)."

A second criticism of case study is that it is too biased towards one case to be useful as more than an exploratory tool (Soy, 1997). Other academics say such criticism is either without proof or based on misunderstanding (Gerring, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2003; Bryman, 1989). Yin defends the case study as expanding and generalizing theories rather than enumerating frequencies. This was supported more recently by Seawright and Gerring who also advocate using one or a small number of cases to understand wider similarities (2008). Flyvbjerg states that single case study generalisations not only contribute to other methods but also can be central to scientific development (2006). He goes on to stress that "the force of example" is underestimated while formal generalisation is overvalued.

Much case study research contributes to wider knowledge based on generalisation. Eisenhardt describes case study research as "especially appropriate in new topic areas" and useful for

extending emergent theory (1989:532). He adds that, "building theory from case study research is most appropriate in the early stages of research on a topic or to provide freshness in perspective" (1989:548). Case study is the most suitable method for this research because of its ability to examine new phenomenon without prejudice. Many academics stress the importance of cross matching methods and avoiding dependence on single informants, to be able to verify the authenticity of the findings (Tellis, 1997; Brewer and Hunter, 1989; Arksey and Knight, 1999). The different types of case study methods and suitability for this research are examined in the following section.

4.2.3 An examination of the different types of case study

Several kinds of case study were investigated before the methodology for this study was finalised. This section examines types of case study, including a specific focus on examples of journalism case studies. Yin is widely acknowledged to be one of the leading authorities on case study methodology. He has explored three strategies of case study - exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies (2003). It is worth noting that Yin also created two further categories - multiple-case studies and collective - yet these can be examined within the context of the initial three definitions. According to Yin, exploratory case studies develop hypotheses and propositions which may need further investigation e.g. a pilot study. Descriptive case studies examine strategies used by people within the case studies and describe national phenomena within the data e.g. describing the data as it occurs. Explanatory case studies examine information at two levels e.g. on the surface and then at a deeper level in a bid to develop theory. Yin argues that it is possible to employ either one or more of these strategies within a research project, particularly as they all overlap (2003:2). Stake is another

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authority on case study and defines three case work strategies – intrinsic, instrumental and collective, which can be regarded as building on Yin's strategies. Intrinsic case studies are very specific and employed where a particular case is being examined rather than a more general problem (1995). It involves studying a case for its own sake rather than with any expectation of implications for other cases. Instrumental case studies aim for generalisation by examining a specific case in order to try and understand something external. Collective case studies use multiple instrumental case studies usually with the specific aim of making comparisons in a particular area. Stake believes that balance and variety in collective studies improve such projects - dissimilarity can help bring clarity. This is similar in some ways to Yin's multiple case study design which involves a number of instrumental case studies.

Academics also regularly highlight the importance of studying the right cases. Soy gives three reasons for selection – because cases are unique, typical or represent a variety of parameters (1997). One particular interesting case study was presented by Deuze et al. who examined the extent of replication in four newspapers (2007). Such comparative studies must select cases which identify areas of both differences and similarities, and due to the nature of newspaper ownership and circulation contain a range of variables. All good case study research follows a rigorous process when building theory. Eisenhardt highlights the following stages: Define research question; select cases; craft instruments and protocols; collect data; analyse data (within-case analysis), shape hypotheses (replication logic across cases); compare with enfolding literature; and reach closure (theoretical saturation when possible) (1989:533). Soy also defines six steps for case study research: Determine and define the research questions; select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques; prepare to collect the data; collect data in the field; evaluate and analyze the data; prepare the report (1997).

The relative naissance of mobile news and the lack of research in this field had to be taken into account when designing the case study method for this project. Yet it was also important to place the findings within the existing international framework in a bid to recognise emerging patterns. All case study research varies as the methodology must alter to fit individual circumstances. There is no exact template for researchers to follow. Miles and Huberman describe it as relying on "researchers to bend the methodology to the peculiarities of the setting" (1994:5).

The initial part of this research focused on daily and weekly newspapers owned by different organisations. This was followed by interviews at one company, Johnston Press, "to explore" the emerging findings, themes and phenomenon in greater depth (Arksey and Knight, 1999:17). The initial round of content analysis and platform comparisons examined nine newspapers in a bid to establish the emerging themes and patterns. This was later more specifically focused on one company to allow more in-depth analysis. Just as interviews can be used to elaborate on initial findings, triangulation with platform and content analysis can be used for what Arksey and Knight describe as confirmation and completeness. It ensures weaknesses in one method are balanced by strengths in others. In fact, far from differences in data weakening results, they can potentially enrich both the analysis and explanation.

Case studies can employ an embedded design, that is, multiple levels of analysis within a single study to strengthen findings (Eisenhardt, 1989:541). This method allows one study to address different but complementary questions and produce more subtle findings. Triangulation is also important as it helps to make sure the right evidence has been obtained. As Stake explained, it either confirms what the findings mean, or leads to ideas about how they could be interpreted differently by different people (2006). It is a process of repetitious data gathering and critical review. Johansson describes it as combining different methods with the purpose of illuminating a case from different angles; to triangulate methodologies

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(2003). The different perspectives are taken from what Denzin labels 'triangulation protocols' (1994). Investigator triangulation is where other researchers verify meaning, theoretical triangulation is where different theoretical perspectives are given to data, or, as in this study, methodological triangulation where a range of data collection methods are used.

There are a range of journalism case studies including some previously mentioned and others which offer differing perspectives on online news. These studies examine a wide range of research questions, angles and theories. Recently much academic focus has been on online newspapers, in particular audience participation and interactivity. Research projects range from focusing on just one newspaper, for example, The Case of Online Newspapers and the Web (Riley et al., 2006), to 16 newspapers in Participatory Journalism Practices in Media and Beyond (Domingo et al., 2008). The focus ranges from the words used to build stories to hyperlinks or interviews at all levels within the newspaper structure. For single and multiple journalistic case studies, data collection is most commonly done using a mixture of interview, content analysis, observation and data management (Stake, 1995).

Garrison and Dupagne's single case study exploration of Media General's converged Tampa News Center in Florida cross checked interviews with document analysis (2003). Erdal used the triangulated approach of textual analysis, interviews and observation in the study of a converged Norwegian public broadcaster (2009). Aviles and Carvajal combined observation and interview when researching multimedia news rooms in Spain (2008). A study by Elizabeth Smith used content analysis to focus on the differences between five US newspapers and their online versions, looking particularly at hyperlinks and the contextual features unique to websites. It found that story content was the same across both platforms 96 per cent of the time (Smith, 2005: iv). Weiss (2009) used similar methods to analyse 20 newspaper websites, focusing on contextual features uploaded with stories online and concluding that 65 per cent had none at all. Early studies such as these Singer and Martin

used content analysis to compare digital and print platforms regularly concluded that most stories were not altered when uploaded to the internet, or had only slight modifications such as new headlines or photographs which had been cropped differently (Singer, 2001; Martin, 1998). Such studies are useful in establishing how newspapers are differentiating between their print and online products. This thesis takes that further by examining mobile.

4.3 Methodology: Rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine mobile news

Case studies must incorporate a series of components - address a research question, address propositions which are possible answers, consist of units of analysis, logically link data to propositions and have robust criteria for interpreting findings (Yin, 1994). More widely there are four essential criteria used to judge the quality of case study research designs: Construct validity, identify the correct operational measures; internal validity, seeking to establish a causal relationship; external validity, testing whether the findings could be generalised beyond the immediate study; reliability, minimising errors and biases to ensure other investigations would reach similar conclusions. The following sections explain how this thesis meets these criteria in creating a robust theoretical case study framework. This research started with analysis of four daily and five weekly titles which created a broad picture of the industry. These findings were followed by a more specific focus on one of the country's largest local newspaper groups Johnston Press. This established a greater depth to the research. While the nine initial newspapers were selected in order to give a broad picture from across a range of independent and multi-national owners, the later examinations were

specifically selected from the same company. The reasoning behind this is explained in greater detail later in the following section, 4.4.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are combined in this research. The data consists of existing text and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. The primary analytic method is systematic content analysis. This largely quantitative analysis was given some qualitative dimensions in the overall assessment of material, some qualitative textual analysis and a degree of subjective judgment honed by professional journalism experience. This study examined news articles on all platforms, including the text of articles and headlines, images and symbolic matter, combined with media data such as circulation, quantity and frequency. This quantitative analysis allows exploration of how news is changing to encompass mobiles and provide clear comparisons with other new, and old, media. The differences between content on mobile and other platforms give clear indications of how the characteristics of mobiles influence the range of stories presented.

All case study research relies on distinct boundaries for workable results (Yin, 2003). The time period over which this research was carried out is one boundary. The limited number of newspapers examined, stories analysed and staff interviewed all form further boundaries. A small number of newspapers formed the content analysis data, followed by an even more select focus on one company, Johnston Press. In order to create a manageable amount of data, the main focus of the analysis was words. This excluded a range of items including photos and video, but did not detract from the primary focus of comparing the type of stories and the varying prominence given to them on different platforms. Only homepage news stories were included, rather than wider sections and older articles, in order to examine one specific element of mobile news. The interview focus was a small number of very senior staff at group level, rather than a larger number of journalists in specific newsrooms. This allowed an examination of how decisions which impacted the entire group were taken at the most senior

level. This was a deliberate choice to gather quality information which was relevant to as many titles as possible. The reasoning behind these decisions is explained in more detail later in this chapter.

4.4 Selecting a manageable number of titles to allow comparison

When conducting content analysis it is particularly important to select a manageable number of cases in order to allow comparison. Nine analyses[16] of contemporary phenomenon in real-life settings were selected for this research following two pilot studies. An initial pilot study was undertaken on daily local newspaper the *Manchester Evening News[17]* to establish the validity of the methods to be deployed. This was followed by second pilot conducted on weekly newspaper the *Banbridge Chronicle[18]*. The two pilots exposed considerable differences in the selection, presentation and distribution of news. The study examined the platforms of four daily newspapers and five weekly newspapers.

The daily newspapers studied were:

Express & Star, Wolverhampton

Stoke Sentinel

North West Evening Mail, Barrow-In-Furness

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[16] A fifth weekly title was added during the research process to expand the findings due to a lack of both mobile and online activity on certain sites.

[17] *Manchester Evening News* was selected as it had the closest circulation size and format to the research and England's largest newspaper, *Express & Star* (Sweney, 2012). It was therefore anticipated to be the most likely to highlight issues with the methodology.

[18] *Banbridge Chronicle* was selected because of its similarities to other weekly titles within the study, yet different ownership. It was therefore anticipated to be the most likely to highlight issues with the methodology.

Oldham Chronicle.

The weekly newspapers studied were:

New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times

Newbury Weekly News

Rotherham Advertiser

Shrewsbury Chronicle

Great Yarmouth Mercury.

The daily newspapers were selected because they all print at least one edition on a daily basis six times a week and contain news focused on a specific region, i.e. a local newspaper. They were each owned by a different media group and were regarded as the flagship publication of the group i.e. those with the largest circulation, reach and/or largest editorial teams. As such there were best able to reflect the aims of the newspaper group. The weekly newspapers were selected for the same reasons, although they are each only printed once a week. The vast majority of local newspapers in England are owned by just five large media companies however the picture is somewhat different when it comes to weekly newspapers. Although the majority of these are also owned by the same media conglomerates, there are many 'independent' newspaper companies which are specific to one geographical area and are long established. As the large companies usually operate digital policies which are implemented across all newspapers in the group, e.g. identical website templates or policies on numbers of articles uploaded to the internet, assessing their largest, flagship newspapers also allows insight more generally into other publications in their ownership and the industry at large.

4.5 Rationale for adapting a constructed week of sampling

This study used an adapted constructed week sampling for the daily newspapers and consecutive days sampling for the weeklies. Each day of the week was represented through the selection of random days to create a composite week. This method was chosen in order to use the most effective size sample for investigating the longitudinal content analysis of regularly updated news sites. Wang (2006:7) describes the ideal size thus: "An effective and efficient sample size is achieved at a point where increasing the number of cases will not significantly improve the representativeness of the sample results while decreasing the number will significantly damage its validity." Thus targeting the right amount of data within the overwhelming amount of online data is important to maintain validity. So while this study avoids the problem of defining sample frames, the effectiveness and efficiency of the samples' sizes was a primary concern. This research used a composite taken in November 2014.

Constructed week sampling is widely regarded as producing more reliable results than either random sampling or consecutive days (Jones and Carter, 1959; Riffe et al., 1993; Stemple, 1952; Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). The results are easier to use for generalising over time and many academics argue it can thus be more reliably used to represent a longer period. Wang has conducted considerable research into the topic and believes "a sample size of six days will effectively and efficiently represent the content on the updated daily news sites in a six-month period of time" (2006:17). This has also been extended with evidence that data collection from one time period can represent a year of content (Wang, 2006:7; Riffe et al., 1993:9). Stempel found that 12 issues from two constructed weeks could effectively represent the content of an entire year. Wang and Riffe (2010:9) went as far as stating that using six simple random days to represent one year could "serve as a guideline for future web content analysis". It is widely accepted that daily-stratified sampling is more efficient than genuinely

random sampling as it avoids issues such as over representing days which may not be representative; for example, Sundays. Riffe at al. conducted research into the effectiveness of random, consecutive day and constructed week sampling in newspaper content analysis (1993). They compared 20 sets of samples and concluded that a constructed week sampling was superior. Lynch and Peer also found that sampling a month "isn't significantly more reliable than a week's worth of papers" and stressed the importance of good sampling rather than studying every story published (2002:6). They also highlighted the advantage of a constructed week of analysis in minimising possible distortion by one major news event and correcting "any normal differences in news that naturally happen".

Much research has focused on the best ways to analyse the websites of daily newspapers but little has examined weekly platforms. Initially an identical method was used for both however it quickly became apparent that there were major flaws in the comparisons for weekly print products. Without a full week of consecutive online data it is impossible to compare the website and mobile platform against the print product with any level of accuracy. The pilot revealed that news from the previous or following week's newspaper may be uploaded at any point within the week before or after publication, thus making it impossible to trace within the limits of a constructed week. Therefore, the data that was collected from the desktop and mobile platforms of the weekly newspapers covered two consecutive weeks. Three editions of the newspaper, at the start, middle and end of the data collection period, were needed in order to examine stories which appeared online after or before the print editions. This effectively created just one week's complete data, the same as that collected for the daily newspapers. It was necessary in order to establish which online articles had been printed in editions before and after the one in question. A second pilot, focusing again on the *Banbridge Chronicle* but using the improved method of data collection, quickly established that any fears about the large quantity of data collected over the extended period were unfounded. In

fact, the data from the weekly newspapers collected during two weeks was, in many cases, still considerably less than a week of data from a daily newspaper.

Some internet content analysis has coded websites once a day in a 'snapshot' to represent 24 hours. However because of the instant, irregular and continual updates on both web and mobile sites this study makes more regular comparisons. The decision was also taken to continue analysis during the evenings as it is a peak time for internet use (BBC, 2011b). Data was collected four times a day and linked to recognised peaks in audience – first thing in the morning, lunch time, dinner time and evening[19]. This took place between 9am and 9.30am, 1pm and 1.30pm, 5pm and 5.30pm, and 9pm and 9.30pm on both the daily and weekly newspapers, across three platforms.

4.6 The systematic analysis of three platforms

Quantitative assessments were carried out between the mobile sites, main websites and print editions. The design of the three platforms was examined as well as differences between the types of specific news stories which were being given prominence on each medium and any disparities in the way the stories were written and presented. This study includes a quantitative examination of all the articles available each day on the three platforms. It also assessed the main stories of the day, giving priority to the mobile site where discrepancies occurred between platforms. Qualitative textual analysis helped capture connotations and meaning (Morris, 2010:167). The analysis acknowledged that news is not merely facts but "representations produced in language and other signs like photographs". This enabled the

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[19] Information supplied during pre- interview meeting with Johnston Press digital product manager Mark Woodward, October 14, 2014

analytical discussion to focus on both linguistic and visual signs including the coded signs which readers of a local newspaper would recognise and understand (Bignell, 2002:79). This allowed for the regularities of the communications patterns to be recognised while also acknowledging for irregularities in the symbol system (Huxman and Allen; 2010:188).

This triangulation of data collection and analysis showed how mobiles are influencing the presentation and distribution of news through comparisons with the other platforms. While similarities between the content on the three platforms were acknowledged, it was important to also accommodate the differences. As Buscher et al. state, it is difficult to methodically deal with "the fleeting, the distributed, the multiple, the non-causal, the sensory, the emotional and the kinaesthetic" of mobile (2011:15). Therefore slightly different methods must be employed than those used for print. Where the newspaper had more than one print edition the assessment focused on the edition with the largest circulation. If there was more than one daily edition for that specific geographical area, data was taken from the day's final edition. One of the major differences between the print and internet versions of the newspapers is the ease with which stories can be altered, up-dated, removed or added. Taking four daily snapshots allowed for the range and prominence given to different stories throughout the day online to be recorded. Capturing the evanescent ever-changing content on web-based platforms is difficult but vitally important. Attempting to collect web data from the recent past is virtually impossible "when so much of what was produced was subsequently deleted, disabled or amended" (Ankerson, 2009:193).

4.7 Defining a tangible sampling framework through content analysis

It is unwise to ignore content when examining any form of mass communication and media. Content is vital to every aspect of local newspapers, indeed individual publications and the industry as a whole either survives or dies on the strength of its content. Riffe et al describe content analysis as crucial to media studies and states that, in the long run, one simply cannot examine mass communication without it. When studying how mass media adopts a newly emerging platform it is important not to exclude the technical process of how content is made available and this is the case with mobile news. However, without knowledge of the content, "all questions about the processes, generating that content or the effects that content produces are meaningless" (Riffe et al., 2005:39). Content analysis is the oldest quantitatively driven method in mass communication research (Huxman and Allen, 2010:183). It was first used in the 1930s by journalism students looking at American newspapers (Berelson, 1952**:**22). Since then its techniques have been applied to a wide range of communication forms including other mass media and mobiles (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:1). Berelson describes it as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (1952:18). Riffe et al. give this definition: "...the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods" (2005:3). Part of this research took a social science approach based on empirical measurements and observations in order to investigate the differences in mobile news compared to other platforms. Content analysis has been used to examine cultural patterns on the assumption it can reflect attitudes and interest. What it arguably does most clearly is 'reveal the focus of attention' (Berelson, 1952:72, 98, 90). Analysing the three platforms allowed trends and changes in content or priorities to be noted ahead of the Johnston Press interviews.

In order to reach valid findings, all three platforms had to be analysed in an identical way using standardised measurements of specific units thus allowing the characterisation and comparison of articles (Manning and Callum-Swan, 1994). This method also permits large quantities of information to be reduced efficiently into categories so a sufficiently large amount of data can be included. It was also necessary to examine the frequency of themes, subjects and concepts such as crime, politics or celebrities so as to establish more generally the types of articles being given priority on mobiles and if or how that differed from other platforms. The prime focus of the content analysis was on single words and a set of the most relevant concepts was selected. Words which had similar definitions but appeared in different forms were included and the level of generalisation reflected the varied nature of news. Emphasis was placed on keeping the classification procedure consistent and the validity of the results was protected by a series of rules to organise the coding process. The coding was done by hand so implicit words were not automatically discarded. The analysed data was then compared across platforms and publications. The differences between platforms indicate how the characteristics of mobiles influence the stories presented. To establish a concise and relevant coding method, a trial was carried out on one daily and one weekly, as previously explained in Section 4.4. This allowed for initial problems to be tackled before the main analysis was conducted and also gave a greater insight into the efficiency and strengths of the methods. While the analysis was carried out by one researcher, a second coder also undertook a test of the pilots to establish the reliability of the researcher's coding and categories. This made it possible to ease any discrepancies in the method and contain problems during the pilot.

The mobile homepages were monitored for change four times a day between 9am and 9.30am, 1pm and 1.30pm, 5pm and 5.30pm, and 9pm and 9.30pm, and the positioning each was given on the other two platforms. Emphasis was placed on keeping the classification

procedure consistent and the validity of the results was protected by a series of rules to organise the coding process. This was done by hand so implicit words were not automatically discarded and small, yet significant changes could be spotted quickly. A concise and relevant coding method was established during the pilot. This allowed for initial problems to be tackled before the main analysis was conducted and also gave greater insight into the efficiency and strengths of the methods being used. The coding was carried out by one researcher, after a second coder had undertaken a test of the pilot findings to establish the reliability of the main researcher's coding and categories. The second coder was familiarised with the coding categories and both coders then ran tests on the same sample of articles selected for the pilot. Their responses were compared and intercoder reliability tested using Holsti's formula[20] (Holsti, 1969). The results (94 per cent) were well within Holsti's acceptable levels.[21] Minor discrepancies were highlighted in the method and slight alterations took place at the end of the pilot. The second coder also carried out three checks through the data collection to ensure consistency and the results remained true to within one per cent.

It is important to keep investigations and findings as objective as possible yet as content analysis has developed, critics have argued that is an impossible ideal. Hansen et al. believe research using content analysis cannot be objective because it does not analyse every possible aspect of a text (1998**:**95). However many academics favour the method, including Webber who demonstrates that when comparing content analysis to other more obtrusive methods, "there is little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data" (1990:10). That is because the sender and receiver are both unaware the

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[20] There has been some criticism of Holsti's formula because it does not account for chance coder agreement (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:172). However it was deemed the most appropriate for this research due to it being a single coder trial with a straight-forward coding schedule.
[21] A minimum reliability coefficient of 90 per cent or above is acceptable in most situations (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:175).

message is being analysed. This research included many different categories of news as well

as of a range of local newspapers to make the analysis as objective as possible and enable a

wide range of possible findings, patterns and trends to be identified. This procedure allows

valid inferences about the sender of the message and the audience as well as the message

itself (Webber, 1990:9). However, while the methods of gaining data are scientific it must be

remembered that the platforms under examination are operating in the real world therefore

other influences should not be ignored. Riffe et al. explained:

> Under natural, nonlaboratory field conditions, members of the audience (who, it
> turned out, were not uniformly helpless or passive, nor, for that matter, very
> uniform in general) used media and messages for their own individual purposes,
> chose what parts of messages – if any – to attend, and rejected much that was
> inconsistent with their existing attitudes, beliefs, and values. Social affiliations
> such as family and community involvement were important predictors of people's
> attitudes and behaviours, and networks of personal influence were identified as
> key factors influencing their decisions. (Riffe et al., 2005:7-8)

The method of content analysis used by this research took into account aspects of an article's

context. However it was not possible to make allowance for the interpretant or the

circumstances in which articles were read.

One problem researchers of online news have faced is how to study websites in a constant

state of flux. Traditional methods of content analysis need to be adapted to incorporate the

unique challenges of internet content, such as continually updated and changing content –

referred to as "the moving target of the web" by McMillan (2000:93). As Smith described,

"Even if researchers take screen snapshots of web pages, they often have a few hours - or at

best a few days – to examine the content in the context of the site before it disappears forever.

These factors make careful coding of online content a priority because it often cannot be

replicated (2005:32)." While acknowledging that the context within which a story is

presented both digitally or in print could be heavily influenced by the features immediately

surrounding it, initial assessments of the platforms and its standard features, rather than the articles uploaded to it, were undertaken before the content analysis. This allowed more general contextual features to be recorded and taken into account. This, strengthened by findings from the pilots which established that the main furniture on platforms rarely altered, allowed the coder to analyse print editions and screen shots of online and mobile as web pages no longer current at time of evaluation.

Early internet research tended to use non-quantitative methods and highlighted a range of difficulties in collecting online data for content analysis (Wang, 2006**:**1). Issues included identifying units to be sampled, rapidly changing sites, copyright, standardizing units of analysis on a multifaceted platform, inter-coder and search engine reliability, definitions of key words and isolated sites (McMillan, 2000:3). Fortunately many problems faced by online content analysis were not relevant to this research because it focuses on established newspaper brands with relatively reliable and well-established digital platforms. As all articles and web pages are linked within specific websites they were clearly visible.

In 2013 Flaounas et al. carried out mass content analysis of 2.5 million news articles to demonstrate the possibilities of large scale automated analysis of news content. While it successfully demonstrated that such methods could achieve scales which were previously unobtainable, this was neither necessary nor complimentary to this research. Flaounas et al. accepted that automated analysis could not replace the human judgement needed for qualitative analysis (2013). What the sampling within this research sought was "to generate a manageable subset of data from a large population or a sampling frame to represent this population" (Wang, 2006**:**3). It was important for the focus to maintain a balance between the ease of study and its representativeness. That is why a tangible sampling frame was defined from the outset, balancing the need to make the examination of content analysis within case studies representative, while maintaining the study's size as effective yet efficient.

4.8 Creating detailed interpretations through interviews

The analysis undertaken during this research was on two levels. The initial comparisons of nine local newspapers were enhanced by the more in-depth investigation of Johnston Press. This particular company was selected because it is one of the largest local and regional multimedia organisations in the UK – reaching more than 29 million readers a month across its platforms (Johnston Press, 2015). The researcher was granted access due to her employment within the firm. A series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with the most senior Johnston Press editorial executives. All but one was conducted face-to-face and led by pre-selected questions, which were formulated following the content analysis. Precautions were taken to ensure everyone contacted and spoken to as part of the research was fully aware that it was being conducted completely independently of the company. Data was collected through interviews. This technique was chosen for a range of reasons. These included; the opportunity to generate rich data; to gain insight into the interviewees' perceptions and values; the inclusion of contextual aspects which are significant to understanding perceptions; and the opportunity to analyse collected data in a number of ways and create detailed case interpretations. Exploring the experiences and opinions of the most senior managers at Johnston Press was vital. Such questions within in-depth interviews allow researchers to "see and experience the world" through the eyes of the interviewees, and form "one of the most powerful methods" in qualitative research, according to McCracken (1988: 9).

The qualitative findings combined with the earlier content analysis to create a comprehensive picture of the mobile platform and local newspapers. The quantitative findings focused on content and differences between the three platforms. The interviews give insight into the decision making process, the adoption of the platform, priorities within the industry and the future of mobile news.

A range of interview techniques were explored including structured, semi-structured and unstructured. It would not have been possible to use structured interviews to gain relevant information from interviewees and carry out reliable comparisons. At the other end of the spectrum, the vast diversity of topics and answers which can come to light through unstructured interviews would have make comparisons impossible. Both these extremes were likely to have led to results which were difficult to validate and explore in any depth. It was also apparent that the interviewees were journalists who had vast experience in carrying out interviews themselves but were likely to be less experienced in being interviewed. Therefore, it was important to give them guidance with a clear list of questions while not overly restricting their answers through a structured interview. One of the main advantages of a semi-structured qualitative interview as a methodology is that it can adapt and respond to interviewees' opinion as it becomes apparent. Interviewing a group of people within the same industry and company also presents the opportunity to explore beliefs within that sub-culture. It is also possible to gain unique insight into both areas of "broad cultural consensus" and explore individuals "personal, private and special understandings" (Arksey and Knight, 1999**:**4). That is helpful when analysing individual opinions but also views across the company. Arksey and Knight describe such research as being more interested in "describing and understanding complexity" than merely measuring (1999**:**4).

The interviews were semi-structured and analysis of the answers involved interpretation of the data including noting patterns and surprises, comparisons and checking results (Miles and

Huberman, 1994). The focused interviews shored up potential deficiencies of the textual

analysis by offering greater exploration of the issues identified. However, at the outset it was

important for the limitations presented by interviewing on a small scale and the many

assumptions carried by both researchers and research subjects to be recognised (Holloway

and Jefferson, 2000:2). In particular, as the interviewees were speaking as employed

professionals working for one specific company, it was crucial to be aware of personal

deliberate or 'unconscious filters' in their answers e.g. avoiding negatively portraying their

employer or themselves (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998). The information they provided was

also limited by their own role within the company and, as with all qualitative research, it must

be acknowledged that the findings will be "holistic and blatantly interpretive" (Iorio, 2010:6).

In a similar way, it is important to acknowledge that the content of a semi-structured

interview follows the interviewer's own analytical thinking yet, while some would argue that

it is impossible to completely avoid influences whether personal, political or theoretical

(Ribbens and Edwards, 1998:121), this must not unduly influence the findings. As this

research focused on journalism and was conducted by a journalist, the comparisons with the

traditional techniques used by journalists in their daily interviews should also be

acknowledged. As Iorio explains: "Whether by infusion from the methods of social science or

diffusion of sound journalism practice, basic tenets of the focused interview are also essential

elements found in reporting texts (2010:113)."

The researcher's employment within Johnston Press created access to senior executives. It

placed the project within the field of practitioner-based research. In order to protect the

validity and avoid insider bias the researcher did not focus on titles where she had worked

and with which she had connections other than being part of Johnston Press. She also did not

interview anyone involved in her role or directly responsible for her employment or

development. However, it should be acknowledged that the seniority of the interviewees

meant that they were ultimately responsible for all Johnson Press employees, including the researcher. As such, the interviewer took extra care to remain objective throughout and explored potential issues created by researching one's own employers. At a basic level, it could create obvious challenges with regard to positive bias at one extreme or fears of being sacked at the other. Such research also requires sensitivity towards colleagues and an awareness of potential impact as well as "the development of self" (Costley et al., 2010). Challenges are found in all types of research. The researcher believes that her unique access created such valuable findings that it was appropriate to capitalise on her position while minimizing the potential problems it created. Bourdieu describes the initial response of researchers focusing on their own companies as fear of being accused of bias or "of using the weapons of science in the pursuit of personal interests, to abolish the self even as a knowing subject, by resorting to the most impersonal and automatic procedures ... which are least questionable" (Bourdieu, 1984:6). He believes this must be overcome to encourage the benefits of practitioner-based research and what it can add to academic and industry knowledge. It is also worth noting the "relatively unique" research opportunity which Murray and Lawrence describe as creating the means to channel the eagerness of practitioners (2000:3). At best such research challenges assumptions and propositions, including those of the researcher.

Practitioner researchers are under-represented in many fields, particularly media and journalism studies. Such work is described as being placed "at the bottom of the hierarchy" (Lees and Freshwater, 2008:2). However, it brings new insight to the work undertaken by academics, including former practitioners who "rely on pre-designed methodological systems" (Lees, 20018:1). Schon highlights differences in the approach of researchers who are either inside or outside the group at the centre of the research (1983). Internal researchers,

or employees, may be accused of having pre-generated ideas, but the same can be true of all researchers. Every individual has predetermined ideas and reasons behind their choice of research subjects. Those more involved with the focus of the research must set such opinions to one side just as outsiders do. Insiders are better placed to recognise topics and issues which are most in need of research and investigation. The lack of research into weekly newspapers use of mobiles, highlighted in the literature review (see Section 3.2) could be seen as one such issue. This lack of cohesion between industry and academia is often so pronounced it is seen as rivalry in some fields. It is described by Gibbs and Garnett as weakening both (2007).

> "In choosing to study the social world in which we are involved, we are obliged to confront, in dramatized form as it were, a certain number of fundamental epistemological problems, all related to the question of the difference between practical knowledge and scholarly knowledge, and particularly to the special difficulties involved first in breaking with insider experience and then in reconstituting the knowledge which has been obtained by means of this break. We are aware of the obstacles to scientific knowledge constituted as much by excessive proximity as by excessive remoteness, and we know how difficult it is to sustain that relation of a proximity broken and restored, which requires much hard work, not only on the object of our research, but also on ourselves as researchers, if we are to reconcile everything we can know only as insiders, and everything we cannot or do not wish to know as long as we remain insiders."
> Bourdieu (1984:1)

Coghlan and Brannick describe researchers undertaking projects from the inside as 'natives' immersed in situations and armed with the experience to examine knowledge within that specific context (2010). Academics have concluded that those existing within the context under examination can be better placed for research, and are sometimes the only ones able to access the necessary areas (Evered and Louis, 1981; Goffman, 1956; Lave, 1988; Schon, 2004; Wenger et al., 2002). It is also widely acknowledged that such research is often not straightforward and can be particularly difficult. Costley and Elliott describe researchers as 'experts' who have experienced and understand the minute details of companies or situations (2010; xvi). They call for a critical, reflective and evidenced-based approach in such research.

Rosenfeld et al. describe this as researchers who are engaged and participating but also critical and analytical observers (1995:10). This thesis extends academic concepts, particular around community, by using information that could only have been gained by the researcher through her employment with the company at the centre of the case study. It brings new insight to an industry which the literature review highlighted as being in crisis.

4.9 Interview methodology

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with a list of questions [see Appendix 1] which included closed questions for specific facts and open questions allowing interviewees to go into more depth. A checklist of research questions relevant to the interviews and essential topics allowed the interviewer to improvise where necessary and explore themes raised by interviewees without the constraints of pre-set questions. Before an interview took place, each participant was given and had the chance to discuss a printed explanation of the objectives and aims of the research [see Appendices 2 and 3] in strict accordance with the university's code of ethics. To ensure absolute clarity, each interview started with an explanation of the structure, a brief guide to the range and type of questions, and a description of the motivation for the research. As all interviewees were employees of Johnston Press, they were also given an explanation of the scale of the research and other people taking part. Every interviewee was invited to discuss confidentiality and sign a consent form [see Appendix 4]. Permission to record the interview was also confirmed. Each was given the opportunity to remain anonymous – with neither their name nor job title used within the research. However, as all employees interviewed worked at group level with very specific areas of focus there was no option to include job titles yet keep names confidential.

All interviews began with confirmation of the interviewees' name, job title and brief explanation of role, when they began with Johnston Press and a short history of their journalism career before their existing role. The initial questions were deliberately kept simple in a bid to put interviewees at ease, with more complex issues included later. Where necessary the researcher summarised or repeated questions to ensure absolute clarity and avoid misinterpretation. A series of probes were also included, allowing the researcher to seek further clarification, specific examples or more elaboration on a previous answer (Arksey and Knight, 1999). These techniques allowed the researcher to make the most of semi-structured interviews' flexible nature by questioning contradictions both within that specific interview, but also in the context of answers from previous interviewees, within the university's code of ethics. The data was analysed after all interviews had concluded and themes were extracted, around those already created by the interview question guide [see Appendix 1]. This included clustering relevant quotes and comments around the highlighted themes and making comparisons to extract meaning.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to establish that this research addresses the important components of case studies (Yin, 1994). It has distinct boundaries and a robust theoretical case study framework. Mobile news is evaluated through the quantitative assessments of content and analysis of the platform, combined with qualitative analysis of data from semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the three platforms – print, desktop and mobile– focuses on how local news is being presented and distributed. It also allows comparisons between news on mobile and

other platforms, with a particular focus on the types and range of articles. It facilitates analysis of differences in how daily and weekly newspapers are produced. This information is then used to formulate questions for semi-structured interviews at one of this country's largest newspaper organisations. These allow a more in-depth examination of how decisions are made regarding mobile news, ambitions and the potential for the future of the platform.

The literary review in Chapters Two and Three focused on new media, mobile communication and community. This thesis links all three through a multimedia approach enhanced by a single case study. In order to create an applicable theoretical framework it incorporates a series of components including addressing the specific research questions, logically linking data to propositions and having robust criteria for interpreting the findings. This created a sound foundation for the next section, the analysis of four daily newspapers across three platforms.

Chapter Five: Analysis of daily newspapers: Considerations from four titles across three platforms

5.1 Introduction

The four daily newspapers examined were the *Express & Star*, *Stoke Sentinel*, *North West Evening Mail* and *Oldham Chronicle*. Each analysis followed an identical methodology in order to strengthen reliability. The method was constructed then tested and adjusted using information gathered during the pilot study. Each of the three platforms – print, desktop and mobile – was examined to give overall insight into their structure, elements and design, without regard to content. An overall assessment was made of each mobile site including the quantity of news stories available on the platform throughout the day, in comparison to the website site and newspaper. The content of all three platforms was then recorded at specific times on specific dates [see Appendix 5]. This information was used to establish themes. The data was also coded and categorised into four categories: repetition, adaptation, representation, and unique to establish differences between content across each platform. Other areas covered by the coding schedule included the length of each article, the geographical focus and alterations in headlines or prominence on each platform [see Appendix 6]. None of the desktop or mobile sites charged, and the prices of the print editions were noted in the comparisons.

This chapter starts with a brief explanation of the methods used to code across three platforms (5.2) then provides a discussion of how the coding frame was designed (5.3). All three platforms of the four daily newspapers are then analysed (5.4) and brief conclusions are drawn (5.4e). Content analysis of the four follows (5.5) and then there is a discussion of the findings (5.5e) within the conclusion.

5.2 Coding news across three platforms

This research has taken an intensive look at the articles which appear on local newspapers' print, desktop and mobile platforms – the headlines, priorities and changes to make them suitable for each. It examines how news is presented on each platform taking into account the design, structure and characteristics of print, digital and mobile. Each article is categorised to reflect how it was distributed across platforms.

Table 5.1: Categorisation of content distribution across platforms

Repetition	Identical article appears on more than one platform
Adaptation	Article appears on more than one platform on the same topic, with slight changes
Adaptation (headline only)	Identical article appears on more than one platform, with changes to headline
Representation	Article appears on more than one platform on the same topic, with significant changes
Unique	Article exclusive to one platform

This information allowed an evaluation of how many articles were written exclusively for one platform, as well as highlighting how stories could be altered between platforms. As part of this, the length of each article was recorded in a simplified manner to take alterations between platforms into consideration.

Table 5.2: Categorisation by article length

Length category (measured in sentences)	Definition
Short	Four sentences or less
Medium	Five to ten sentences
Long	11 sentences or more

A record was also made of where each story was displayed on each platform.

From the outset of the analysis it became apparent that there were no differences in the construction of the stories used on the three platforms. That is, stories were not written or re-written specifically for one particular platform. There was no difference in the styles used between platforms. This meant some data was less relevant to a study of the mobile platform. For example, the length of each story did not vary due to the platform. There was greater change within the presentation of content on each platform, how the stories interacted with each other and elements that were altered because of the platform; for example, headlines and priorities. To protect the validity of the research, every story on all three platforms was analysed in an identical way with the same data collated from each.

The very nature of the mobile platform, and to a lesser extent news sites for desktop, means they are specifically designed to only show a limited number of articles at any one time. For example, five articles may be the maximum displayed on mobile homepages. It was therefore logical to allow the mobile platform to lead the data collection; i.e. the starting point was to analyse mobile articles, then the web and print comparisons. For the purpose of this research it was not deemed time-worthy to analyse every article published on all three platforms

throughout the day. So the focus was on the stories which appeared on the mobile homepage. However, in order to trace this content it was necessary to analyse articles from the majority of the print news pages. The variances between story priorities across the platforms meant that this was the only way to include all stories which appeared on the mobile homepage. Analysing only the front pages of the print editions would have rendered comparisons between the platforms impossible.

5.3 Designing the coding frame

This research employed standardised measurements of specific units to allow both individual articles and whole platforms to be compared. Conceptual analysis, using an updated and adapted version of long-established news themes to better suit local news, allowed the frequency of subjects to be monitored. The titles of these news categories allowed the collection of as much comparable information between the platforms as possible, while protecting the accuracy and reliability of each variable. It was necessary for a wide range of categories to be included. The level of generalisation reflects the varied nature of news, while encompassing the complex themes which make up local news stories.

In order to ensure accurate and consistent analysis across three platforms a coding frame was created. This consisted of a coding schedule where the values for each variable within articles were inputted. A wide range of data was collected on each article from the basics of platform and publication, to information about length, context and themes for subjects and concepts. Once data collection was complete, the coding schedule was used alongside the coding manual to organise the variables on schedule. When categorising the types of stories it was vital to apply simple all-encompassing themes to allow analysis of every type of article. Designing the coding schedules and manuals was not a linear process; indeed, they were

tested on content examples before being used in the pilot. At every stage they were assessed for comprehensiveness.

The coding of categories for this research was based on two studies - Deutschmann's ten categories for a newspaper content analysis (Deutschmann, 1959**:**58-62) and Stempel's 14 news categories (Stempel, 1985:791-796). Deutschmann's ten categories, refined from Freyschlag's 50 basic news categories, are:

1, politics and government

2, war, rebellion and defence

3 economic activity, transportation and travel

4, crime

5, public moral problems

6, public health and welfare

7, accidents and disasters

8, science and invention

9, education, classic arts and popular amusements

10, general human interest

Stempel's 14 news categories elaborate on the above and these are:

1, government and politics

2, war and defence

3, diplomacy and foreign relations

4, economic activity

5, agriculture

6, transportation and travel

7, crime

8, public moral problems

9, accidents and disasters

10, science and invention

11, public health and welfare

12, education and classic arts

13, popular amusements

14, general human interest

Although these categories date back to 1959 and 1985 respectively, they are still good reflections of today's news, even across new digital platforms. However, the major drawback is that they were not designed for local news. Therefore, an adapted version of the categories was designed for this research with the addition of topics covering more recent interests and developments, as well as widening the categories where necessary to include items likely to be found on local news agendas.

The 14 categories used for this research, following the pilot analysis, were:

1, politics

2, military

3, economics and business

4, roads and travel

5, courts and crime

6, accidents and disasters

7, science and environment

8, public health and welfare

9, education

10, community events

11, general human interest

12, charity and fundraising

13, technology

14, celebrities

15, other – not news

These were intended to be as all-encompassing as possible. A 15th category of 'other – not news' was created to remove stories from the analysis which occupied a position within the news section, but could not be defined as news; for example, a match report[22] or article promoting a supplement within the print product.

A further two categories ran alongside this coding frame, with each story assessed on the overall impression it created before being coded as either positive or negative [Appendix 7]. Due to the general and subjective nature of this coding frame, great attention was paid to the findings of the second coder during the pilot work. It was deemed accurate enough not to bias the overall conclusions as there were no variations in the coding; i.e. the findings of both researchers were 100 per cent identical when categorising pilot stories as either negative or positive. As this research has a specific focus on local news, it was deemed important to analyse the geographical focus of each article.

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[22] See Pages 9 and 10 for further explanation as to why sport was not included within the findings.

This was initially divided into five categories[23].

Table 5.3: Categorisation by geography

Local	Village, town or city
Regional	County or neighbouring counties
National	England
International	International
Unknown	Geographical location is unclear

 These elements, including the priority and placing given to stories on each platform, were brought together in the analysis of daily newspapers which vary in many aspects, not least size and geography, focus and ways of dealing with digital demands.

5.4 Analysis of the three platforms of four daily, local newspapers

To aid interpretation of results, it is worth noting that the main items on the national news agenda around the time of the content analyses were the Scottish referendum, the debate around appointing female bishops in the Church of England, concern around Black Friday sales chaos, an investigation into whether MP Andrew Mitchell called police officers plebs

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[23] The categories were later revised to just three (removing unknown and merging national/international) after it became apparent during the pilot that there was an insufficient quantity of stories to make these particular categories relevant.

and the announcement of the British-led moon mission. The local news agendas are examined in great detail individually.

5.4a Platform analysis of *The Sentinel*

The Sentinel is a daily newspaper based in the city of Stoke-on-Trent but also covering Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as more rural areas including the Staffordshire Moorlands and towns and villages such as Crewe, Nantwich, Congleton and Stone[24]. In 2016 the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) of Stoke and Staffordshire had a population of 1,120,300; an employment rate of 76.4 per cent and earnings were below the national average. The area was best known for pottery manufacturing and had been hard hit by the recession (Office for National Statistics, 2017). *The Sentinel* was owned by Local World, cost 50p per edition and sold 26,657 newspapers daily (Linford, 2017). It is worth noting that both the website and mobile URL vary from the official name of the newspaper. They are both stokesentinel rather than thesentinel. The website URL is www.stokesentinel.co.uk and the mobile url is m.stokesentinel.co.uk. The website and mobile site for The Sentinel have different designs although they display the same number of stories on the homepage, nine. The most prominent stories at the top of the mobile homepage are displayed on a carousel. Only one article is displayed at any one time but the user can rotate the three stories using an arrow. Four sport stories are displayed immediately underneath the carousel, followed by an advert then a news section which displays six further news articles. Only headlines and pictures are on display for all stories on the mobile site. There is relatively little other furniture on the mobile homepage, comprising a dropdown menu, the masthead and a search icon.

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[24] Information provided by title's own website.

The desktop homepage also displays nine news stories. The top three articles are followed by a selection of sports stories, then a further six news stories are displayed under a 'more news' heading. While stories on the mobile site only display headlines, the top three stories on the desktop site also show the first sentence of the article. Other desktop homepage furniture includes a banner advert, the date, 'place an advert' link, 'buy a photo' link, 'local projects' link, Facebook and Twitter icon links, log in, register the masthead, weather, search, a row of tabs (listing homepage icon, news, sport, what's on, jobs property, cars, directory, notices, buy&sell, dating, all, cashback) and a range of other adverts.

Throughout the research period the front page of the newspaper had just one story per edition. This was surrounded by two or three adverts including an earpiece next to the masthead. Other print front page furniture included the masthead, which incorporates the words 'est in 1854', Twitter and Facebook icon links, the date of publication, the price 50p, blurbs running either across the top or down the side of the page promoting items inside the newspaper, and photos with headlines cross referencing two other news stories inside. One remarkable aspect of the front page design was that on a single page it included the website address as many as five times – at the end of stories, built into blurbs and next to the masthead.

Overall the three platforms differ from each other in design and masthead, but the greatest differences are between the print edition and the digital sites. There is much more content easily available on the mobile and online platforms and there is more choice, in comparison to the front page of the print edition which is all that is visible at first glance to potential readers. The mobile site is simplified in design but offers the same number of stories on the homepage as the desktop. Less information is available as only the headline of each article is displayed on mobile and the carousel only rotates on demand. Both sites have simplicity and ease of access.

5.4b Platform analysis of *North West Evening Mail*

The *North West Evening Mail* focuses on South Cumbria, a largely rural area with the exception of Barrow-in-Furness which is well-known for ship building and, more recently, offshore farms. In 2016 the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) of Cumbria had a population of 497,900, an employment rate of 78.1 per cent and earnings were below the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2017). The newspaper is owned by independent local media organisation CN Group and sold 7,744 copies daily (Linford, 2017). The url for the desktop and the mobile site is the same, www.nwemail.co.uk, however the mobile site design is significantly simplified. The number of news stories displayed on the desktop and mobile homepages is 16, divided into two sections. The top two stories in each of the two news sections displayed the headline and one sentence from the story, while the others showed just a headline. The mobile homepage carried far less furniture than the online homepage, and included just the masthead, an icon for a list of available drop down options and a banner advertisement.

The desktop homepage of *North West Evening Mail* was much more cluttered. There was regularly a large advert which took up the entire page with what effectively became a mini-version of the website set within. Other homepage furniture included a banner advertisement plus another advert lower down the page, weather, date, two rows of tabs (a higher row including subscriptions, offers, property, motors, travel, dating and family notices, and a second row including home, news, sport, jobs, business, opinion, lifestyle, nostalgia, education, what's on, contact us), the masthead, a search box, box and an interactive box of links listing the most read and most commented upon articles.

The overall design of the mobile and desktop sites remained constant. The front page of the print edition changed depending on the top story of the day, the number of articles on the page and the chosen design. The layout of the print front page varied dramatically during the research period with between one and three stories on display. The style of the headlines, size of the photos and a range of other elements varied. Other regular front page print furniture included a blurb strip, masthead, website address, Love Barrow icon, date, price 50p and blurbs which usually advertise news stories inside the paper. The differences between the mobile and desktop sites were little more than simplifications to the furniture rather than the design of the actual editorial content. The differences with the print edition were much more prominent.

5.4c Platform analysis of *Express & Star*

The *Express & Star* is based in Wolverhampton, covering urban towns and cities known as the Black Country[25] including Walsall, Sandwell, Birmingham and areas of Staffordshire. In 2016 the Black Country had a population of 1,175,700, an employment rate of 67.3 per cent and earnings were well below the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2017). It is owned by Midland Newspapers Association and is the UK's biggest selling regional daily title with an average daily sale of 55,373 (Linford, 2017). This research compared the City Final edition of the print product, focused on Wolverhampton, with the desktop and mobile site. There are nine print editions of the newspaper each day but all editions feed into the homepage of the website without any obvious categorisation through geographical boundaries. The cost of a print newspaper is 50p. The desktop and mobile platforms have the

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[25] The area earned its nickname from large-scale manufacturing pollution.

identical url www.expressandstar.com. This means both platforms host identical information, though with some presentational differences.

The average number of stories printed on the newspaper's front page was between five and eight, and varied widely in length. The number of stories altered daily. There was also a range of other furniture on the front page including the date, masthead, the price 50p, contact telephone number, brief weather image, the website address, a strap stating Britain's Best Selling Regional Newspaper, cross references to inside stories, between two and five photos, and blurbs promoting items inside the newspaper. The *Express & Star* had the most information available in the print edition of the newspaper of all the newspapers included in this research.

The number of stories on the desktop and mobile homepages remained static at 14. On both, the top story had a photo, headline and one sentence displayed, while the other 13 articles displayed just the headline and a photo. The main difference between the two digital platforms was the presentation, with the mobile page a simplified version of the desktop site. A range of adverts were hosted on each, the most prominent on the desktop site was a banner advert. Other web homepage furniture included the date, Twitter and Facebook icons, two rows of tabs (the top row listing jobs, dating, buy photos, local businesses, star shop, classifieds, book an ad and digital editions while the second row listed home, news, sport, lifestyle, what's on, opinion, business, education, motors, property and notices), search icon and a rolling feed to Express & Star Live. Much of the mobile site's furniture was repeated from the website including a smaller version of the banner ad, the date, masthead, Twitter and Facebook icon links and Express & Star Live. There was also a search facility which performed the same operations yet had visual differences. The mobile site also had a drop down list linking to different sections, rather than two rows of tabs.

Express & Star Live was a feed which was updated with news 'as it happens' including a range of links from social media sites and stories which were uploaded directly to the feed. It appeared on both the mobile and desktop sites, but was lower in prominence on mobile because of the simplified layout. The complex nature, and the fact that only a single newspaper was using one during the data collection period, means analysis of the content has not been included in any depth in this research. It is however the most obvious difference between the print and digital editions of the *Express & Star* so is worthy of note. The complex nature of the print edition's front page design meant there were fewer clear differences from its digital counterpart. However, while the mobile site was simplified, the large number of stories displayed meant readers had to scroll down several screens to get to the bottom of the news list.

5.4d Platform analysis of *Oldham Evening Chronicle*

The *Oldham Evening Chronicle* focused on the city of Oldham, an urban area within Greater Manchester. In 2016 Oldham had a population of 103,544, the wider area had an employment rate of 71 per cent and earnings were below the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Oldham is one of the most deprived areas of England (Bond, 2016). The newspaper was owned by independent firm Hirst Kidd and Rennie Ltd and sold 6,812 daily (Linford, 2017)[26]. The desktop and mobile addresses were identical, www.oldham-chronicle.co.uk, both losing the word 'evening'. The desktop and mobile homepages were also identical so there were no differences in appearance or any simplification despite it being resized to fit within smartphones' smaller screens. A total of seven news stories were

[26] The Oldham Evening Chronicle closed when the firm went into administration in August 2017.

displayed on the homepage, all showing two to three sentences of the story underneath the headline. Other homepage furniture included a banner advertisement, the masthead and two rows of tabs (the top included news, business search, property, jobs, events, forum, community, buy a photo, my account, advertising, eChron, reader holidays and cookies; while the bottom includes submit news and comment rules). There was also a news index which included 14 sections, and a local news index of six sections, although the difference between the content in these two areas was not clear.

The front page of the print editions varied dramatically from the digital site. During the data collection period there were just one or two stories on the front page of print editions. There was a range of regular other furniture which included an advertisement earpiece, the masthead, edition number, website address, date, price 65p and blurbs promoting items inside.

5.4e Conclusions from the platform analysis of four daily local newspapers

Analysing the three platforms of these four daily newspapers highlighted the differences in the way newspapers responded to the challenge of the mobile platform. While some created mobile specific sites which differed a great deal from the desktop homepage, others merely altered the existing platform to simplify it or had no mobile-specific offering.

Table 5.4: Average number of articles on home/front page of daily titles

Platform	The Sentinel	North West Evening Mail	Express & Star	Oldham Evening

				Chronicle
Mobile	9	16	14	7
Desktop	9	16	14	7
Print	1	2	6	1

Table 5.4 illustrates the varying number of stories available across platforms and titles. The designs of the print product usually differ vastly from the digital sites. This has not been extended to ensure the mobile sites are also designed to be uniquely suitable for the screens they are viewed upon.

5.5 Content analysis from across the three platforms of four daily, local newspaper

5.5a Content analysis of *The Sentinel*

Systematic analysis of *The Sentinel* revealed many things about how the content differed across the three platforms. One of the most striking elements was the number of times other platforms were promoted within the newspaper and, in particular, on the front page. Throughout the research period, the online address was included four or five times on the print edition's front page. It is worth noting that while the address promoted in the newspaper is thesentinel.co.uk and all internet searches locate this address, it actually diverted to stokesentinel.co.uk online. *The Sentinel* has different web and mobile platforms – www.thesentinel.co.uk and m.thesentinel.co.uk. References within the paper promoted the url thesentinel.co.uk, allowing readers to find the correct platform depending on the device on which they were accessing the internet. For example, on Wednesday, November 26, 2014:

The url was built into the newspaper's masthead; it was repeated within a jobs advert in the statement, "Plus: view more vacancies online at thesentinel.co.uk"; it was added underneath the main story, "Should scheme go ahead? Vote in our poll at thesentinel.co.uk"; it was included in a competition artwork, "Christmas ideas online today at thesentinel.co.uk"; and it was added in a teaser for a story inside the paper, "Watch video of raid online at thesentinel.co.uk". It should also be noted that, as with most newspapers included in this research, the Twitter and Facebook addresses were promoted on the front page, and would indirectly lead readers to the newspaper's web or mobile site.

The mobile site was simple and easy to navigate. There were seven news stories displayed on the mobile homepage, although a further two were accessible via a carousel which rotated through three stories at the touch of an arrow. Sport was given unusual prominence for a newspaper homepage, with four sport stories appearing immediately below the news carousel and above the remaining six news stories, which fall under the headline More News. Only the headline and a photo were displayed for all stories on the mobile site, meaning the reader had to click on an article to be able to get any further insight into it. This was different from the website homepage where the top articles also displayed the first sentence of the story. News stories which appeared further down the page displayed just a headline with no photo or image. The need for every online story to appear with an image means a number of generic or stock photos could show on the mobile site at any one time. This was not repeated in the newspaper. The stories on the mobile site were identical to those on the website. However, the online and print headlines were different.

Every story which appeared digitally and in print carried different headlines across the platforms. The Page 3 lead story on Monday, November 17, 2014, carried the headline "'Dave's death has left us heartbroken': Dad died after tumour was found during martial arts class". When the same story appeared as the seventh story on the mobile site, at 9am on the

same date, it read "Tributes paid to popular Clayton martial arts instructor who died after tumour was rediscovered when he was kicked". The addition of the location Clayton is important here, but other information has also been extracted from the story and added to the headline. For example, the fact he was a martial arts instructor, the tumour wasn't new but 'rediscovered' and it had been found in class 'when he was kicked'. Another example, appeared on the mobile site at 9am on Thursday, November 27, 2014, as the third story in the news carousel, and as a small story on Page 3 of the same day's paper. The online headline was "Update: Alton man killed in Cheadle car crash named by Staffordshire Police", while the print version was "Pensioner died in car accident". The online version incorporated more information including three geographical references – Alton, Cheadle and Staffordshire. The online version also started with the word 'update' to indicate it was not the first time the story had appeared online. However, the updated version was identical to that which appeared in print.

There are lots of examples which show the complexity of headline changes. This includes one printed as the lead story on Page 11 on Monday, November 17, 2014, and displayed as the eighth article on the mobile homepage at 9am the same day. The mobile headline read "Thousands of North Staffordshire motorists caught speeding in the last 12 months", while the paper version was "12,000 speeders put lives at risk: Area has highest number of careless drivers". The location has been added but, while the body of the article remained unchanged, the inferences from the different headlines were clear. The print version included the figure 12,000 and added its own emotive conclusion that the speeding drivers were putting "lives at risk". The online version stuck to the facts of what the motorists had been caught doing and over what time frame.

The situation was slightly different at weekends because there is no print product on Sundays. Therefore, stories that broke on the mobile site on Saturday do not appear in print until the

Monday. In some cases that means a story can be developed and several different versions published before the print version is finalised. That was the situation when the top story on the mobile site was published with the headline "Taxi crashes into Caldon Canal" at 9am on Saturday, November 22, 2014. A new version of the story was published at 9am the next day with the headline "Restaurant owner tells of horror after taxi crashes into Caldon Canal". The updated version of the article was printed on Page 3 of Monday's paper with the headline, "'I said that we needed barriers next to canal': Owner had called for safety measures near his restaurant". Although The Sentinel did use 'update' in headlines to indicate when a new version of a story was published online, this example shows that it didn't always.

The prominence stories are given online compared to in the newspaper offers interesting insight into the differences between the platforms. An average of between 40 and 50 news articles are printed in the newspaper each day. Only nine stories can appear on the online homepages at any one time. While the print edition is limited to a certain size each day, there are no such digital constrictions and the sites could be updated as often as required, within staffing constraints. However, analysis of the mobile site four times a day showed there were far less stories published online than in the newspaper, or at least, far less stories ever made it onto the homepage than were printed in the newspaper. A total of 18 new stories appeared on the mobile homepage on Monday, November 17, compared with 47 in the newspaper. The largest number of stories published online was on Thursday, November 27, when 27 news articles appeared on the mobile site. Interestingly, this was also the only day when a significant number of stories were published on the homepage but did not appear in the newspaper. It is worth noting that all the digital-only stories had a national focus. These included an update on footballer Pele's failing health, images from classic scenes from Star Wars, the death of crime novelist PD James, Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping updates. Similar figures for the amount of stories published on the homepage were found for

other week days, with the number decreasing at the weekend. In the time that passed between 9am on Saturday, November 22, and 9am on Sunday, November 23, just three new stories appeared on the mobile homepage. These three appeared in the following day's newspaper.

This research has already established that the majority of stories which were printed in *The Sentinel* did not appear on either homepage. However, the articles deemed most important in the newspaper were also well promoted digitally. At 9am on the day of publication, every Page 1 story did appear on the homepage carousel as either the first or second story. Throughout the day, the front page articles often remained in their original position, with other stories displaying on the mobile site below them. However this was not always the case and on some days the articles gradually lost their prominence and dropped down the list as other stories were published above them. There was also a mix on the homepage of articles which had been given differing prominence in print. For example, lead stories on pages towards the front of the newspaper ran online alongside short stories which were dotted throughout the paper and as far back as Page 27. There were often occasions when one of the top stories on the homepage was much less obvious in the newspaper, although the length of the article was the same on both platforms. In some cases the headlines were so different that detailed examination was needed to establish that they were in fact the same story. On Monday, November 17, 2014, the eighth story on the homepage was "Cheshire East councillors to discuss how to make the most of HS2", the same story was given a NIB position on Page 12 in the following day's print newspaper with the headline "HS2 to create 64,000 jobs". The dramatic variance in prominence and headline created a different impression for readers despite the identical content.

On Monday, November 17, 2014, the front page story in *The Sentinel* focused on a bus company's decision to overturn a cut to services in Stoke-on-Trent. The print version of the story on Page 1, with a connected story on Page 2, was "People Power! First shakes up

timetable after listening to your complaints". This included a reference at the end of the article to "Full Story: Page 2". There the headline on the lead story was "'We're over the moon that First has listened'", tied to another story on the same page labelled "Timetable changes" which listed the exact details of the changes being introduced. The online headline, as the second story on the home page on the same day, was "People Power! First Bus reinstates dozens of Stoke-on-Trent routes after residents fight changes". What is most interesting is that the linked story "Is your bus affected by First Potteries timetable shakeup?", which was clearly tied to the main story in print because of its positioning on the page, ran as the ninth story on the homepage that day. Not only were there seven unconnected stories between these articles, there was nothing to show the content was linked. Neither story had an embedded link to the other thus readers of the first story were left without exact details of services affected. Readers of the second story had no context or, indeed, any reason why a list of bus timetable changes would be included in a news section. Also, neither story was included in the suggestions for 'related stories' at the end of the article. In summary, *The Sentinel* offers a completely different experience to its online and in print readers, however content does not alter between mobile and desktop other than headlines. The mobile site is easy to navigate but does not differ from other platforms in terms of the kinds of articles published, how often breaking news is updated or the areas of news covered.

5.5b Platform analysis of *North West Evening Mail*

There were lots of interesting elements to the *North West Evening Mail*'s mobile offering, although much of it was similar or identical to the main website. The mobile and desktop platforms look different although they have the same address – www.nwemail.co.uk. Readers

are automatically diverted to the mobile site when using a smartphone and the mobile design is significantly simplified. Articles are the same on both sites.

One unique element of the *Mail* was an RSS feed which altered throughout the day as more breaking stories were added. It appeared above what would normally be classed as the top news story of the day underneath the masthead and two rows of tabs. During the research period it varied in quantity from no stories to four stories. For example, at 9am on Monday, November 17, 2014, the 'breaking news' ticker-tape appeared directly above the top story, 'Man charged with attempted murder after assault at Barrow Industrial Estate'. At 1pm the content and look of the top story had not changed but two new stories had appeared above it and beneath the 'breaking news' ticker-tape – 'Concerns raised over growing 'panic' about Universal Credit in Barrow' and 'Barrow man who made pair's lives a misery jailed'. At 5pm four new stories were being displayed – 'Dozens of guns surrendered in Cumbria firearms amnesty', 'Cumbria burglar loses half his skull in horror fall', 'Two Cumbria criminals told to sell their homes', and 'Jasper funding boost means work could start on new Cumbria mountain rescue base'. The previous two stories from 1pm were no longer on show in that section. At 9pm it had not changed. As stories were uploaded to the website they would first appear in the 'breaking news' section, then later in the main news area. In this example the two stories that were in 'breaking news' at 1pm were being displayed in the second section of news on the homepage by 5pm. No more than four 'breaking news' stories showed on the website at any one time and, if no new stories were uploaded within a certain timeframe, the section effectively disappeared. For example, some mornings there were no stories on display there at 9am. When this happened the 'breaking news' ticker tape still appeared but it was directly above the top news story of the day. Stories in 'breaking news' were set within a light grey box separating them in appearance from articles in the main news sections. There was just one example of an article appearing in 'breaking news' and also in the main story.

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This was Sunday, November 23, when 'X Factor winner Matt Cardle and a host of stars shine at biggest Barrow Christmas Lights Switch On' appeared twice. The second version was directly underneath the first on the homepages. Three pages of the following day's newspaper were also devoted to the article.

Content on the website always appeared fresh but it often looked different because old articles had been moved rather than new content added. Indeed stories shifted position several times through the day moving both up and down, rather than naturally degrading in priority and being pushed down the news list by more recent articles. On Thursday, November 27, 2014, an example of this was an article with the headline 'Milon man arrested on suspicion of murdering girlfriend in Kenya' which was the top online story at 9am. It dropped to third at 1pm, was back up to second at 5pm, then pushed down to sixth at 9pm. It is worth noting that the sixth position is also the top of the second news section. This gave the article more prominence than in its previous two positions because it also displayed the first sentence and a photograph. News articles were also often removed from the homepage without having reached the bottom of the displayed articles and new stories were inserted into positions regardless of how long they had been online. Again this created an impression that the website had been changed more radically than was actually the case. However on occasions the story deemed the most important of the day was kept at the very top of the list and new stories were added underneath it, creating the false impression that no new stories had been uploaded.

Stories were published regularly through the day and there were several new articles added online between 9pm and 9am so the mobile and desktop sites always had something new in the morning to attract readers during one of the key times. Articles were also uploaded throughout the evening, for example, two new stories were added between 5pm and 9pm on Thursday, November 27, 2014, with 'Church seeks permission to reuse century-old Cumbria

graves' and 'Dalton festival organiser vows to go out with a bang'. Both appeared at the top of the news section but neither were in the 'breaking news' section which appeared empty at 9pm. There were also updates throughout the weekend, although considerably less on Sundays, with just two new stories appearing at the top of the news section and automatically pushing older stories down the websites on Sunday, November 23. The first was the previously discussed Christmas lights' switch-on and the second was 'Barrow school ranked in national table as 18th best primary in country'. These additions in the evenings and on Sundays, when no newspaper was printed, keep the website looking fresh.

On Monday, November 17, 2014, the top story on the homepages – at 9am, 1pm, 5pm and 9pm - was 'Man charged with attempted murder after assault at Barrow industrial estate'. In the newspaper the article appeared as a short picture story on Page 2 under the different headline 'Attempted murder accused, 46, in court'. There was no difference between the digital and print versions other than the headlines and priorities. However the story which was not deemed important enough for the front page was at the very top of the homepages from 9am to 9am. Interestingly the front page story in print on that Monday - 'If I hadn't taken Jake to Manchester he would have died' which focused on a boy with aggressive cancer which had been misdiagnosed on several occasions – did not appear online at all that day. It was printed as an 'exclusive'. This illustrates that audiences on different platforms either do not have access the same stories and articles are prioritised differently.

Another difference is illustrated by stories which have multiple versions published digitally but only one in print. Digital platforms offer the possibility of instant updates as stories change and evolve and huge importance is attached to getting stories online as quickly as possible. Therefore stories can be uploaded online then updated. In essence the print audience only sees the complete or final article while the online audience may have been able to access several altered versions. The only example of this in the *North West Evening Mail* was on

Monday, November 17, 2014, when the sixth story online at 9am was 'Barrow man dies following A592 crash in Cumbria'. This story was not showing on the homepages at 1pm but by this time the second article online was a new story 'Tributes to Barrow dad-of-three who died after car crash'. The second story included more detail. The online story moved positions several times throughout the day. At 5pm it was the seventh story and at 9pm it was back in its original position as the second most prominent article online. This story appeared in print as the Page 3 lead story on the same day, under a similar headline 'Family pay tribute to 'kind and loving' dad who died after crash'. The digital and print headlines in this example were not unusually different. However, the online version included the town where the man had lived. The decision to include either the fact he was a 'dad-of-three' or 'kind and loving' is reflective of a trend at the *Mail* not to use dramatically different headlines across the platforms, but to always add at least one geographical location.

In summary the *North-West Evening Mail* offers a regularly updated mobile site for local news. It has been simplified and the content was identical to the desktop site and not mobile specific. The mobile version did not carry as many over-bearing advertisements as the desktop homepage. The website was regularly updated with breaking news within usual working hours and headlines altered. The number of articles displayed on the mobile homepage was quite high at 16 and because they were updated throughout the day offered a good range of news despite the emphasis being placed on negative stories, in particular crime and traffic. The stories in print varied hugely from what appeared on the mobile platform, with some stories never appearing on the homepages despite being given prominence in print.

5.5c Content analysis of *Express & Star*

The *Express & Star* had the largest number of stories on the print front page of all daily

newspapers included in this study. It also had the most stories displayed on its mobile and

desktop sites without the news section being interrupted by other areas – 14 in total. On the

mobile site the top story showed a headline, photo and one sentence of the introduction

followed by an advert. There were then three news stories displaying just a photo and

headline, a link to Express and Star Live, then a further ten news articles displaying a photo

and headline. The same 14 stories were on the mobile and desktop sites, although the layout

was significantly different. The desktop site showed the main story - with a sentence of

introduction, headline and photo - on the top left of the site. The next three stories were

adjacent to the right displaying a photo and headline. There was a link to Express and Star

Live on the far right. The next ten news stories were immediately below and comprised two

rows of five stories, flowing from top left down the first column, then up to the top of the

second column. Therefore, the ninth story uploaded chronologically or in categorised order of

importance, was actually alongside the fourth story and appeared to have been given higher

priority. There were very few examples of the story order being changed, other than new

articles being published at the top. However, on Thursday, November 27, 2014, an article

with the headline 'Axe gang raid Black Country service station' did have its position moved

to give it more prominence. At 5pm it was ranked in the tenth position, at 9pm it had moved

up to the third spot. The mobile design was clear and simplified.

Articles were uploaded to the *Express & Star* digital platforms throughout the day and that

process started before 9am. Between 9pm and 9am the next morning, every news story on the

homepages changed. The only exception was at the weekend when the number of articles

published digitally dropped significantly. Eight stories were uploaded online between 9am on

Saturday, November 22, 2014, and 9am the following day, Sunday, November 23. That meant just six stories remained from the previous morning and, with the exception of new article 'Why we all love Football Manager' which was inserted into the third position although not categorised as news, the stories stayed in their original order. During that 24 hour period, Saturday's top story 'Driver jailed for seven years for deliberate hit-and-run in Brownhills' was downgraded to the ninth spot by Sunday morning.

During the week large numbers of stories were uploaded around the same time and that coincided with time they are assigned to print pages for that day's newspaper[27]. The majority of articles were uploaded in the morning. Using Monday, November 17, 2014, as an example, there were 11 new articles uploaded between 9am and 1pm. The three most prominent ones were 'Football hooligans involved in mass Wolverhampton brawl banned from every stadium', '£3m to improve business in Wolverhampton' and 'Wolverhampton schools £15m expansion to go ahead despite high number of objections'. At 5pm, of these, only the football hooligans article remained and a further three stories had been added, followed by another four at 9pm. The only discernible trends were that the most articles were uploaded between 9pm and 9am the following morning and very few remained on the homepages all day. On Thursday, November 27, 2014, all of the 14 stories on the homepages at 9am were different from 9pm the previous day. At 1pm a total of six new stories had been uploaded to the top of the news section, two more were added by 5pm, and four more before 9pm. So just two stories were on display at 9am and remained at 9pm, they were 'Walsall man arrested over Syria-related terror offences charged with identity theft' and '50 firefighters tackle huge blaze at historic Willenhall printing firm – watch footage'. Therefore, mobile readers who only visited the site once a day would receive a different digest of news depending on the time.

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[27] Information regarding print times was gained through the researcher's prior knowledge.

They also always received a different digest of news from print readers due to the priorities given to articles on different platforms.

Differences between online and print articles are not unique to digital in the case of the *Express & Star*. There are still several editions of the newspaper produced daily so print readers also receive different stories depending on their geographical location. The editorial team covers a large area and this is reflected in the fact the mobile and desktop sites are often dramatically different to the newspaper, much more so than any other daily newspaper examined. However the editionisation meant that the news on mobile and desktop was often very different from that in print. At 9am on Wednesday, November 26, 2014 'Sir Elton John to play Walsall's Bank's Stadium' was the top story online and a short story on P1, 'Fears over repair delays and job losses as Wolverhampton road budget faces £400k cut' was the fourth story online and the main story on Page 5, 'Jailed: Drunk Polish lorry driver caught driving the wrong way down major Black Country road' was the eighth story online and main story on Page 15. None of the other stories on the homepages appeared in the print edition, however most had Sandwell, Walsall or Staffordshire in the headline so are likely to have been in other editions. Interestingly, on Thursday, November 27, 2014, the top story at 9am was 'Walsall man arrested over Syria-related terror offences charged with identity theft'. It was still on the homepage at 9pm. However it did not appear in the main edition of the newspaper. There are plenty of examples of this kind, reflecting the large quantity of stories uploaded throughout the day. That is not to say that no stories from other areas appear in the main edition, but the online differences do highlight interesting editorial choices. They also create what could be described as a digital super-edition containing all the best stories from across the editions.

As already established, the quantity of stories published online before 9am meant that every story on the *Express & Star* homepages was usually new each morning. The example given

above shows that on some days very few of these stories appeared in the main edition of the newspaper, however that was not always the case. On Thursday, November 27, only four stories which were online at 9am did not appear in the main edition of the newspaper. As already mentioned the top story 'Walsall man arrested over Syria-related terror offences charged with identity theft' was one, the others were 'Family pays tribute to son killed in Oldbury collision'; '£330,000 cash boost to fight Stafford obesity'; and 'Civil servants could move to West Midlands in savings plan'. The headlines which appeared online were often not very different although, as with other newspapers, they had all been altered to include the location. The second story '50 firefighters tackle huge blaze at historic Willenhall printing firm' appeared in print as '50 firefighters tackle flames: Blaze at historic printing firm'. 'Every little helps! Poundland boss to save hundreds of thousands by putting £5.6m mansion up for sale himself' was the third story online and the Page 4 lead in print as 'Poundland boss to sell mansion online: Millionaire using new business venture to avoid agent fees'. The fifth story online 'Raiders escape with hundreds of pounds after targeting Wolverhampton buses' was the main story on Page 1 and was the only article to have a significantly differently headline, 'Smash-and-grab thieves hit buses: Patrols upped after raiders strike five times in six days'. The next story was 'Dying Tom's baby joy is bittersweet' and the main story on Page 6 of the print edition was 'Dying Tom's baby joy is bittersweet: Businessman battles on to raise funds for step-daughter'. This was followed by 'Wolverhampton's child care budget facing £6m cut' which was the Page 5 lead 'Child care budget is facing £6m cut'. Next was 'Dog lover's heartbreak as crematorium gives her wrong pet's ashes' which was the Page 17 lead as 'Heartbreak for grieving dog lover after claims she was given wrong ashes'. It was followed by 'Pensioner in acid attack case was 'normal self', court hears' which was the second story on Page 5 as 'Acid attack accused 'was normal self''. 'Lucas is a Little Star for his cancer fight courage' was the picture story on Page 6 with the headline 'Lucas is our little

star: Courage award for boy, four'. 'West Midlands paramedics head to west Africa to tackle Ebola crisis' was the main story on Page 13 with 'Pair join battle against ebola' online. 'Tens of thousands living in fuel poverty across West Midlands' was the Page 22 lead with 'Thousands struggling to heat their homes: More than 60,000 households cannot afford to pay fuel bills' online. Generally the stories given highest priority in the print newspaper were also most prominent online, but this varied widely from day to day.

There was just one example of an online news story having its headline changed with no update to content. At 9am on Thursday, November 23, 2014, the story was published with the headline 'Dying Tom's baby joy is bittersweet' by 1pm this has been altered to 'Terminally ill Tom's baby joy is bittersweet'. It is interesting to note that the original headline is the same as the one which ran in print. Different styles were also used online and in print on the same day with reference to capitalisation of Ebola. The online headline was 'West Midlands paramedics head to west Africa to tackle Ebola crisis' while the print version read 'Pair join battle against ebola'. This one example does not make it clear which would have been considered the correct style and the difference may have been down to human error. However it does raise an interesting point about the level of checks carried out on the different platforms and how they vary.

In conclusion the mobile *Express & Star* site offers a mix of regional news uploaded from the different editions of the newspaper. However, this also makes it harder for readers to find news specific to their town or city. This is particularly an issue because of the quantity of news uploaded to the site at certain times. It is again something rooted in the print past. The publication time of news appears more connected to the creation of the print edition than when stories break or are most suitable digitally. The mobile site's offering of 14 stories on the homepage is again a large number for a mobile site, but the simplified design makes it relatively easy to navigate. Again, the content for the *Express & Star* mobile site is not

platform specific but uploaded directly to both the desktop and mobile sites. Express & Star Live is an initiative which would seem ideally suited to the mobile platform and future development. While such changes are beyond the time period of this research it is something which would be interesting to watch in the future, particularly with regard to whether or not it becomes mobile specific.

5.5d Content analysis of *Oldham Chronicle*

The *Oldham Chronicle* did not have a site designed specifically for use on smartphones, meaning mobile readers could only access the desktop site via their handsets. This made it very hard to read without needing to first zoom in on specific areas. While a lot of information could be displayed on the screen most of it was illegible when the page opened because it had been resized to fit smaller screens. The entire homepage was displayed on one mobile screen, including an index on the left and advertisements on the right. Seven stories were displayed in the middle section but, due to larger text for the introductory sentence and headline, only the top story could be easily read without zooming in on the article. While there were seven articles on the homepage under a banner of 'Latest News' these were not exclusively news and regularly included sport stories and promotions for supplements or reader offers within the print product. During the research period a range of different types of stories appeared on the website and thus on the mobile homepage.

The top story at 9am on Monday, November 17, 2014, was 'Care firm collapses' and the only other news story on the homepage was '22,000 Oldhamers are unpaid carers'. Neither story was in Monday's newspapers and, after analysis, it appeared most likely they were from previous editions of the newspaper. The second story was 'First class 2014 supplement 11th

November', which clearly referred to an edition of the newspaper printed six days earlier. Interestingly the main story on the front page of the newspaper on Monday, November 17, and dominating a larger proportion of the print product was 'Birthday joy for Riley – Pages 2&3 plus 12-page awards pullout'. There was no reference to the awards on the website at 9am, however an article had been uploaded by 1pm 'Pride continues to uncover gems'. The third story at 9am was a restaurant review under the headline 'Come Dine With Us – The Three Crowns Inn', rather than news. Again this was not printed in Monday's newspaper so it is likely to have been from an earlier edition. The fourth, fifth and sixth articles - 'Johnson spoilt for choice over team selection', 'Holden lands at Latics' and 'Band slams players' attitude' - were categorised as 'other – not news' as they were all sports stories. The website at 1pm had a new top story, as mentioned above, promoting that day's awards supplement. The second article remained 'First class 2014 supplement 11th November' and the third story stayed as the same restaurant review. The main story on Page 33 of that day's newspaper - 'Flicking the festive switch' – which was in the fourth position and the seventh position displayed 'Sham marriage probe' which was a news in brief story printed on Page 32 of the newspaper. The other spots promoted sports stories. There were no further changes to the homepage by 5pm or 9pm.

The lack of news appearing on the *Oldham Chronicle* homepage was a trend that continued. On some days news was given less space online than sport. Four of the seven stories displayed at 9am on Wednesday, November 26, 2014, were categorised as sport. Throughout the analysis period the second spot was permanently given to 'First class 2014 supplement 11th November'. This headline instantly made the homepage look out-of-date and promoted a print supplement which would have no longer been available to buy. The top story on Wednesday, November 26, 2014, was 'Cancer lifeline sinking fast' which has been the main story on the front page the previous day. The only other news story on the homepage

appeared to be a campaign – 'Help the region's poorest kids this Christmas' – and was not in that day's newspaper. The main story on the front page of that day's newspaper, which also turned onto Page 2 – 'Awash with cash' - was uploaded later in the day. This was the same for two other news articles – the Page 4 main story 'Murdered Lee Rigby: Facebook 'has his blood on its hands'' and the Page 35 lead 'Nurse jailed for butting patient'. Therefore by 9pm only three news stories were on show from that day's newspaper while a total of 40 had been included in the print product.

The *Oldham Chronicle* was the least mobile friendly of all the daily newspapers in the study because there was no platform specific site. The stories uploaded were aimed at promoting the newspaper rather than being 'news' or offering an alternative to the print product. The desktop site appeared more dated than the other dailies and was virtually unusable on a mobile. The vast majority of articles from the newspaper never appeared on the homepage and there was no sign of stories being uploaded to the website first. Headlines were not changed and there was no distinction between the areas for news and sport online. Overall, it was difficult to read news on mobile because of the combination of navigational difficulties and general lack of up-to-date news. However this is not unique to mobile, similar issues also face users trying to access articles on desktop.

5.5e Missing the mobile potential: Daily content analysis conclusions

The analysis of four daily newspaper's mobile platforms and comparisons with print and desktop sites reveals that none offered unique content specific to the mobile platform. All of the newspapers published articles that were automatically sent to both digital platforms. This leaves local newspapers in a situation reminiscent of their first steps onto the digital platform

when they were accused of being both slow at recognising the opportunities and responding accordingly. This created a vacuum which was filled by organisations not traditionally viewed as newspaper competitors. This initial conclusion is developed with the analysis of weekly titles then explored further during the interviews. More evidence is needed to clarify whether this is a deliberate choice being made within the industry.

Table 5.5: Content per categories on mobile platforms of daily titles[28]

Category	The Sentinel	Northwest Evening Mail	Express & Star	Oldham Evening Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Politics	3	5	11	1	20	6.5
Military	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economics/Business	5	8	13	4	29	9.4
Roads/Travel	6	15	15	4	40	12.1
Courts/Crime	20	42	29	7	98	31.6
Accidents/Disasters	7	9	15	3	34	11
Science/Environment	0	1	0	1	2	0.6
Health/Welfare	1	0	2	1	4	1.3
Education	1	4	1	1	7	2.3
Community Events	11	9	6	2	28	9
Human Interest	6	10	3	2	21	6.8
Charity/Fundraising	3	5	1	2	11	3.5

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[28] In instances where stories did not change before the next analysis, the story was recounted to create an accurate picture of the daily content available to readers.

Technology	0	1	1	0	2	0.6
Celebrities	0	1	1	0	2	0.6
Other/Not news	0	1	0	11	12	3.9
Total	63	110	98	39	310	

Table 5.5 illustrates the wide variety of content included across all sites. However, it is highlights the predominance of court and crime stories. This, combined with dramatic variances in the prominence given to the same story on different platforms, sometimes created a very different overall impression despite being identical content. Another element which added to the differing tones across platforms was the greater prominence given to negative stories online, as illustrated in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Percentage of positive/negative stories on mobile platform of daily titles

Category	Sentinel	North West Evening Mail	Express & Star	Oldham Evening Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Positive	19	38	31	10	98	31.6
Negative	39	61	60	27	187	60.3
Neutral	5	11	7	2	25	8.1
Total	63	110	98	39	310	

The websites were regularly promoted from the print products, as many as five times on one page in some cases. Some newspapers updated their websites in the evenings and Sundays but not as regularly as during more traditional office offices. This is an indication that the online offering is progressing but news is still being shaped by print deadlines. Online headlines are altered to improve SEO and often go further than simply adding a geographical reference. The analysis made it clear that while mobile and desktop audiences access identical stories, it is a completely different experience for print readers.

The analysis of daily titles revealed that the focus of daily local newspapers is still on the communities which they serve, see Table 5.7.

Table* 5.7: *Local, regional or national/international classification on mobile platforms of daily titles

Category	The Sentinel	Northwest Evening Mail	Express & Star	Oldham Evening Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Local	57	101	59	35	252	81.3
Regional	3	8	32	4	47	15.2
National/International	3[29]	1	7	0	11	3.5
Total	63	110	98	39	310	

[29] The Sentinel includes a page with a round-up of stories from across the country and world, but these were not uploaded to the website.

The majority do include the most important stories on all platforms. So while some dailies, such as The Sentinel, offer a different experience and range of content across the platforms, there are also elements of consistency. As mentioned previously, some digital content is still inextricably linked to print deadlines. News is uploaded to the desktop and mobile sites when articles are ready for print, particularly apparent during analysis of the Express & Star. This initial analysis indicates that local daily newspapers are not operating on a digital-first basis and most are not offering anything unique for the mobile audience. These issues will form part of the Johnston Press case study, within the wider context of group and industry aims and constraints.

Section 2.3 highlighted the importance of mobile design, with sites accessed on the move and smaller screens ideally kept as simple as possible (Nielsen, 2009; Ward, 2002; Vaataja, 2015; Lacerda, 2015). However some of England's local daily newspapers still do not have a site designed specifically for mobile. The mobile market, devices and sites have altered beyond recognition during the course of this project. While many newspapers have embraced the emerging platform to varying levels, others have not begun. Some lagged behind in targeting news to their digital audience, and presented articles that were not only out-of-date but irrelevant or illegible on mobile.

Chapter Six: Comparisons from cross platform analysis of five weekly titles

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines weekly newspapers and builds on the previous chapter's focus on daily titles. There is a proud history of weekly newspapers in many of England's communities. While the dailies tended to focus on the larger metropolitan cities allowing them greater reach and larger circulations, the weeklies have served hundreds of smaller villages, towns and communities. This research, using a virtually identical methodology as previously, first briefly examines the challenges for weekly newspapers before analysing how they are making use of the mobile platform. This chapter uses similar methods to the previous in order to compare all platforms of daily and weekly titles. It analyses the three platforms of five titles (6.2) before examining the content in greater depth (6.3). The weekly findings and extent of differences between titles are summarised (6.4f) before the conclusion (6.5) highlights the range of challenges created by the production and distribution of mobile news.

6.2 Analysing the three platforms of weekly newspapers

In order to maintain viable comparisons, the weekly newspapers were analysed using similar methods and identical categories to the dailies. One additional weekly title was included in the project to compensate for what quickly became obvious as a lack of mobile and digital activity in more than one of the titles. As discussed in Chapter Four, the weekly titles'

analysis is based on two consecutive weeks rather than one constructed week's data. Articles are published on desktop and mobile up to a week before or after print publication, therefore the inclusion of three print editions was necessary to allow comparisons across the platforms. Other than these two adaptations, the analysis of the five weekly news platforms commenced in the same manner, with the analysis of the three platforms in their entirety before comparisons of the content. The five weekly newspapers were - the *New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times*, *Newbury Weekly News*, *Rotherham Advertiser*, *Shrewsbury Chronicle* and *Great Yarmouth Mercury*. They comprise a mix of independent and conglomerate ownerships as well as covering very different areas of the country and vastly differing approaches to the web and mobile platforms.

6.3 Analysis of the three platforms of five weekly, local newspapers

6.3a Platform analysis of *New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times*

This weekly newspaper is based in the New Forest and serves a largely rural area including New Milton, Barton-on-Sea, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Milford-on-Sea, Brockenhurst, Burley, Lymington, Sway, Boldre, Beaulieu, Hythe, Fawley and Totton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge. New Milton is a coastal market town and a high proportion of residents are above retirement age. The New Forest has one of the best employment rates in the country. The paper is printed every Thursday, independently owned by 'editor and proprietor Charles Curry', and costs 40p. In 2016 it had a combined circulation of 15,590 (Ponsford, 2017a). The *New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times* was unique in that all three platforms displayed stories in an identical way. The url for both mobile and web was

www.advertiserandtimes.co.uk. The vast majority of the homepage was dedicated to displaying an image of the print front page i.e. all three platforms displayed the identical information within an identical design. Online the page designed for print was surrounded by other internet furniture but it occupied almost the entire screen and was the only source of news or articles on the homepage. As an image, although displayed as a print page, the design was not digitally interactive in that there were no links to individual stories. The only way to properly read a story was to download the image of the page and either enlarge it or print it.

At the top of the homepage was the strapline 'Your local independent newspapers for over 80 years', with the masthead and address just below. The price, 40p, and a prompt to buy the newspaper 'Available in the shops every Friday* for only 40p!" was given the greatest prominence of all newspapers examined. The latest front page was uploaded on Fridays. Underneath the strapline 'current issue – 22nd November 2014', it was also deemed necessary to carry an explanation as to how readers could access the front page online, 'To view a readable copy of this week's front page stories please click here'. The homepages did include a menu of click-through lists, mostly connected to getting in touch with newspaper departments – 'home, advertising, subscriptions, wedding article submission pdf, contact, about the Advertiser & Times, Puzzle Corner Solutions, to send us a classified advert click here'. The website address www.newmiltonadvertiser.co.uk was under the masthead. The titles' social media sites were also promoted, in this case in a list down the left of the page – firstly 'Find us on Facebook' and then embedded Tweets. Due to the lack of accessible articles, it is worth further noting that during the analysis period there was just one post a week on Facebook. While this included descriptions of the top stories the articles were not available online. A similar approach was taken to Twitter, with two or three Tweets uploaded on print publication day referring to stories in the newspaper but with no way to read the full article online.

Analysis of the *New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times* website and its identical mobile site led to the conclusion that the online platforms were used solely as promotional tools for the print product. They were not viewed, or at least not used, as a way to reach new audiences with editorial content or increase the number of digital readers. While the effectiveness of the platforms was acknowledged in so far as deemed worthy to invest time in encouraging more people to read the print product, the opportunities offered by a regular mobile and online audience had not been exploited.

6.3b Platform analysis of *Shrewsbury Chronicle*

The *Shrewsbury Chronicle* is focused on the Shrewsbury area of Shropshire and owned by Midlands Newspaper Association. In 2016 it had a circulation of 31,421 (Linford, 2017). Shrewsbury is a rural tourist town with an ageing population of 73,276, low levels of unemployment and few large employers. The desktop and mobile sites for www.shrewsburychronicle.com were identical during the research period[30]. Each newspaper promoted the website www.shrewsburychronicle.com directly under the masthead. Only two stories could be seen on the web homepage, one news and one sport. They displayed a headline and introductory paragraph but no photo. Underneath the web masthead it stated 'Shrewsbury's Award Winning Local Newspaper', followed by tabs listing news, sport, features, community, jobs, motors, property and myclassified. Down the left were 'sitesections' – acceptable use policy, cookies and third party privacy, terms of website use, about us, contact us, local information, other publications, sites faqs, site accessibility, terms

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[30] The web and mobile sites for www.shrewsburychronicle.co.uk were overhauled after the data collection period so towards the end of 2015 this URL redirected readers to a Shrewsbury specific section of daily sister paper Shropshire Star.

& conditions, site map and community. Down the right side of the page there were a list of links to 'other titles' including Shropshire Star, The Shropshire Magazine, Telford Journal, Shrewsbury Chronicle, Newport Advertiser, North Shropshire Chronicle, Oswestry Chronicle, Market Drayton Advertiser, Mid Wales Journal, South Shropshire Journal, Bridgnorth Journal, Leominster Journal, Ross-on-Wye Journal, and Hereford Journal.

6.3c Platform analysis of *Newbury Weekly News*

The *Newbury Weekly News* is a family owned, broadsheet newspaper based in West Berkshire covering the rural towns of Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford and areas of Hampshire. It had a circulation of 14,986 and cost 75p. The area has high rates of employment and pay in comparison to the rest of the country and a population of 150,700 (West Berkshire Council, 2017). The front page included the masthead followed by 'at the heart of your community', the date and price, then 'Follow us through the week' with the website address, Twitter and Facebook icons. Below that there were four photo blurbs with four word-only blurbs underneath. There were usually three stories on the front page. The website displayed the masthead newburytoday.co.uk, which is different from the print name *Newbury Weekly News*. However it did state immediately underneath the masthead that it is 'powered by the Newbury Weekly News'. The website also displayed a search box before two rows of tab. The first row includes Home, News, Districts, Sport, Entertainment, Business, Forum, Property, Mortgages, Jobs, Dating, Place An Advert, Out & About, and Travel; the second row includes Most Read, Video Gallery, Picture Gallery, Family Announcements, Essential Guide, Pubs & Restaurants, Wedding Guide, Digital Editions, and Contract Printing. The top story displays a headline, five paragraphs of the article and a

photograph. The next eight articles ran down the right of the sites and just displayed a headline, with a ninth story underneath which included a headline and photo. A section labelled 'other news' was just below and displayed a further six stories with headlines, one paragraph of introduction and a photo. The mobile site was identical except for a simplified layout.

6.3d Platform analysis of *Great Yarmouth Mercury*

The *Great Yarmouth Mercury* focuses around the areas on rural coastal town of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. It is an area with lower than average rates of employment and pay, and relies on two main industries of tourism and marine energy supplies (Great Yarmouth Borough Council, 2016). The newspaper cost 80p, sold 11,305 copies, was published every Friday and owned by Archant Community Media Ltd (Ponsford, 2017a). The front page included the masthead with a blue strap underneath including the date, website address and cost. No mention was made of a specific mobile platform throughout the print product although the website address was at the top of every page. The desktop version of the website had an advert above the masthead, Twitter and Facebook icons and a search box, followed by two rows of tabs. The first included Home, Your Great Yarmouth, News, Sport, What's On, Buy & Sell, Contact Us, iWitness24; and the second has Jobs, Property, Motors, E-Edition, About Us, Facebook, Twitter, My24Account. This was followed by a strap stating 'Latest Great Yarmouth Mercury News' with the top story underneath including a headline, first paragraph, photo, byline and time uploaded. Beneath this were six stories which included the same information and fell in two rows of three, followed by a further eight stories in two rows of four with just the headline displayed. The mobile homepage was a platform-friendly

redesign of the desktop site and carried the same stories but in a more accessible layout. At the top of the mobile homepage were links to 'Log in' and 'Register' as well as 'jobs24' and 'useful links', above an advert which was followed by the masthead and icons for search and tabs to navigate the site. Below these a blue box contained the words 'Latest Great Yarmouth Mercury News' followed by six stories displaying the headline, introductory paragraph, photo, byline and time uploaded. There were then eight further stories showing only the headline.

6.3e Platform analysis of *Rotherham Advertiser*

The print edition of the *Rotherham Advertiser* was sold in South Yorkshire and the Dearne Valley, focusing on Rotherham and surrounding towns. The circulation was 20,101 (Ponsford, 2017a) and the population of Rotherham was 261,900. Employment was below the national average at 71 per cent, it is a highly populated urban area and the town was the centre of a child sexual exploitation scandal in 2013. The newspaper cost 80p, was available from Fridays and owned by Garnett Dickinson Group[31]. The front page of the newspaper, during the research period, included two stories. Underneath the masthead was the date, price, slogan of 'Your Town, Your Paper' and 'Serving South Yorkshire'. It had two earpiece adverts on either side of the masthead and a third advert across the bottom of the page. The mobile and web sites were identical and therefore displayed identical stories. The homepage masthead incorporated three newspapers – *Rotherham Advertiser*, *Rotherham Record & Dearne Valley Weekender* – with a list of links to the right including Register, Log in, My account, Send a story, Send a phone, Advertise with us, Bookmark. Underneath was a phone

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[31] The weekly title was owned by the same family for a century until March 2015 when a sale was agreed by Garnett Dickinson Group to former chief executive Nick Alexander.

number for the newsdesk and advertising, then the date, 'click here for address' and a search box. There were then two rows of tabs – the first Home, News Sport, Leisure, Local Services, About Us, Motoring, Photosales, and Easy Ad Booking – the second Family Announcements, Online Newspapers, Jobs, Flog it quick!, Sneak Peek, Schools Christmas Concert, What is child sexual exploitation?, and Dear Santa. A large advert is displayed below these, above a carousel section called 'Site Highlights' which contains four stories rotating automatically. The headlines of all four of these articles could be seen all the time however they were individually highlighted on rotation. A photo plus a larger version of the headline and the first paragraph of the story appeared to the right when highlighted. A further four stories were displayed under 'Latest News' and these all included a headline, first paragraph and photo.

6.3f Conclusions from the platform analysis of five weekly local newspapers

The majority of weekly newspapers mobile sites were identical to desktop. The digital platforms all displayed more stories than print, see Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Number of articles displayed on home/front page of weekly titles[32]

Platform	Newbury Weekly News	Rotherham Advertiser	Great Yarmouth Mercury	Shrewsbury Chronicle	New Milton Advertiser
Mobile	10	8	14	1	n/a

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[32] *New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times* was excluded from data, as explained in Section 6.3a.

Desktop	10	8	14	1	n/a
Print	3	2	1	4	n/a

The most accessible mobile site was the *Great Yarmouth Mercury's* simplified version of the desktop site. The worst was the *New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times'* illegible mobile site which came with instructions on how to print the page. This is unusual in an age which is increasingly digitally and mobile driven. It also created a need to extend the number of titles analysed due to the lack of accessible digital articles. To what extent other weekly titles are able to offer mobile content will be explored in the content analysis which follows.

6.4 Content analysis from across the three platforms of five weekly, local newspapers

6.4a Content analysis of *New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times*

It was not possible to analyse differences and comparisons between the platforms of the *New Milton Advertiser and Lymington Times* due to the identical nature of all three, as summarised above in the platform analysis (see Section 6.3a).

6.4b Content analysis of *Shrewsbury Chronicle*

The data collection period of this research in November 2014 proved to be an interesting time of change for the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* digitally and on mobile. The weekly Chronicle is owned by Midlands Newspaper Association, which also owns one of the daily newspapers

examined during this research, *Express & Star*. The analysis revealed differences between the two websites to the extent that there were no similarities in the design or specifications of the sites and nothing to link them in any manner. It quickly became clear during this research that www.shrewsburychronicle.com was not being updated. That was despite readers being directed to it from the newspaper. There was no explanation online or in paper. The url shrewsburychronicle.com was not redirected to another site, and at first sight there was nothing to show that the homepage was not being updated. The only indication that something was amiss on the site was the fact that the stories on the homepage did not change during the research period. The homepage news article 'Guildhall on university wish list' was dated July 11, 2014, although this information was only displayed after clicking through to read the complete article, and appeared to be the last story uploaded on the site. None of these stories appeared in the print edition of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* during the research period, although that is not surprising considering their publication date.

The lack of stories on the homepage prompted a decision to investigate the news section of the sites. This section displayed a total of eight news stories on the main page, all in list form with only the headline and first paragraph displayed. The stories did not change. They were - 'Guildhall on university wish list', 'Nursery faces closure threat', 'Villagers in shock at cyclist's death', 'Concern at old hospital plans', 'Thumbs up for school merger', 'Anger over plans meeting blunder', 'Dana bid falls at first hurdle', 'Wyle Cop junction to get facelift', 'Businessman's bid to buy jail', and 'Family mourns tragic racer'. These unusual circumstances prompted further investigation beyond the planned analysis. The top link in all searches was www.shrewsburychronicle.com, including links to several sections of the website. However, the second was the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* section of sister paper *Shropshire Star* at www.shropshirestar.com/shrewsbury-chronicle. The third was a free digital edition of the newspaper and archive published via PageSuite, with no apparent link

either to or from either the two homepages mentioned above. Articles were uploaded from the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* to this sub-section of *Shropshire Star*. The mobile and web homepages differed in design but shared the same stories, although they could not be found using information either from the print editions, the homepage of *Shropshire Star* or www.shrewsburychronicle.com. To add to the confusion, while *Shropshire Star* did have a homepage tab labelled Shrewsbury (www.shropshirestar.co.uk/shrewsbury), this directed readers to stories from the Shrewsbury edition of the daily newspaper, not the weekly *Shrewsbury Chronicle*.

The Shrewsbury section of the *Shropshire Star* mobile site had a simplified design which displays the date, Twitter and Facebook icons, and the *Shropshire Star* masthead, drop-down section and search facilities, with the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* masthead immediately below. The top story stood alone, followed by two pairs of stories, then a further 22 articles all displaying the headline, first sentence and photo. Therefore a total of 25 news stories were available on the mobile homepage. This was the same as the web homepage which displayed identical stories in a slightly different layout: the top article appeared in the top left corner of the site, to the left of four stories which were grouped and did not have the first sentence on display. The following stories were displayed in rows of three and did have the first sentence on show. There was also a difference with the mastheads on the mobile site. On the desktop site the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* was considerably smaller than the *Shropshire Star* masthead, compared to identical sizes on the mobile site. The website also displayed the Twitter and Facebook icons, followed by three rows of tabs. The first contained – jobs, dating, buy photos, local businesses, star shop, classifieds, book an ad, and digital editions; the second – home, news, sport, lifestyle, what's on, business, education, farming, motors, property, notices; the third – iPad and iPhone apps, desktop edition, weekly editions, free e-

supplements, Telford, Shrewsbury, Oswestry, crime, 999, Shrewsbury Town, AFC Telford, and more.

The apparent lack of coordination between the online sites and print version of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* offered an interesting insight into the relationships between daily and weekly local newspapers. The lack of signposting plus incorrect signposting must raise questions about how digital content is regarded and the importance attached to it. As noted previously (see Footnote 25) the web and mobile sites for www.shrewsburychronicle.co.uk were overhauled after the data collection period so towards the end of 2015 this url redirected readers to a Shrewsbury specific section of daily sister paper *Shropshire Star*. While this is clearly outside the remit of this research, in the context of discussion focusing on the priority relationships between daily and weekly newspapers, it should be noted that readers of the weekly newspaper were directed to a defunct website for more than a year.

6.4c Content analysis of *Newbury Weekly News*

The mobile and desktop sites have virtually identical designs and carry identical articles, although it should be remembered that both displayed the masthead newburytoday.co.uk, a different and more relevant title that the print version *Newbury Weekly News*. The Newbury sites were updated regularly throughout the day. However there were examples of stories on display which were dated by their headline. 'Signalling problems causing railway delays (Monday)' was still showing on the homepage the following day, Tuesday, November 18. Although it had dropped down the order, it was not sufficient to remove it from the top stories and therefore immediately made the site appear dated. On Wednesday, November 19, the headline was cut off at the end of the second line in the headline 'A lot to celebrate at Fir

Tree as Ofsted marks improvements with'. However it is interesting to note that the print headline, which appeared as a picture story on page 12 the following day, Thursday, November 20, was much shorter, 'Good progress at Fir Tree'. Ironically the lack of space for the web headline appears to mean a lot of the information added to the online headline, such as a geographical location and most interesting facts of the story, was lost. However, key words such as 'school' or the name of the town did not appear even in the full digital headline 'A lot to celebrate at Fir Tree as Ofsted marks improvements with good rating'. This problem of headlines not displaying in full was something that occurred when stories degrade in importance. The complete headline was visible when the story was first uploaded at 9am on Tuesday, November 18. This only changed when it moved into the 'other news' section lower down the website, which has less space for headlines. This unusual problem faced by the *Newbury Weekly News* within the 'other news' section, meant that some were unable to display the complete headline so they regularly either did not make sense or were unclear until the story was opened. Further examples of this included 'Tilehurst butchers scoops four golds at national industry' on Sunday, November 23, and 'Drunk motorist ploughs into taxi ... telegraph pole ... garden ...' and 'Environment Agency opposes park cafe for fear of flooding despite', both published on Tuesday, November 17.

Articles were often uploaded to the sites outside of normal office hours and throughout the weekend. Breaking emergency calls stories were not held back for the print edition. Therefore at 9am on Wednesday, November 18, there were already two new stories which hadn't been there the previous evening. These both covered the work of the emergency services, specifically 'Air ambulance lands at Brimpton Common after woman is cut from overturned car' and 'Air ambulance lands on M4 between Theale and Reading after bridge collision involving lorry'. Around 24 hours later a further six stories had been uploaded above these articles, which were now displaying in the 'more news' section. However, it

appeared that there was no consistency or regularity in when articles were uploaded throughout the day. On some days there were new stories at each four hour check and on others there were not. An example of this was on Wednesday, November 18. The website did not display any new articles at 1pm or 5pm, although there were two new stories displaying at 9pm – 'Air ambulance lands at Brimpton Common after woman is cut from overturned car' and 'Air ambulance lands on M4 between Theale and Reading after bridge collision involving lorry'. It should be noted that these were both breaking news from the emergency services. On Tuesday, November 25, a total of ten new articles were uploaded to the sites before 9am and updates continued throughout the day. At 1pm two new stories were displaying – 'Disruption to NHS services continues with industrial action until Sunday' and 'Safe stolen during overnight Subway break in Thatcham' – and at 5pm, although no other articles had been uploaded to the sites, the order of the top two stories had been altered so the sites looked refreshed. It is worth noting at this point that during this research period, it was rare for the order of articles to be changed and it never happened on most sites. At 9pm two further articles were displaying, thus highlighting the inconsistency in updates to the sites, something also reflected across most publications included in this research. At 9am on Monday, November 24, there were 12 new articles on display, at 1pm and 5pm just one more article had been added between each time frame, and a further two stories had been uploaded before 9pm.

One interesting anomaly occurred at 9pm on Tuesday, November 25, when two different articles were uploaded about the same incident. The first 'Safe stolen from Thatcham Subway in overnight break-in' was the top story while the other was displayed in the fourth position 'Safe stolen during overnight Subway break-in in Thatcham'. The similarities give an insight into how reporters are expected to construct headlines specifically for online.

Stories were regularly put online before appearing in the print edition while others were uploaded after the newspaper printed. Stories were also always given digital specific headlines and their online priority was not necessarily reflected in print. At 9am on Wednesday, November 19, one of the top stories online was 'Swift launches West Berkshire Christmas toy appeal 2014'. The same article appeared as a picture story on page nine of the newspaper the following day under the headline 'Appeal goes out for Christmas toys: Annual plea for donations to help underprivileged children'. Several stories were uploaded digitally on the same day as the print publication but with different headlines. For example, on Thursday, November 20, 'Environment Agency opposes park cafe for fear of flooding' was on page four of the newspaper as 'Agency's flood concerns to delay park's cafe plan: Council dismay as proposal set back in order to allow for modifications'. Others were published digitally several days later. For example, 'Sun could set for good on Woolhampton pub' was online at 9am on Saturday, November 22, yet had appeared as the main story of page six on Thursday, November 20, as 'Sun likely to set for good on historic pub: Application submitted for 14 houses on site of former coaching inn'. Another example of this was at 9am on Sunday, November 23, when the story 'Newbury rally driver comes out on top in championship' was uploaded to the news section online but had already appeared on page seven of the newspaper on Thursday, November 20, as 'Rally driver steers a course to the top'. It is interesting to note the most important page one print story of the week 'Vicar took 'wholly inappropriate interest' in children's sex lives' was uploaded the day after the print publication, on Friday November 21. It was the only example of both versions of a story using identical headlines.

In conclusion, the Newbury sites had more breaking news than the other weekly newspapers. Headlines were tailored to the specific platform, although this was hampered by the lack of display room in one section of the desktop and mobile sites. It is also interesting that the

weekly publication offered instant breaking news throughout the week, often regardless of

print deadline. Many stories went online before appearing in print but others were held back.

Overall, news was regularly updated on the digital sites and the platforms were always well

presented.

6.4d Content analysis of *Great Yarmouth Mercury*

The *Great Yarmouth Mercury* stood out from the other weekly newspapers in this research

because it had a mobile specific site and more uploads to the digital sites. Stories went online

both before and after the weekly print publication. It was comparable to some of the less

digitally active dailies and updated seven days a week. Two new stories – 'HMS Dauntless

hoped to return to Great Yarmouth for historic ceremony' and 'Men accused of murdering

Hannah Witheridge and David Miller in Thailand 'beg for help' in letter' - and one updated

article – 'Updated: Non-emergency police number is restored' - were uploaded between 9am

on Saturday, November 22, 2014, and 9am on Sunday, November 23, 2014. At 9am the

following day all six of the top stories had been updated and a further two added. Such a

quantity of new articles before 9am was more than most daily newspapers offered. Between

two and five new stories were uploaded to the web and mobile sites between each check,

including before 9am and after 5pm each day. It is noteworthy that the only time new stories

hadn't appeared online was at 9am on Thursday, November 27, and only one new article was

uploaded before 1pm that day. That was around the print deadline.

The vast majority of stories from the crime, traffic and accident categories were uploaded to

the website before they appeared in print. An example of this saw the first version of a rape

story displaying online at 9am on Monday, November 24, with the headline 'Police appeal

after rape allegation at Great Yarmouth's Britannia Pier'. This story was updated by 1pm on Monday, November 24, as 'Man bailed as police continue to investigate alleged rape in Great Yarmouth' and then appeared in print as a small story on Page 7 on the Friday. Another case of digital first was 'Seaside vandals are accused of putting lives at risk' which was displayed at 5pm on Tuesday, November 11, and then appeared as the page 25 lead on the Friday as 'Vandalism put lives at risk'. Other types of articles are uploaded well before they appeared in print, including events. The online headline 'Photo gallery: Festive feeling at Gorleston's Christmas lights switch on 2014' was on show at 9am on Monday, November 24. It appeared in the newspaper the following Friday as the lead and picture spread on page 32 with the headline 'Big turn-out to watch town's light switch-on'.

It is not just time-specific stories which are uploaded online first – 'Walking barefoot over hot coals to raise money for domestic abuse charity' was online at 5pm on Tuesday, November 18. The print version 'Fire walk will help victims' was the page 20 lead on Friday, November 21. This is also an interesting example of separate headlines being written for web, a necessity due to it being published online first, and print – yet without a geographical location. There was also no clear attempt to keep stories off the desktop and mobile sites, to run exclusively, or at least initially, in print. On Tuesday, November 25, one of the stories on display at 5pm was 'Great Yarmouth teen admits wearing uniform without permission on Remembrance Sunday'. The same article appeared in the newspaper on Friday, November 28, as the page 4 lead with the headline 'Teen dressed to look like soldier'. Alterations to stories were always cleared labelled as 'updated' and uploaded promptly. At 9am on Monday, November 24, the top article was 'Two cars and a moped in A47 crash between Brundall and Norwich' and by 1pm it had changed to 'Update: One person injured following crash between two cars and a moped on A47 between Brundall and Norwich'. It had also lost priority and was at this point the third most prominent article online. A number of photo

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galleries were uploaded during the research period and shared in print as picture spreads. There were also examples of online videos, such as, 'Video: "To be told you're not worth a 1 percent pay increase is hugely demoralising" – NHS staff strike across Norfolk and Suffolk' which was the second story at 1pm on Monday, November 24.

Stories appearing online first led to differences in headlines which were more pronounced than at other titles. The top story at 1pm on Thursday, November 27, was 'Teen forced to strip by robbers in Great Yarmouth'. The same story appeared as a short article on Page 4 of the following day's newspaper with the headline 'Victim made to remove shoes'. At 9pm on Wednesday, November 26, there were two examples of articles where the online headlines were different from print. A report of the Christmas lights switch on in Great Yarmouth carried an equal number of pictures and content on all platforms. Online the headline was 'Photo gallery: Great Yarmouth lights up for Christmas' while in print it was 'A glittering success!'. An article about the dangers of seals had a much more dramatic headline online, which as with the previous example was also considerably longer. On the web it was 'Killer grey seals attack North Sea porpoises – and could harm humans, scientists warn' and in print it was 'People warned of aggressive seals'. These two examples also illustrate the variance in priorities given to stories online and in print. Great Yarmouth's Christmas lights was the second story online and appeared as the Page 6 lead with a range of pictures. The seal story was the third most prominent story online, yet in the newspaper was the Page 27 lead. The stories were given similar prominence online yet in print there was a difference of 21 pages.

In conclusion the *Great Yarmouth Mercury* had a mobile design and online content which were more similar to some of the daily newspapers than other weeklies. It would be hard to tell how regularly the print editions were produced if a reader was guided by the online offering. Some daily newspapers uploaded the majority of stories after the print deadline.

Overall the *Mercury* mobile site offered a wide mix of content regardless of the print deadlines.

6.4e Content analysis of *Rotherham Advertiser*

The *Rotherham Advertiser* includes two main news sections on its desktop site – Latest News and Site Highlights – which are replicated on its identical mobile site. Stories which appeared in Site Highlights were also regularly in Latest News at the same time. Thus the number of individual articles available on the home pages was a maximum of eight, but at certain times was as low as five because of the repetition. For example, at 9am on Tuesday, November 18, 2015 the articles in Site Highlights were 'SportsChat Monday 16/11/14', 'Woman trapped after East Dene crash', 'Tributes after five teenagers killed in crash', and 'Teenager suffers serious head injuries in suspected assault'. Meanwhile, the stories in Latest News were 'SportsChat Monday 17/11/14', 'Firefighters battle Parkgate car blaze', 'Woman trapped after East Dene Crash', and 'Tributes after five teenagers killed in crash'. Therefore three of the stories appeared in both sections meaning only five separate articles were on display.

Nothing was uploaded to the homepage during the weekend so the stories displayed at 9am on Saturday, November 22, 2014, were identical to the articles displayed at 9am on Monday, November 24. In the Site Highlights these were 'GALLERY: Sahara adventure in aid of SAFE@LAST', 'This Week's Sneak Peek – November 21, 2014', 'Three arrested over Rotherham child sex abuse', and 'Conisbrough death crash – inquests adjourned'; while in Latest News were 'GALLERY: Sahara adventure in aid of SAFE@LAST REPEAT', 'LETTER: Battling for Rotherham's green belt', 'Man in hospital after North Anston flat fire', and 'Family fun evening aims to boost football club funds'. Only one new article –

'Two trapped after accidents' – had been added to Site Highlights by 1pm on Monday, November 24, although there had been three additions to Latest News – 'Lorry fire drama on M1', 'Three crews battle garage blaze' and 'Two trapped after accidents'. This trend of stories remaining on the homepages for several days, due to a lack of new articles being uploaded, was not confined to weekends. 'Woman assaulted on Denaby Craggs' was on the homepage at 1pm on Tuesday, November 25, 2014, and was still on show two days later. This also impacted the overall appearance of the homepage as stories remained unaltered and were not updated for up to two days. An example of this occurred with articles which were first displayed on the Site Highlights by 1pm on Tuesday, November 25, 2014. The articles 'Volunteers to quiz Rotherham police chief', 'Woman assaulted on Denaby Craggs', 'Rotherham celebrates its volunteers' and 'Police seek flasher' in Site Highlights did not alter until 1pm on Thursday, November 27. The stories in Latest News - 'Volunteers to quiz Rotherham police chief', 'Woman assaulted on Denaby Craggs', 'Rotherham celebrates its volunteers', and 'Police seek flasher'- did not alter between 1pm on Tuesday, November 25, and 5pm on Wednesday, November 26. Although, it is not classified as news within the agreed categories, the most obvious example of an article which appeared dated online is worth noting. An article with the headline 'Sportschat Monday 17/11/14' was still displayed on the homepage in the afternoon on Wednesday, November 19.

The cross-platform comparison of stories revealed that the vast majority of articles in the newspaper did not appear online. The front page stories were not included on the homepage. The digital articles were either printed towards the back of the newspaper's news section or were small articles. The print edition of Friday, November 28, 2015, included 'Police hunting flasher' as a small story on Page 2 – the same story had appeared as the second article online on Site Highlights at 9am on Tuesday, November 25, with the headline 'Police seek flasher'. Another story appeared in print as a small story on Page 4, Friday, November 21. The

headline was 'Family's appeal to locate missing mum'. It was the third story online at 1pm on Wednesday, November 19, as 'Police search for missing mum'. At 9am on Tuesday, November 18, a story ran online with the headline 'Woman trapped after East Dene crash', and in print, on the following Friday, the same article had the headline 'Crash rescue'. This is one of very few examples where the location was added. Another example of this was the addition of a charity's name rather than a location, 'What a sandblast' was the headline of the lead story on page 37 of Friday, November 21's newspaper while it appeared online under 'GALLERY: Sahara adventure in aid of SAFE@LAST' on the same day.

The story of five teenagers who died in a car crash appeared on page 9 on Friday, November 21, under the headline 'Safety probe plea as death toll rises'. The online story on Monday, November 17, had the headline 'Tributes after five teenagers killed in crash' and had been updated for the newspaper. The only time this story was updated online was after that week's newspaper had printed. It appeared online on Friday, November 12, with the headline 'Conisbrough death crash – inquests adjourned'. The follow-up story was the second most prominent story on page 9 of the newspaper of Friday, November 28. It focused on the funerals and didn't mention the inquests until the ninth paragraph. As well as being a completely different article, it also ran with the alternative headline 'Each one has a place in our hearts. They had tremendous lives ahead'. A very basic story was shared online, with more detail used exclusively in print. Articles about the Rotherham child sex exploitation scandal were dealt with in a similar way. Both the newspaper editions for November 21 and 28 included several pages of features, interviews and investigations into the story yet very little or nothing appeared in the online news sections. However it is worth noting that there was a dedicated homepage tab entitled 'What is child sexual exploitation?'. The newspaper of Friday, November 28, had a three-page special investigation including a small story at the bottom of page 8 with the headline 'Suspects bailed in CSE case'. The only part of this

investigation to appear online was a story on the homepage on Friday, November 21, with the headline 'Three arrested over Rotherham child sex abuse'. It is worth noting that, such editorial decisions may have been taken in a bid to protect print circulation, there is a legal obligation to cover court stories correctly and contemporaneously. Failing to inform readers that those arrested had been bailed raises questions about whether readers are fully informed within the legal requirements. The vast majority of stories which appeared online fell either within the crime, traffic or accident category, however, not all of these stories appeared on the homepage. One example of this is a police story 'Man found seriously injured at bus station' which was a small story on page 5 in the print edition of Friday, November 21, but did not appear on the homepage at any point.

The *Rotherham Advertiser* cross promotes its online and print platforms, but makes no mention on either of the mobile platform. The website address is printed at the top of every page, although gets no mention on the front page. It is also promoted at the end of the contents panel on page 2, alongside the newspapers' Facebook and Twitter pages. Online, an article is uploaded to the homepage every Friday promoting the contents of that week's newspaper under the headline 'This Week's Sneak Peek' plus the date. In conclusion, while the website is used as a tool to promote the newspaper it also offers a good range of news online, although without a simplified mobile site it is hard to navigate quickly.

6.4f From unreadable to competing with dailies: Conclusions from the content analysis of weekly newspapers

There were huge variations between the five weekly titles as there had been with the daily newspapers. This included the way they shared their articles online but also whether they had sites specifically designed for mobile or even desktop. The in-depth analysis created an accurate snapshot of the newspapers' mobile platforms. It also revealed that many articles still only appeared in print. The online sites of the weeklies were also dominated by crime and court stories, see Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Overview of content categories on mobile platforms of weekly titles

Category	Newbury Weekly News	Rotherham Advertiser	Great Yarmouth Mercury	Shrewsbury Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Politics	3	2	5	n/a	10	4.6
Military	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Economics/Business	4	3	4	n/a	11	5.1
Roads/Travel	9	5	12	n/a	26	12
Courts/Crime	37	19	47	n/a	103	47.7
Accidents/Disasters	5	2	13	n/a	20	9.3
Science/Environment	1	0	1	n/a	2	0.9
Health/Welfare	3	0	1	n/a	4	1.9
Education	1	3	2	n/a	6	2.8
Community Events	4	6	7	n/a	17	7.9
Human Interest	0	2	2	n/a	4	1.9
Charity/Fundraising	3	7	3	n/a	13	6

Technology	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Celebrities	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Other/Not news	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Total	70	49	97	n/a	216	

A wide range of stories were covered on all platforms but, as with the daily titles, negatives stories dominated online, see Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Overview of positive/negative stories on mobile platform of weekly titles

Category	Newbury Weekly News	Rotherham Advertiser	Great Yarmouth Mercury	Shrewsbury Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Positive	27	20	21	n/a	68	31.3
Negative	42	26	72	n/a	140	64.5
Neutral	1	3	5	n/a	9	4.1
Total	70	49	98	n/a	217	

The weekly titles maintain a focus on local issues with 97.7 per cent of all stories classified as 'local'. This was a larger percentage than that seen in the daily titles, see Table 5.7 and 6.4.

Table 6.4: Local, regional or national/international classification on mobile

platforms of weekly titles

Category	Newbury Weekly News	Rotherham Advertiser	Great Yarmouth Mercury	Shrewsbury Chronicle	Total	Percentage
Local	68	49	95	n/a	212	97.7
Regional	2	0	3	n/a	5	2.3
National/International	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Total	70	49	98	n/a	217	

The analysis also showed that the weekly newspapers are less active in updating their mobile or desktop sites – placing them a long way from the belief that newspapers "cannot take the risk of not communicating with customers over the mobile platform (WAN, 2009:41)". In many cases the conclusions of Karlis et al. (2012) still hold true that weekly titles simply do not live up to" their digital potential". At one end of the scale was the *New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times* which used the web for nothing more than promoting the newspaper. At the other was the *Great Yarmouth Mercury* which offered regularly updated online content extending through the evening and weekend on a mobile specific site. This was more similar to the daily newspapers than its weekly peers. It is worth noting that the Great Yarmouth title is part of a large newspaper group, Archant, and as such can share mobile design and software. *New Milton* is an independent title. More research would be needed to prove if ownership has such an impact or if these are locally taken editorial decisions. Further investigations would also be useful to provide clarity around the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*

online, which appears to be an anomaly. The digital approach was very different from other titles owned by Midlands Newspaper Association.

Analysis of these five titles was the first step in capturing how the mobile platform is being adopted by England's weekly newspapers. As more people access news on mobiles and less in print, the comparisons, similarities and differences between weekly and daily newsrooms will become increasingly important. This is particularly true in a digital market which does not recognise traditional print boundaries. Indeed this research has shown that one of the weekly newspapers was already offering more daily digital content than daily competitors. This in turn may force a rebalancing of staffing levels within large news organisations. The demands for breaking news apply equally to all editorial teams regardless of the frequency of the print product. What remains to be seen is whether more weeklies will follow the dailies with mobile sites, as was the case with the arrival of desktop sites.

6.5 Conclusion: Comparison of daily and weekly platforms

This content analysis has addressed two of the broad aims of this research. It has analysed how local news is created, presented and distributed on the mobile platform. One of the most significant findings is that none of the newspapers were creating content specifically for the mobile platform. Some were not creating any content specifically for digital platforms (see for example Section 6.4a). There were large differences in the prominence given to certain content on some titles, often driven by a dominance of crime and negative stories online. Negative stories made up 60.30 per cent of content on daily titles with 31 per cent focusing on court of crime (see Table 5.6). Negative articles were even more dominant in the weeklies at 64.5 per cent with 47 per cent court and crime (see Table 6.4). An example of this can be

seen on Page 168 when a story in the *Rotherham Advertiser* about a flasher was given much

greater prominence online than in print. No content appeared only on mobile or was adapted

for it but there were examples of stories given greater priority online and therefore on mobile,

and this was not restricted to crime. Examples include a toy appeal in the *Newbury Weekly*

News (see Page 162) which was the top story online but only Page 9 in print; and a *Great*

Yarmouth Mercury seal story which was the third most prominent story online, yet in the

newspaper was the Page 27 lead (see Page 166). Some titles had greater design differences

between platforms such as sites designed specifically for mobile on *The Sentinel* and *North*

West Evening Mail (see Sections 5.4a and 5.4b). However at the other extreme was *New*

Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times (see Section 6.3a) where the design was identical

regardless of platform.

Findings from the content analysis have also addressed another aim of this thesis, how mobile

is challenging the traditional models of England's weekly and daily newspapers. England's

local newspapers are responding to mobile in varying degrees. The daily newspapers

generally protect traditional differences between the models by updating the online sites more

regularly (See Section 6.5). A more detailed analysis of why daily titles produce more digital

content will take place during the Johnston Press interviews. Daily newspapers are also more

likely to have a mobile specific platform. Again, further analysis is needed to be able to draw

conclusions as to why this is the case and will take place later in the thesis. The difference in

mobile offering between the most mobile active daily newspaper and least active weekly is

vast. However, there was a middle ground occupied by several of the titles both daily and

weekly. The fact such similarities exist represents a larger shift for editorial teams working

on weekly newspapers, which until fairly recently had just one deadline a week. However it

still remains that, with exceptions such as the *Great Yarmouth Mercury*, daily newspapers are

generally likely to have more regularly updated online platforms than weeklies. That

adoption pattern is unlikely to alter. Lessons from how the larger daily newspapers adapt to the platform are likely to be adopted by both smaller dailies and weekly titles in the future.

The clearest distinction between daily and weekly local newspapers models has always been how frequently the product is printed. The emergence of digital platforms and the possibility of uploading articles around the clock have theoretically ended these deadline constraints. In reality, most titles showed that they were still being driven to a large extent by print methods and models. Basic stories are still going online with details held back as print exclusives (see for example Page 169 for *Rotherham Advertiser* articles on child sex exploitation and a fatal crash, and Page 141 for the handling of two stories by the *Oldham Chronicle*); large numbers of articles never appear online and more are only uploaded after appearing in print (see Page 134 where this is highlighted in the *North West Evening Mail,* Page 149 for the *Oldham Chronicle* and Page 163 for the *Newbury Weekly News)*; fewer articles are uploaded in the evenings and weekends despite the internet's constant deadline (see Page 13 for details of weekend coverage at the *Express & Star* and Page 133 for *North West Evening Mail*); and the amount of online stories is impacted by print production times (see Page 158 for the lack of online stories on print day at the *Great Yarmouth Mercury* and Page 140 for an increase in digital articles connected to print deadline at the *Express & Star)*. Print still drives news rooms and traditional methods continue even at the most digitally advanced titles.

The analysis uncovered examples of clear disparities between the websites of daily and weekly titles. This was highlighted at the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* and sister daily title the *Express & Star*. The weekly title was the 'poor relation' to such an extent that readers were directed to a defunct website for more than a year (see Section 6.4b on the *Shrewsbury Chronicle)*. Such examples raise important issues about differences between titles and the production of news. However, similarities also appeared in the convergence of content

across new platforms. The clearest illustration was that the vast majority of stories have a local focus (see Pages 147 and 173). Local newspapers are not only maintaining traditional working patterns, but continue to perform many traditional community roles with the types of stories they cover. Examples of this can be seen in the *Oldham Chronicle's* Pride Awards on Page 135, prominence given to resident's voices and campaigns as in the *Stoke Sentinel's* canal crash article on Page 122 and the *Great Yarmouth Mercury's* support of striking NHS workers on Page 159. All these factors combine to answer RQ1, How are the traditional models of England's local newspapers being challenged by the mobile platform.

These content analysis findings have seen the emergence of new observations. Firstly, all local journalism in England can be described community journalism. Despite the international possibilities of the internet, local newspapers still focus on their patches. They are also campaigning for their communities and integrated within them. This allows the emergence of a more specific definition: local journalism is community journalism regardless of title ownership or reach because it is primarily defined by attention to and involvement in local issues. It can exist regardless of physical location. This conclusion was informed by the literature review but strengthened by findings of the content analysis. These findings partially answer RQ2, How is the community role of journalism within England's local newspapers changing as mobile news grows? This will be examined in greater depth during the case study, as will the final aim and expanded answers for the research questions.

Chapter Seven: "Changing our mentality": Lessons learnt and balancing demands within Johnston Press's approach to mobile

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters examined the mobile platforms and content of local newspapers, highlighting large differences between titles. None had unique mobile content and all stories uploaded to desktop were also automatically published to mobile. In general, the digital platforms of titles which printed daily were more advanced than the weekly titles. However there was little difference between some daily titles and the more advanced weeklies. Despite this the pattern emerging from the data was that there remained extremes between the most and least comprehensive mobile sites, with some titles having not yet moved onto the platform at all. This chapter now specifically explores Johnston Press within a refined case study structure. Johnston Press is one of the country's largest media companies, owning more than 200 local newspaper titles. This research focused on senior executives working for the whole company rather than individual newspapers because decisions such as the design of mobile sites, staffing and resources are controlled at this level. It was also a unique opportunity to interview people in the most senior roles and understand how those in control adapted a large local newspaper group to address the mobile platform.

How local news is displayed on mobiles varies widely. However market dominance by several large companies means there are hundreds of titles with identical site designs. Therefore an in-depth examination of a large local newspaper owner, informed by the earlier analysis of nine titles, expanded and concretised initial findings. Johnston Press was an ideal case study for this research. It owned daily and weekly local newspapers, and several titles

had moved from publishing daily to weekly during the preceding five years (Halliday, 2012). At the time of this research its titles displayed identically designed websites with the exception of its flagship daily titles *The Scotsman* and *Yorkshire Post* which both had similar yet more advanced designs. This largely uniform approach to desktop and mobile design is found in all of England's large newspaper companies. However the content and approach to digital are likely to vary depending on the title, even within large companies.

As the majority of newspapers are owned by large corporations, it was felt more relevant to investigate influences within one specific company which impact many titles, rather than extend earlier findings through further comparisons between organisations. The decision to focus on one company also allowed for deeper interrogations of the differences between daily and weekly titles. It removed a large number of potential problems such as comparing titles which worked under different expectations, staffing levels and managerial influence. Interviewees were able to talk objectively about all titles as they were not specifically linked to any particular newspaper within the group. They were also among a fairly small number of people who worked across numerous titles at a group level. This gave them a perspective for comparisons between newspapers' content and working practices which would not be possible either within individual Johnston Press newsrooms or titles owned by different companies. The researcher was also granted unique access to the most senior management and previously inaccessible data due to her employment with the company. That allowed the project to make a considerable contribution to the area of research, using information from more than 200 Johnston Press titles. It must also be acknowledged that a part-time researcher who is also a full-time Johnston Press employee would have to declare this affiliation. Then, even if other company executives agreed to grant interviews, commercial rivalries and sensitivities would have been likely to influence their responses.

All of the firm's paid-for newspapers had an associated website and every site had its own mobile-specific version - described on the company's website as having "generated significant traffic, with the majority of users aged under 35" (Johnston Press, 2015). This reinforces research which found that news consumption is highest when people are younger (Chisholm, 2010:15). Johnston Press also had smartphone, iPad and tablet apps for 18 of its titles including *The Scotsman*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Sunderland Echo* and *The Star* in Sheffield. In total the group had released 31 apps, including iPhone apps for specific advertising sections - *Jobstoday* and *iAnnounce* (family announcements) platforms - and a number of free football smartphone apps. In 2016 the company began to introduce newly designed 'responsive' websites and, while this was planned for all titles, it was initially only available on the largest sites. Several of Johnston Press's daily publications also unveiled new, improved mobile apps around the same time. The first 'responsive' website, app and newly-designed newspaper were unveiled for *The Scotsman* in September 2015. The site was described by chief executive officer Ashley Highfield as the firm's "first fully responsive website, meaning whatever device you're on it will size appropriately with the same content" (Greenslade, 2015). These changes were viewed by all of the interviewees as important developments in Johnston Press's mobile journey and are discussed in more depth later.

The Johnston Press case study is divided into two chapters. Previous findings in this thesis from nine newspapers under a wide range of ownerships examined the general research areas, such as how local news is created, presented and distributed on the mobile platform. The aim of the case study was to further probe how Johnston Press had adapted to mobile and the platform's influence. Therefore Chapter Seven investigates how Johnston Press first adopted mobile and present development, particularly within the context of decisions influenced by the industry's challenging circumstances. This includes a focus on the contexts created by specific external influences. These findings are further developed in Chapter Eight which

examines the future impact of mobile growth on Johnston Press's traditional newspaper models.

Chapter Seven sets the scene within Johnston Press and its relationship with mobile. It starts with a description of the interview methods (7.2), which were guided by findings from the literature review (Chapters Two and Three) and cross-platform analysis (Chapters Five and Six). There is also information about the interviewees (7.3) and the history of Johnston Press (7.4) to give context. The rest of the chapter is made up of findings, with an initial focus on the adoption of mobile at Johnston Press (7.5). The remainder of Chapter Seven focuses on the present-day level of mobile adoption (7.6) and examines some of the major challenges. The need for mobile-specific content is then re-examined (7.6.7) before the chapter's conclusion (7.7). Chapter Eight examines challenges to traditional local newspaper models and connections to the mobile platform. It starts with the introduction (8.1) then examines the future of mobile at Johnston Press (8.2) including the potential dominance of the platform. It also addresses wider issues raised within the literature review, in particular the mobile divide (8.3). Comparisons between Chapters Five and Six have already shown that the mobile and desktop platforms are to some extent lessening differences between daily and weekly newspapers. These are discussed in greater depth (8.4) before the earlier findings of the content analysis are examined in light of the case study conclusions. Several insights emerge from the discussion section (8.5) and are summarised in the conclusion (8.6).

7.2 The interviews

Information about Johnston Press was gathered through background research, figures provided by interviewees and the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method to target specific areas while allowing exploration of new topics,

beliefs and opinions broached by interviewees. This also allowed reliable comparisons which may not have been possible in unstructured situations. This method led to findings which were simple to validate and easy to explore within the sub-culture of a local newspaper company. It also allowed measurement of both broad consensus and individual understandings. Face-to-face interviews took place at a number of locations within Johnston Press premises but away from other members of staff to avoid interruptions. There was a range of practical and theoretical questions, requiring both factual and opinion-based answers. The questions were designed to further develop the findings of previous chapters.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with a list of guide questions [see Appendix 1]. These included a mix of closed questions for specific facts and open questions which allowed interviewees to expand their answers. A checklist of research questions relevant to the interviews and essential topics allowed the interviewer to improvise where necessary and explore themes raised by interviewees without the constraints of pre-set questions. Participants were given an overview of the process and a sheet fully explaining the objectives and aims of the research [see Appendices 2 and 3]. This was in strict accordance with the university's code of ethics. To ensure absolute clarity each interview started with an explanation of the structure, a brief guide to the range and type of questions, and a description of the motivation for the research. As all interviewees were employees of Johnston Press, they were also given an explanation of the scale, focus and purpose of the research. Every interviewee was invited to discuss confidentiality and sign a consent form [see Appendix 4]. Permission to record the interview was also confirmed. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to remain anonymous with neither their name nor job title used within the findings. However, as all employees interviewed worked at a very senior group level, there was no option to include job titles but to keep names confidential. All participants were happy to take part without anonymity.

Four of the five interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the fifth conducted over the phone. All lasted between 40 and 75 minutes, and were electronically recorded. All interviews began with confirmation of the interviewees' name and job [see Appendix 8]. The initial questions were simple in a bid to put interviewees at ease, with more complex issues included later. Where necessary, the researcher summarised or repeated questions to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation. A series of probes were also included allowing the researcher to seek further clarification, specific examples or more elaboration on a previous answer. These techniques allowed the researcher to make the most of semi-structured interviews' flexible nature by questioning contradictions both within that specific interview but also in the context of answers from previous interviewees.

All interviews were fully transcribed within 24 hours of taking place. They were then coded to extract information relevant to the research aims. A coding system was designed to record individual quotes within relevant categories to capture information within the interviewees' own words. This relied on intensive and systematic analysis informed by the previously examined literature. A coding template was created, initially using broad themes related to the research questions, followed by successively narrower issues as raised by the interviewees and categorised through their relevance to each area [Appendix 9]. The reliability of the coding grid was confirmed through a second researcher who conducted independent coding on one of the transcripts. The results were compared with those of the primary researcher and the discrepancies were found to be so minor that no changes were needed. All transcripts were then coded to this template and illustrative quotes were extracted. Emphasis was placed on in-depth quotes rather than quantitative findings in order to capitalise on the unusual level of access with the company and to allow for specific details to emerge.

7.3 The interviewees

In-depth interviews were conducted with the company's four most senior executives who had a direct input into shaping its editorial mobile strategy. A fifth interview took place with the company's most senior trainer who worked directly with journalists to implement changes and update skills. The number of interviewees was deliberately small to allow longer, in-depth interviews examining subjects more comprehensively. All other senior editorial staff within Johnston Press report to those interviewed; therefore, this small number was in fact saturation. There are no explicit guidelines for determining saturation and, as such, establishing how many interviews are appropriate for any research project can be a challenge. However, it is useful to briefly examine how a range of scholars have approached this conundrum.

Strauss and Corbin dictate that theoretical saturation is reached when no new themes or insights arise (1990). However, Charmaz believes the priority should be interviewing those who have the most knowledge of the particular topic (2003). These two concepts, while not opposed, give little guidance as to the best number of interviewees. Bowen goes so far as to question whether guidelines for saturation are even necessary (Bowen, 2008:137-8). He concludes that sampling adequacy is reached with depth as well as breadth of information (Bowen, 2008:141). Fusch and Ness also stress that saturation depends on individual research designs, but agree that basic principles include no new themes (2015). Fugard and Potts give examples of saturation ranging from two interviews to 100 (2015). Guest et al. highlight that metathemes can be evident and data saturation can be reached with six interviews but stress that "purposive samples still need to be carefully selected" (2006:79). This is strengthened by Mason who maintains that a smaller number of samples are needed for qualitative studies

concerned with meaning rather than generalised hypothesis (2010). He also points out that the intensive nature of qualitative research makes large numbers impractical. Barbour (2001), Dworkin (2012), Francis et al. (2010), Guest et al. (2006), Mason (2010) and Morse (1995) all conclude that it is the quality of the information that is important and there is no specific rule or quantity to signify saturation.

No clear principles for the number of interviews emerge when examining journalism case studies. There is often a focus on quality data rather than large numbers. A 2010 project assessing the impact of the internet on newspaper supply chains collected "rich data" from three newspapers. The researchers did acknowledge the small number limited the findings' generalisability (Graham and Smart, 2010). Weber and Rall, researching data journalism, conducted 19 "expert interviews" across eight organisations before a case study at the New York Times, which included one "short" interview followed by two longer interviews to gain "deeper insights" (Weber and Rall, 2012). Five senior executives at Johnston Press were interviewed at length for this research. The limited number of such senior roles working across all titles means the research relies on high quality data collection (Francis et al., 2010). To this end, in-depth interviews were carried out with each participant. Scholars are divided on how many interviews mark saturation but the unusual scope of this research's access means the project is strengthened by these purposive interviews. They offered in-depth, qualitative and unique information. However, it is acknowledged that interviewing at group level means there is no specific information about individual titles and it is not ideal for generalisation outside Johnston Press.

The interviewees were chief executive officer Ashley Highfield, who was responsible for overseeing all operations and reported directly to the board; chief digital and product officer

Jeff Moriarty, who worked at group level to develop products and led digital design for all titles; editor in chief Jeremy Clifford, who oversaw editorial; digital product manager Mark Woodward, who was responsible for digital editorial development across all titles; and learning and development manager John Wilson, who led all editorial training across the group.

All group-wide editorial decisions were guided by Johnston Press's editorial board. This consisted of editorial directors from all regions of the country and was led by editor in chief Jeremy Clifford. Each editorial director was also in charge of implementing these decisions within their individual publishing unit, usually consisting of all Johnston Press titles within a defined geographical region. The editorial board controlled issues such as staffing levels, general content improvement and newsroom structures. It functioned within the wider company context and decisions made by the executive management committee, which was led by chief executive officer Ashley Highfield. These decisions were implemented at individual centres by editors or group editors, supported by their own management teams within newsrooms. Most Johnston Press editors had responsibility for several titles and the majority of daily editors were also members of the editorial board. A similar structure existed across the company's commercial operations but is not relevant to this research.

7.4 An examination of the history of Johnston Press

Johnston Press was founded in Falkirk in 1767 and owns more than 200 newspapers with associated desktop and mobile sites. In 2015 that included 13 daily, 154 weekly paid-for and 37 weekly free newspapers, a number of glossy monthly lifestyle magazines, smaller specialist local publications, 215 local, e-commerce and mobile websites, and 31 tablet and

Smartphone apps (Johnston Press, 2015). Johnston Press bought its first daily newspaper *Halifax Evening Courier* in 1994 and had increased that number to nine by 1999. In 2016 it also announced the purchase of its first national newspaper, the i. During this research the company operated eight publishing units, each including a number of publishing companies and publications, as well as three printing centres in Sheffield, Portsmouth and Northern Ireland. It had head offices in Edinburgh and London.

The company described its aim thus: **"**Johnston Press aims to be the fabric that binds local people to local businesses. We want to provide the best, most engaging platform for local news and information in our markets, and to be the best advertising and marketing partner for Small and Medium Businesses (Johnston Press, 2015)." Johnston Press was one of the largest local newspaper companies in the UK in 2016. It illustrated the size of its reach with the claim, "each month our news brands touch the lives of more than 29m people across our publishing regions, delivering extensive coverage of local news, events and information" (Johnston Press, 2015). The company also stated on its website that it believed long-term growth would come from extending the scope and value of its digital media. Its digital strategy was summed up in three words: Social, Local, Mobile. As previously discussed, one of the problems faced by newspapers was generating enough digital advertising revenue to compensate for the income lost through the shrinking print market. One of Johnston Press's key aims was to earn equal amounts from its digital and print products by 2020.

When the interviews were conducted for this research Johnston Press was already attracting more people to its digital platforms than its print products. For example, towards the end of 2015 the Yorkshire Evening Post averaged around 100,000 unique users every day compared

to a print sale of around 23,000 newspapers[33]. It is usually accepted that each print edition is read or seen by around 2.5 readers which would increase the total readers to 57,500, but even that figure remains lower than the digital reach. At that time the mobile platform comprised just over 40 per cent of the newspaper's digital reach meaning about 45,000 accessed the *Yorkshire Evening Post* on their mobile each day. At the start of 2016 between 50 and 60 per cent of Johnston Press's total digital audience was mobile with a further ten to 20 per cent on tablet. In total that averaged between six and seven million unique users accessing content online a month in 2015 including almost four million on mobile alone by the end of the year.[34] These figures highlighted the importance of the mobile audience to Johnston Press. They also bring reality and context to why researchers and leading industry figures such as James Katz predicted mobile would be a transformative technology (Katz, 2008). The same is true of Anders Borde's statements that newspapers could not risk not using mobile. The huge numbers of people accessing mobile news show that, as forecast, it is expected that articles were available on the platform (WAN, 2009:41).

Johnston Press is a large and influential local newspaper group yet it has rarely been the focus of academic research. One notable exception focused on three aspects of newsroom culture at Johnston Press – news values and norms, work routines and output and occupational roles. The research by Jane B. Singer explored "the boundaries that journalists see as distinguishing them from outside contributors" (2010). It concluded that most are open to user generated content being included on newspaper websites. However they also believe it can undermine journalistic values if not carefully monitored to a standard that some feared was not possible "within newsroom routines threatened by resource constraints of increasing severity" (Singer, 2010:142).

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[33] Information supplied during interview with Editor in Chief Jeremy Clifford, January 29, 2016.
[34] Information supplied during interview with Jeff Moriarty, January 19, 2016.

In 2006 the University of Central Lancashire joined forces with Johnston Press to appoint the UK's first chair in digital journalism, Singer. It was an investment which the company said demonstrated its "commitment and far-sightedness" and would "exploit the benefits of new and emerging digital technology" (Johnston Press, 2006). In May 2007, as part of this role, Singer carried out one of the first detailed examinations of user-generated comments on a newspaper website during an election, scotsman.com. It explored how the newspaper adapted within a networked environment (Singer, 2009). Also of relevance because they specifically focus on Johnston Press during the company's funding of the chair were two further studies. The first focused on newsroom culture. It explored how journalists distinguished themselves from outside contributors within new values and norms; work routines and outputs; and occupational roles (Singer, 2010). The second used website traffic assessments to compare user preferences against what editors identified as the best stories (Singer, 2011).

It is unusual for a newspaper company to work so closely with academics let alone fund a position within a university. The recommendations of the chair and how they were acted upon by Johnston Press would be relevant to future work. However no evidence was uncovered during the literature review or subsequent interviews, and would go beyond the remit of this research. In 2014, after the chair had ended, Singer et al. focused on newspapers in the US to examine how journalists responded within a culture of job insecurity and the effect on efforts to change news practices (Ekdale et al., 2014). Other research focused on Johnston Press titles but none had access to senior executives, thus looked at individual newspapers rather than the group as a whole. In particular, O'Neill and O'Connor focused on sources and the influence they had on news (O'Neill and O'Connor, 2008); Firmstone and Coleman examined how digital engagement changes perceptions of journalists in mediating between the council and public (Firmstone and Coleman, 2014); Nel studied UK newspapers,

including Johnston Press titles, to examine the online commercial approaches of news publishers and how they take advantage of business models being used elsewhere on the internet (Nel, 2010).

The lack of academic research into England's local newspapers and, of most relevance, Johnston Press makes the inclusion of other sources a necessity when building a complete picture of the company. It is worth examining the National Union of Journalists' (NUJ) publically expressed opinions on Johnston Press, in particular with regard to the journalists it represents. In November 2102 the NUJ highlighted the most recent management statement to demand urgent talks. The company blamed a 16 per cent fall in advertising revenue for planned cuts of £30million (NUJ, 2012). Johnston Press was in the process of a £13.8million restructure which it said had already slowed decreasing circulations. The union expressed particular concern about "the fast pace of change" and "that the switch to digital has not seen revenues match those of print prior to the re-launch". It was a similar situation in 2016, when financial results revealed profit before tax had increased by 22.6 per cent to £31.5m. The union highlighted profit margins of 21 per cent which it described as being sustained by further cuts at grassroots level. It also compared pay freezes and redundancies among staff to executive directors' bonus arrangements of £3.9million and said its members were deeply sceptical about the company's strategy (NUJ, 2016). In August the same year, the NUJ again raised concerns about the company strategy after it cut the valuation of title assets by 45 per cent to £224m and increased debt to £209m, from £183m the year before. Pre-tax profits for the previous six months to July fell by 27 per cent on the same period last year to £12.3million. This period included Johnston Press's purchase of the i newspaper. Laura Davison, NUJ national organiser, said: "The company now appears to actually be factoring in periods of 'disruption' during its transformational projects – such as the salesforce changes.

Unfortunately, as those who have gone through the transformational 'Newsroom of the Future' editorial programme will testify, things are certainly no better on the other side." The NUJ continued to warn about staffing levels and stress (NUJ, 2016a). At the end of the year Johnston Press announced a £300million pre-tax loss. Advertising revenues dropped by eight per cent to £222.7million and the company's net debt increased from £179m to £203.9m but it stressed it has saved £100m since 2012. The NUJ accused the company of cutting staff costs to maintain unrealistic profit margins while increasing payments under long-term share 'incentive' plans for executive directors (NUJ, 2017).

Johnston Press's strategy has come under fire from other sources, but often within the context that all local newspapers face challenging times. However, in March 2016 Ponsford said the company had made deeper cuts than other competitors.

> Johnston Press has cut costs more aggressively than other regional newspaper publishers in recent years as it sought to bring its debts under control. When the financial crisis hit in 2008 Johnston Press owed £700m spent on buying other newspaper groups. Johnston Press has halved the number of journalists it employs since 2009 reducing its editorial headcount by around 1000. Johnston revealed today that it has cut its total headcount by around 500 over the last year to the current total of 2,840. Johnston Press closed at least 18 local newspapers last year. (Ponsford, 2016)

Johnston Press showed no signs of ending cuts, stating that it helped progress the company. In 2017 chief executive Ashley Highfield described the overall environment as remaining challenging for Johnston Press and the whole industry and promised more efficient editorial and sales. He added, "Our continued drive to maximise operational efficiencies gives us flexibility in the face of a challenging market and gives the management confidence that we can make further progress (Ponsford, 2017)."

In 2015 Jim Chisholm concluded that Johnston Press's woes highlighted the pressures on local media. He highlighted specific problems for Johnston Press such as smaller online

audiences than other local newspaper companies, in particular lack of mobile advances

(Chisholm, 2015).

> Johnston's recent performance suggests a company going through a particularly
> bad patch – blamed on ongoing trading difficulties and the impact of the election–
> but its story epitomises a trend throughout the western world. One preoccupation
> among local publishers is when, or if, they will realise a "point of inflection"
> where digital revenues are growing faster than print income is declining. Of these
> publishers Newsquest, owned by US company Gannett, is attracting strong
> audiences on PCs. ComScore data shows that the typical visitor spends 40 per
> cent more time per visit than the average and double the figure of either Local
> World or Johnston. Trinity Mirror's strategic advantage, in contrast, is its
> advances in mobile, with three out of four of Mirror Online's digital visitors
> accessing it that way. David Higgerson, the mastermind of this success, confirms
> that "we focus on providing people the content they want, when they want it, in a
> format which makes it easy to access on whatever device they choose." Local
> World also has grounds for optimism: its PC audience shows the highest
> frequency of visits of the regional groups. Johnston's PC audience engagement is
> by far the lowest of the regional groups, at around only a third of that of
> Newsquest. Of more concern is that access by mobile is significantly lower than
> for any other UK news title or group. ComScore statistics suggest Johnston has
> some way to go before it reaches that point of inflection. (Chisholm, 2015).

Chisholm concluded, "While Johnston's challenges seem greater, its travails reflect more

fundamental questions being posed for all local newspapers". In 2016, Chisholm was more

critical of the company. He labelled its performance a "masterclass in strategic failure" after

share prices fall dramatically following the EU Referendum. It is worth noting the fall was in

line with other regional publishers. Chisholm's points include a lack of strategy after buying

declining businesses and creating more decline with no clear strategy, also stripping

acquisitions while realising operating profits in excess of 30 per cent. He added that digital

advertising revenues grew by 32 per cent in 2015 at Trinity Mirror, while Johnston Press

recorded 12.4 per cent growth, and year-on-year decline in shares had been over three times

that of "any other comparable stock". Chisholm concludes, "This is not just a reflection of

market performance, but also of management performance" (Mayhew, 2016).

The vast majority of reports on Johnston Press focus on circulation slumps, digital growth, titles closing and financial results. It is worth looking briefly at some. In 2014 Johnston Press increased profit by 2.8 per cent to £55.5million and chief executive Ashley Highfield described the firm as being on a "much more stable and secure footing as a company". The digital audience grew by 35.8 per cent to 16.7million. Chief executive Ashley Highfield described growing the online audience as key to revenue, but also getting readers engaged and visiting the websites more regularly. He said £7million had been invested in "journalism", including mobiles, laptops, software, website investment and increased training (Turvill, 2015a). The firm cut costs by £7.6million in the first half of 2015, using £2.6million of that to fund digital investment. Digital audiences increased by 20 per cent to 19.9million a month. Revenues fell by 4.6per cent at £128.9m compared to the first half of 2014, while pre-tax profits were up from £8.3million to £17.8million (Linford, 2015a). The Advertising Association/Warc put advertising spending on regional news brands at £1.25billion last year, a decline of 3.9 per cent year on year, of which £174m was on digital, an increase of 24.7 per cent (Lambourne, 2015).

In 2015 underlying revenues fell seven per cent year-on-year, with print advertising revenues down 12 per cent, digital revenues up 12 per cent and the number of unique users online up to 22.6million. In January 2016, Johnston Press signalled a sell-off of its newspaper titles to fund investment and help pay down debt (Linford, 2016; Linford, 2016a). In September 2016 the company declared it knew of "no operational or corporate reason" why shares had leapt considerably[35]. In November 2016 there was an "improvement" in trading with revenues down 3.2 per cent year-on-year compared to 9.9 per cent in the first half the year. The upturn was credited to increased circulation on the recently purchased national title the i. At that

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[35] Having fallen from a high of 96.75p to 6.19p, shares rose to 15p (Linford, 2016b).

time the company said it remained "focused on cutting costs to mitigate revenue declines" (Linford, 2016c). Shares hit an all-time low in August 2016 leading to a £184m pre-tax loss with falls in revenue and profit put primarily down to print decline (Jackson, 2016). It is worth noting that mobile was not mentioned in the firm's 2016 results until the last paragraph which highlights the number of hits across the platforms (Johnston Press, 2016). Press Gazette described the 2016 profit margin of 22 per cent as among the highest in the industry and described it as being maintained by cost-cutting.

Johnston Press launched 'We Are Digital' in June 2016 to accelerate digital growth through "the development of video, shared content and publishing on social media". Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty used this to hail the previous year's "tremendous digital growth" as a result of "continued investment" (Sharman, 2016). The *Belfast Newsletter* and *Peterborough Telegraph* websites, both Johnston press owned, celebrated having the largest online growth of any local newspapers in August 2016. This followed the introduction of new websites but Johnston Press as a company did not see the largest online growth, beaten by KM Group (Sharman, 2016a.) In January 2016 the company announced an unspecified number of job cuts as part of group-wide restructure. In doing so it identified 59 titles as being sub-core but stressed the label did not automatically mean they would be sold or closed, adding "they are fundamental to the communities they serve and an essential part of the local democratic process of informing and bringing communities closer together" (Ponsford, 2016). In a widely reported memo to staff, editor-in chief Jeremy Clifford said, "We know, and appreciate, that this is not news you want to hear, especially after such a challenging year. The rate and pace of change is unsettling and sometimes it feels pretty relentless." Clifford also stressed that the company would focus on increasing the digital and mobile audience while stabilising print circulation (Sweney, 2016). In response a group of

MPs used a Parliamentary Early Day Motion to call for a "short, sharp" inquiry producing a coherent strategy for defending local journalism. The motion, from Helen Goodman, Labour MP for Bishop Auckland, and signed by six other MPs, stated:

> This House is concerned by the announcement that Johnston Press, which publishes titles including the *Yorkshire Post*, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, *Lancashire Evening Post*, *The Scotsman and Derry Journal*, is to cull almost 100 editorial posts; notes that this announcement comes just days after Newsquest announced that up to 25 journalist posts are to be axed across its Scottish titles; further notes that year-on-year cuts in jobs and closure of newspaper titles have resulted in the loss of 5,000 editorial roles in local and regional press, and the closure of more than 150 newspapers since March 2011; believes that local and regional news coverage is an essential feature of civic life and a healthy democracy; and therefore calls for active government intervention to prevent the destruction of these vital community assets and to establish a short, sharp inquiry to produce a coherent strategy for defending local journalism. (Sharman, 2016b)

The picture that emerges from a review of materials focusing on Johnston Press is fairly grim. Much criticism is aimed at Johnston Press, as it is at the industry as a whole. While the NUJ and Chisholm are the most vociferous in their criticism of Johnston Press, one believes there has been too much change too rapidly (NUJ, 2016a) while the other believes there has not been enough (Chisholm, 2015). This research has found no detailed examination of how local newspapers, and Johnston Press in particular, could improve their strategy or indeed many examples of organisations that had done so. There is considerable focus on the company's decision to maintain large profit margins while titles close and jobs are cut. However, there is little research into alternative business models with the exception of Nel (2010). As highlighted, there is a general lack of research focusing on England's local newspapers but also a trend for researchers to examine and question journalists rather than those with greater influence at group level. While this may in part be due to the inaccessibility of management teams and an unwillingness to participate in academic research, it makes the importance of this research clear. The senior managers were also willing to share non-commercially

sensitive data which had not previously been made public. Therefore the findings of this research are able to make a considerable new contribution to this area.

7.5 How Johnston Press dealt with mobile as a nascent platform

The following sections draw on findings from the literature review (Chapters Two and Three) to establish how and when Johnston Press first addressed the mobile platform. It relies on questions formulated from the results of the content analysis. It is also necessary to establish a sound foundation for understanding and examining the existing situation at Johnston Press in order to answer the research aims and questions. These include the advance of the mobile platform within Johnston Press and decisions impacted by the industry's challenging circumstances; impact on content and newsrooms of group-level decisions and economics; and likely effect of mobile growth and attitudes towards it.

7.5.1 Defining the importance of the mobile platform to Johnston Press

The initial focus of the interviews examined how Johnston Press, as a group and a collection of individual newsrooms, had adopted mobile over the previous five years. This included how important the platform was seen at the time of the interview and expectations for the future. All interviewees were clear that the importance of mobile was growing as numbers increased. However there was some variance as to how it was viewed, with comments by some that it was "probably not as important" for local newspapers as it was for national titles. Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty and digital product manager Mark Woodward

were the most emphatic in their support of mobile. Mr Woodward described the platform as "incredibly important" and the first mobile sites launched by Johnston Press in December 2011 as "one of the most important things we have ever done digitally". He said all of the company's websites gained a mobile version which led to an instant increase in users. Mr Woodward added: "That was really important because before then you were just getting a desktop version and we saw that it was growing but of course it was a terrible experience getting the desktop version on your smartphone." Meanwhile Mr Moriarty described mobile as becoming increasingly vital and "driving everything", with all digital developments being created "from a mobile context first". Learning and development manager John Wilson said the industry recognised it needed to "deal with people where they are and how they act", which meant providing news on mobile so it could be accessed in different places.

While chief executive officer Ashley Highfield and editor in chief Jeremy Clifford both said the mobile platform was growing in importance, they were more cautious in their approach. Mr Clifford described mobile as "massively" important but said that also created a new set of challenges. For example, readers on mobile view fewer articles thus creating engagement issues and this in turn made it more difficult to "monetize the audience". There are a range of complex issues which newspapers need to address to properly commercialise the mobile platform. Many of these were still to be addressed in 2016 yet had been highlighted more than a decade earlier, in particular with the report warning: "If newspapers found the internet a challenge when it arrived, the business opportunity within the mobile services sector are considerably harder to get your head around" (Campbell, 2004:1). They are explored in more depth later in this chapter.

Mr Highfield described mobile as "a very small percentage" of all combined platforms and himself as "one not to overplay mobile", while adding it was clear that the future would be increasingly mobile. Mr Highfield put his caution down to a belief that readers of local news

are more interested in finding out about their communities and a "more in-depth experience" than the "quick, grab and go" of mobile news. He said: "I wonder actually whether mobile is more appropriate for our bigger regional dailies which have the more sport, than for our smaller titles when people want to know what is going on in their own communities, the battle to save the local library. I don't think that's the mobile." Focusing on the right content is still vital: "The opportunities for success are still hinged on content, as they were hundreds of years ago (WAN, 2009:54)." Mr Highfield's assertion that such issues need a more in-depth platform confirms that all communication needs to be understood in its local context.

7.5.2 Five years of mobile news growth at Johnston Press

This research has already highlighted the speed at which mobile has grown and changed during the last five years (Chapter 2). It acknowledges that not all local newspapers have kept up with the rapid pace of development. For Johnston Press the number of mobile users increased massively during those five years and grew exponentially at a much faster rate than any other platform. While some interviewees believed this growth was entirely predictable, most felt it had somewhat taken the industry by surprise. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford said predictions were difficult because "it changes so quickly". All interviewees highlighted the importance of being able to reach readers wherever they were and wherever they wanted the news, as increasing numbers of people "live their lives through mobile" and access news on the go. Learning and development manager John Wilson described the mobile platform's impact on local newspapers, combined with the increasing rise of social media, thus: "I think the last five years has probably seen our industry change more in those five years than in the previous 25." He also highlighted a general consensus that it was particularly important for

local newspapers to seize change and keep hold of readers in the face of growing competition and technological challenges. He indicated that a change of mindset had been needed in recent years. It is questionable whether this represents a change in attitude or an evolution of what Mitchelstein and Boczkowski highlighted as the desire to stop competitors rather than truly adapt for positive reasons (2009:564). There is now an acknowledgment that online competitors are really challenging traditional news makers. This research showed that newspapers are beyond creating websites as a back-up plan (Paterson and Domingo: 2008:208). However the extent to which they are capable of stopping a mobile gap which could be filled by competitors will be explored later. The same is true for how much mobile is or can be developed through a vision to develop journalism rather than merely stop competition (Paterson and Domingo: 2008:208).

The backgrounds and experience of the management team at Johnston Press highlights interesting differences in how they view mobile development and their own expectations of the speed of adoption. This was most apparent in the opinions of learning and development manager John Wilson and chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty. This difference was balanced somewhat by digital product manager Mark Woodward. Mr Wilson's career followed a traditional journalism path. He was an editor until he took on the role of training other journalists within Johnston Press. Mr Moriarty's career was also underpinned by a short journalism career in America. However he had a largely digital focus with a particular interest in product development, responsive web and mobile platforms. Mr Woodward moved from a traditional journalism career to digital management in 2007. While all had varying degrees of digital experience and largely agree on the importance of the mobile platform, they had different opinions about the industry's adoption of new platforms.

Mr Wilson said one of the major improvements during the last five years was the ability of local newspapers, weekly or daily, to break news as it happened. He described the freedom

created for journalists when they were first able to publish articles online. He also spoke of excitement when reporters were able to publish immediately on the web. This has had a huge impact on the industry.

> People are lost if they don't have their mobile. If as a news organisation you are not clicking into that they will go elsewhere. The fact is you have to give news where people can find it and we as a group have to make sure that we are there. I think it changes our mentality because the difference between now and certainly five years ago is that you can break news as well as anybody else. You don't have to wait. (Interview with learning and development manager John Wilson, January 14, 2016)

The importance of the move to mobile was shared by all interviewees. However Mr Moriarty said that it was possible to predict a seismic shift to mobile from as far back as 2009. At that time he was involved in launching the first responsive website www.bostonglobe.com. It was designed to adapt between devices without being restricted to either desktop or mobile. After working for large news sites in the United States, he said Johnston Press had been 'behind' when he had joined the company two years earlier. Mr Moriarty said: "All the things we are doing right now [at Johnston Press in 2016] are the things we were doing around the time I launched bostonglobe.com and we are still not where we should be." He said a mobile surge had been predictable but the scale was larger than anticipated.

> And we saw just tremendous growth in usage of devices, consumption of our content on mobile devices this year, it just sky rocketed recently. I mean we knew that this would happen, that it was going to grow quickly so it's not like we were shocked but I think that the pace of acceleration was even more than we would have thought. (Interview with chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty, January 19, 2016)

Such predictions about the increasing importance of mobile were clear as far back as 2007 according to Mr Woodward. Johnston Press initially committed capital to launching their mobile sites in 2011. However, while agreeing with Mr Moriarty that Johnston Press did not initially progress the mobile platform quickly enough, Mr Woodward was more sympathetic

to the context. He described a lack of action with the mobile sites after their launch, saying the company was able to "ride off the back of the whole smartphone increase" but didn't actually do much with their mobile sites or focus on the ability to deliver something different. Mr Woodward has witnessed all of the group's digital advances in recent years. He said that five years ago there had been much discussion around how to deliver content that was specific to mobile – including headlines, video and images. However it wasn't implemented for various reasons, most tellingly because "there is a big resource implication". He said the staffing demands of creating articles for desktop as well as different content for an app and a mobile site, in a shrinking industry faced with diminishing resources, combined with a content management system that was at that time unable to deliver to all devices and thus needed massive investment, proved a step too far.

Mr Woodward described the company as particularly "suffering" from having a content management system that was not able to adapt to mobile and apps in the way that had been expected. He also highlighted problems with being able to deliver commercially on multiple platforms and adverts not generating enough money either across digital as a whole or mobile specifically. Mr Woodward said that while local newspapers could have responded to mobile more proactively and the industry was aware of its growing importance, the reality was more complicated. The firm was downsizing in terms of people, facing the multiple challenges of moving from a print to a digital business and needed improved technology. This was balanced against moves to reduce its multi-million pound debt and meant there was "no appetite" for the necessary major investments. He added: "So in many ways we just, we've left the mobile alone and ridden off the back of it which I think with hindsight was the right thing to do."

Johnston Press was described as wanting to develop mobile at a faster speed but having other priorities in increasingly difficult economic circumstances. This brings a new element to the

argument that newspapers were wrong not to adopt the internet more quickly. It is still true that they have since struggled to catch up with online competitors because of a deliberately slow start (Katz: 2008). However the slow adoption of mobile was a deliberate choice. Investment in editorial was such that putting more resource into mobile would have negatively impacted other platforms. The desire to develop mobile was not backed financially. The interviewees agreed on where mobile news should be now but were not completely united on the speed at which local newspapers had, or should have, adopted the new platform. Again it was mostly agreed that it would have been better for the company to progress mobile more quickly. However industry constraints were said by varying degrees to have had a direct impact on decisions about the emerging platform, balanced against differing growth predictions. Once again the local newspaper industry found itself faced with a landscape that was rapidly and dramatically changing in terms of technology, user behaviour and its own resources. The next section examines the lessons learnt during Johnston Press's adoption of the internet in more depth and how it compares with the progression of the mobile platform.

7.5.3 Progressing mobile by learning the lessons of internet adoption

Much literature, reviewed in Chapter Two, has explored and commented on the lack of speed and enthusiasm with which the local newspaper industry first explored the internet. While these issues are now widely acknowledged across the industry, there are accusations that they are being repeated with mobile. However some Johnston Press interviewees were very frank about lessons learnt from digital adoption and said that it had been different with mobile. They admitted local newspapers originally didn't have "a clue" how to maximise the internet

and felt mobile had proved easier to adopt. All interviewees displayed an eagerness not to miss out on mobile opportunities and said lessons were being learnt about the platform much more quickly than they had been with desktop.

Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty reiterated the point that local newspapers in England had not advanced as far with mobile as they should have by 2016. However, he said that the atmosphere and appetite for change was now completely different than it had been when news first went online. He said that when working on the first responsive website for www.bostonglobe.com there had still been a reluctance to fully commit to the project but believed that had now changed. Mr Moriarty blamed the initial hesitation to embrace digital and then mobile on lack of understanding of how or whether it would make money, or at least enough money to make it worthwhile. He accepted the large expense of rolling out responsive websites meant local newspapers didn't react as quickly as they could have, adding: "But to build a website that works great on all platforms, everybody should have been doing that five years ago." Mr Moriarty described local newspapers ability to innovate and experiment as challenged for both digital generally and mobile specifically.

Numerous examples were given to show that mobile lessons were being learnt more quickly than they had been with websites. Chief executive Ashley Highfield said one of the most important lessons of the last 12 months had been about scheduling content to appear on platforms at specific times. He highlighted "the novelty of releasing the right content to the right platform at the right time of day to appeal to different audiences and different behaviours". Mr Highfield described that as playing into mobile's hands. The addition of live analytics to Johnston Press newsrooms throughout 2015 meant patterns in mobile use became clearer, both in what platform was being used but also at what times of day, so stories could be scheduled to maximise their reach. Mr Highfield said this allowed editorial teams to work on elements that improved the experience for readers such as using "big and bold" pictures

that worked well on small screens, making sure the headline fitted and generally thinking about what would work best on the platform. However there were, as always, resource implications.

Other differences between mobile and digital adoption were highlighted, although described not as lessons but knowledge which only now could to be capitalised upon.

> I think the biggest lesson, and again it is not really a lesson because you know it, is that speed is the absolute essence of mobile, again it is going to come back to load times. That, and this is what Google worked out by accident when they were in their infancy, fractions of a second make the difference between being a winner in that space and actually we are not even talking fractions of a second, we are talking seconds because our load times have been so, so poor. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward, January 31, 2016)

Mr Woodward said great strides had been made to reduce page load times but there were "very, very tough targets" as to what was acceptable on web, and even more so on mobile. The urgency of mobile and people's desire to access stories instantly means they won't wait for stories to display properly and potential mobile audience can be lost through poor load times. He also said that readers disliked even the small elements not working, and gave the example of videos only playing when in view, summarising thus, "little things like that make a big difference".

Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford said Johnston Press would get it right with mobile sooner rather than later. He used national newspaper The Guardian as an example and said despite boasting 195 million unique users in November 2015 "even they haven't got it right on mobile just yet". However he also said it had been a long process to get the right strategy in place for desktop websites and key mistakes were made along the way. Mr Clifford said Johnston Press had to learn lessons from the past, adding: "We should prioritize mobile because otherwise we will end up losing out once again to our competitors, who are

Facebook." In summary, while there were reservations about the speed of mobile adoption, interviewees described lots of lessons which had been learnt from digital adoption and were optimistic that these had and would help the continued push for mobile in the future. To what extent the opportunities will and have been capitalised upon are examined in the following section which focuses on the mobile situation within Johnston Press in 2016.

7.6 The mobile challenges of 2016 for Johnston Press

The first sections of this chapter focused on Johnston Press's initial approach to the mobile platform. The next examine the situation as it was at the start of 2016. They focus on challenges to existing models, particularly resource. A need to balance demands resonates through every section. The following sections question whether enough priority is being given to mobile content, design and those accessing news through social media. An increasing amount of research has focused on the rise of social media and impact on more traditional and mainstream media, as discussed in Chapter Two and above. While much of this remains beyond the scope of this research, there are other highly relevant areas. A high percentage of readers are directed to Johnston Press's mobile sites via social media. It is important to examine if and how that is altering the importance of mobile homepage. The focus then shifts to the balance between click-bait versus traditional methods, and the importance of maximising analytics while protecting journalism. The chapter finally combines all these elements, with particular regard to financial restrictions, to return to the interrogation of whether there is a need or desire for mobile specific content on local newspaper sites.

7.6.1 Examining the priority given to mobile content within newsrooms

Mobile has seen impressive growth in recent years. All interviewees had previously acknowledged the importance of mobile and believed it was quickly moving towards becoming local newspapers' most dominant platform. However none believed it was given enough priority at group level or within individual newsrooms. Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said: "You would never leave a hole in your paper, so why aren't you updating the mobile websites? We still have a way to go." He said that even the success of new apps depended on the journalists. The apps were being introduced to Johnston Press's daily titles but there were still examples of content not being updated for two days. However Mr Moriarty said that not only would things "get better and better with mobile" but the change could come quickly. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford agreed it wasn't given enough priority because of staffing and financial restraints, "therefore we don't give it as much attention as it needs".

Balancing resources was constantly referred to during the interviews. Digital product manager Mark Woodward said Johnston Press's already over-stretched newsrooms did not have the ability to give a different experience for mobile at that time. He also stressed the absolutely crucial point that it was not yet clear whether mobile apps were useful or monetizable. This has previously been referred to as something which stopped investment in mobile, because it was not clear if it was financially worthwhile[36]. Digital revenues have failed to grow as predicted for newspapers, and there are fears that the same thing could happen on mobile.

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[36] Johnston Press closed the majority of its apps in 2017.

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So even where we have got really good mobile apps like on sport, football, and they are really well used and loyal users who come back time and again and view a lot of pages, we are not making any money out of it. And there is no real appetite for subscription so that is very difficult. So in a sense there are no incentives for newsrooms to be thinking differently about mobile and actually in terms of constraints in resource being able to deliver pictures, video, potentially audio is enough. And if we can add things like maps and other things we are probably delivering something that is decent and useable that the readers will forgive us for - but the key element is more load times which users won't forgive. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward)

Mr Woodward said quicker load times led to a direct increase in the number of page views. He argued that, given resource constraints, it was right for the group's effort and investment to go into creating responsive sites "because that is very much the priority from a digital perspective".

In summary, moves were taking place to improve mobile news within Johnston Press and the platform was expected to dominate very quickly in terms of audience size. The same was not true commercially. Despite this, senior editorial managers still believed more priority should be given to the platform. However, within existing staffing restraints it was accepted that, for now, improvements in the technology were more important than improved mobile content and therefore acceptable. The ability to target readers on their mobiles with breaking news and quicker loading times were listed as among the most important aspects of increasing reach. These would be particularly advantageous because of the increasing percentage of people described by The Pew Internet Project (2010) as constantly 'on alert' for breaking information.

7.6.2 Balancing the demands of design on mobile news sites

This research focuses on mobile homepages because that is the site's entry point for many readers. More importantly it is also illustrates the priority given to stories within the newsroom. It is important to note that the majority of people now access stories on mobile via social media, as discussed in more detail throughout this section.[37] However, that does not negate the importance of the homepage which reflects journalistic priorities and intentions in the same manner as the front page of a newspaper. The importance of social media is also seen by some as remaining necessarily limited. Readers who come directly to the mobile homepages are more loyal to the brand and the relationship is not impacted by an external organisation. Well designed mobile sites were vital according to all interviewees but there were a range of other factors that were also important. Some of these demanded a change in journalists' mentality and the traditional management roles within newsrooms. There was also a necessity to balance the demands of print, desktop and mobile. Johnston Press introduced live analytics tool Chartbeat to its newsrooms in 2015. This gave journalists instant information on things such as how many people were reading an article, for how long and navigation routes. This allowed reporters to develop the most popular stories as well as being able to alter articles or headlines to improve performance. Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield used live examples from Chartbeat during his interview and highlighted the direct influence it could have on the decision making process, both at a local and group level. For example, at 2.45pm on Friday, January 13, 2016, just ten per cent of readers across the whole of Johnston Press went directly to the homepage of their local newspaper – described by Mr Highfield as "a very small amount". More people accessed the sites via Facebook (more than 25 per cent) and Google (20 per cent). That, Mr Highfield said, could lead people

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[37] During interview, training manager John Wilson described the homepage as becoming the top priority when growth through social media reached a plateau (see Page 223).

to conclude, "it is all about our presence on Facebook, so that's over a quarter, it's all about our presence on Google, that's a fifth, and it's all about the links and stuff that we provide people elsewhere and in which case, mobile does need to be about articles that stand on their own two feet and people's Facebook stream".

Around 70 per cent of Johnston Press's users never see the homepage of their local newspaper because they follow social media links directly to specific stories. Mobile users often only read one story on a site; and stay for a very short time[38]. However, when considering the amount of traffic created by social media it is also important to take into account that just five per cent of unique users made up 50 per cent of page views. That is to say a small proportion regularly read a lot of stories. So although the fact few people go directly to the website could indicate mobile design is not particularly important, there is also a drive to "build a passionate or a really engaged audience". In that respect, the design is vital to attracting readers.

> So actually you have got to find out what that five per cent do and that probably is the five per cent that do bookmark and come direct to our mobile site - if they are hooked on local sport, traffic and travel or whatever it is that makes them come to our sites. So I think you have almost got to find out who that five per cent is and what they do and build a product for them. And then for the other 95 per cent you've got to serve them very well, probably through social media. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield, January 15, 2016)

This description of continuing to serve the largest possible audience while focusing specifically on those who use the site most compares to Ward's comments about news production. Ward described delivering the same story to multiple platforms as making economic sense (Ward, 2002:126-127). Mr Highfield does not disagree with Ward's notion of getting stories to as many readers as possible across all platforms. However, he does

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[38] Information supplied during interview with chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty, January 19, 2016.

highlights another aspect of monetising mobile content which is targeting loyal readers and trying to improve how long they remain and interact with the site. Digital product manager Mark Woodward also reiterated comments from Mr Highfield that the homepage remained important "in one sense" because it still acted as a landing page and attracted a certain amount of traffic. Both men described this as "bookmark" traffic and felt it was important to be able to offer something interesting to this particular section of audience. Johnston Press was working to increase engagement times and an attractive homepage was seen as one of several important elements. Mr Woodward again emphasised the importance of homepages which are easy to navigate. However he said it was also essential to get the design of the article page and content right.

> So it [mobile homepage] is still important and the article page is extremely important in terms of the way it is laid out, the font size, how quick it is to load, what rich media you've got in there and then what else you're offering. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward)

Further discussion around accessing mobile sites via social media takes place later in this chapter. However it is important to acknowledge at this point that, against a backdrop of mobile putting a new strain on already over-stretched newsrooms, this is also a demand for a split focus within the extra platform. Mr Highfield's assessment of the unique user and page view data makes it clear that there are different types of mobile audiences. In turn, these have different interests and needs. This acknowledgement raises a new level of concern within an industry already under pressure. McNair described journalists as being already being "under unprecedented time pressure to deliver exclusives, scoops and fresh angles" (2013:78). This research has already found that constraints within Johnston Press made it impossible to fully exploit the potential of the mobile platform. However Mr Highfield was the first to explore layers of mobile audience which have their own unique demands. Mr Highfield concludes the

design of the mobile sites is vitally important because it has to suit the minority who access many stories. These users are ideal for attracting advertisers and boosting mobile engagement. They could be described as more similar to traditional newspaper readers who are loyal to the brand and interested in the product as a whole.

Well designed mobile sites not only attract users but keep them engaged by making content easy to access and navigate (Kim, 2013). Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said mobile design was "critical" because it was "vital" for users to have a good experience while on the site. His views were echoed by all in that mobile design is "not high design, it is not sophisticated" but more suited to people on the move or with just a couple of minutes spare. The interviews confirmed existing research that usability is viewed as the most important element of mobile design (Vaataja, 2015:219). Mr Moriarty said the design had to focus on speed and simplicity. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford also described mobile design as "absolutely essential" but stressed that was no different to any other news platform.

> How important is the design of a newspaper? If it is sloppy people won't know why they don't like it but they won't like it and they'll stop buying it. How important is the design of a website? Well if it is not easy on the eye they will go and find another website that is. And so therefore how important is the design of a mobile phone? Absolutely essential and just what is important of the design of our platforms is the way pictures are displayed, and it is not just designing it is about the emphasis on the journalists to get the right pictures to go on there, not file pictures, not buildings, we know pictures lead to great engagement on mobile. (Interview with editor in chief Jeremy Clifford, January 29, 2016)

The lack of research into mobile usability heuristics raises issues even after the importance of design is acknowledged (Lacerda et al., 2015). This links into a wider issue of mobile design knowledge beyond the newspaper industry which needs to be addressed. The role of individual brands within Johnston Press also presented an interesting issue as all of the company's mobile sites had identical design and no platform specific content. It is established that media signs add together to create a particular message and trigger connotations (Bignell,

2002). Therefore, there are wide ranging impacts from generically designed mobile sites where no thought is given to the placing of articles and associated elements. It is worth noting at this point that newspapers have traditionally been designed to look different and have their own identity, despite the introduction of widely used templates in recent years. Therefore, as it has been established that the primary consideration with mobile design is simplicity, questions must also be raised about how easy it is for mobile news to maintain a newspaper's identity.

7.6.3 Meeting the double demands of mobile and social homepages

All interviewees acknowledged the huge impact of Facebook and the need for newsrooms to invest time in social media. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford and chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty held very similar opinions about whether editorial teams should be focusing on social media or homepage priorities. That is, would their time be better spent ensuring the right stories are at the top of the mobile homepage or articles are maximising their potential on social media. This is particular relevant when journalists are already overstretched and newsrooms short staffed. Decisions have to be taken daily on what to prioritise. Mr Moriarty went as far as describing titles' "social homepage" as the most critical and more representative of the "actual modern day experience". He said the importance of the mobile homepage had decreased in the light of social media and summarised: "In general, if you have ten minutes to spend on social, or a social post, or tweaking the home page it has got to be on social right now. There is no doubt that will have a better return on your time." While social was seen as likely to have the biggest impact it is worth noting that again it was within the existing context of an extreme lack of time within newsrooms. The desire was for

the most effective instant return; however that was forced by staffing levels rather than a degrading of homepage importance.

Mr Clifford agreed that the rise of social media meant time should be invested in promoting content on social media, rather than homepages.

> Journalists should become marketers for their content. Most of them are, so they should write the story, they should work on the link that goes onto Facebook, then they should go into Facebook and change the link so that it is more engaging with the type of Facebook users that we have. For example, one I have seen today on the Yorkshire Evening Post was about a plane struggling to land in the high winds. Well if you just put the link into the story you have written it would be a pretty bland headline that says 'Hurricane Gertrude forces delays at airport' whereas the post that has gone on Facebook is 'Do you want to see how difficult it is to land a plane in this wind?' and the interactions it has got are something like 50 times what you would normally expect for a posting on that story. (Interview with editor in chief Jeremy Clifford)

The majority of referrals from Facebook are on mobile so in order to capitalise on audience growth through social media, time must be invested. This is again creating more work for overstretched journalists and a need for new skills. In reality it is not a discussion about where to best invest efforts, rather how to find time to even begin taking on extra yet important tasks such as social media. The previous finding that Johnston Press had deliberately opted not to fully explore the potential of mobile for financial reasons did not extend to social media. It was generally accepted that journalists must make time to exploit, in particular, Facebook.

Rapidly increasing audiences remain a priority but that runs alongside the desire to grow page views. This issue of improved engagement times, rather than visitors, who only read one story, was raised by training and development manager John Wilson. He also said that increasing social media presence did not mean priorities on the homepage were becoming less important. Mr Wilson said the group was producing more user friendly content and

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presenting stories better. He highlighted features on the new websites which were designed to help navigation and keep people on the site longer. He also described presentation and engagement as something Johnston Press needed to improve. Mr Wilson believed retaining the importance of the homepage was a good way of future-proofing.

> There is going to come a point where you actually, in terms of users, you hit the ceiling. You can't go on forever adding more people, although you'll get stories which bring people in from outside. But there will come a point where you hit a plateau. Then what you are really looking to do is keep people engaged and on your site longer. And then what you need to do is keep the site attractive, friendly, links to other stories, so I think appearance is very important though, because if they can find stuff quicker we keep them longer and of course in terms of commercial that makes sense because they see more adverts as well. (Interview with learning and development manager John Wilson)

Mr Wilson acknowledged that although social media was critically important to audience growth in 2016, it necessarily remained limited. He said that the homepage would become the top priority when growth through social media reached a plateau. The improved engagement and commercial benefit from an attractive homepage indicate a longer term strategy which is within the control of Johnston Press, rather than international social media organisations.

The unpredictable future of social media sites poses a potential threat to all organisations which rely on them but have no influence or control over them. The large number of readers accessing local newspapers via Facebook is a clear example of this (see Section 7.6.3). A change on the social media sites algorithms can have an instant impact on the number of unique users to a site. That is because it changes what appears in readers news feeds. This can make stories less prominent and therefore mean readers are less likely to find articles of interest to them. The fact such changes are introduced without warning or explanation creates a particular problem for newspapers. Far from the traditional model of controlling the agenda, they now have to deal with the prospect of not even being able to reach large sections of the news audience whatever the content. This reiterates the importance of the small percentage of

mobile readers who access large amounts of articles. Readers who come directly to the mobile homepages of local newspapers are more loyal to the brand. They also have a relationship with the product which is not impacted by an external organisation. Newspapers can work to improve their offering to these much sought after readers in a similar way to the traditional print model. A better product should attract more readers. The larger the reliance on social media sites, the more control is passed away from newspapers and journalists. The next section examines the growing role of analytics in local newsrooms to attract readers to individual articles, usually through social media, and the impact.

7.6.4 The challenge of maximising analytics while avoiding the click-bait trap

Issues around news analytics and the drive to increase readers and engagement times have all been briefly touched upon already. Here there are examined together in more depth. Digital product manager Mark Woodward described the instant feedback provided by live analytics as challenging everything newsrooms once understood. For the first time it was instantly clear which stories were most popular. He stressed that the design of mobile sites was "very important, just as it is on desktop" but multi-variant testing was the key to getting it right.

> I think the biggest issue around design, and again something which I would say we're guilty of, is the digital world means unlike print everyone has got an opinion about which story is strongest, which picture is the best, which headline is the best, what the layout should be etc. Although ultimately the editor was king - final decision, the editor. Online actually everything you thought you knew goes out the window and it is no longer subjective in that sense. It is like, well actually the user will tell you what works and what doesn't work and so it is incumbent on us to actually just be continually testing that so multi-variant testing is absolutely key. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward)

Once a story has been printed it cannot be changed. The opposite is true for digital stories and, in fact, to maximise mobile news it is seen as important to "tweak" elements to increase its success. Mr Woodward described Johnston Press's lack of multi-variant testing as "the big miss". He believed it was an area which had seen no investment so, despite the company putting resources and focus on the platform, it was missing out. Multi-variant testing allows users to check the success of a headline, monitor if an image is having the correct impact and is in the right place on an article. However in order to be successful "you need to continually tweak that and be completely open and accepting and that is something we don't do - both web, mobile". This in itself is a huge threat to traditional models of journalism. The power is moving from editors' hands to readers, via computer software which reveals their interest.

Writing for a specific platform, driven by analytics rather than the merit of content, creates problems for brands as well as individuals and wider society. Mr Highfield highlighted the danger of journalists being so desperate to increase numbers that they promote content purely to increase hits. Ultimately that can damage the brand and reputation of a newspaper. He described it as one of Johnston Press's biggest challenges.

> How we write the kind of thing that works well on Facebook, yet don't undermine the trust, the legitimacy of our brands. It [the newspaper brand] is all we've got. I think getting that balance right is going to be a key skill for us. Being more light-hearted and engaging and that empathetic tone, but without then losing why people come to us in the first place, which is a gruesome murder or local councillor caught with his pants down. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

These challenges around click-bait and analytics link in with wider issues around traditional news agendas and journalistic values.

7.6.5 Balancing traditional values with a drive for digital growth

The role of local newspapers has always included a certain amount of 'civic duty'. The growth of increasingly personalised news and heavy reliance on social media, both driven by the emergence of mobile, raise significant questions about traditional values. Martin described mobile news' role in increasing democratic connectivity and the platform's unique qualities in allowing new ways of contribution and inclusion (2015). However the desire to increase audience balanced against traditional newspapers values was touched upon by Mr Highfield who was very clear that the role of local newspapers had changed.

> I think the days of shovelling worthy stuff that they are not interested in are largely over. They are only going to consume exactly what they want to consume. What percentage of people now hit Facebook first before they hit any news website in the morning? Most – and therefore they are only going to see content which they've liked or subscribed to and therefore trying to give them what we think they need – part of thou shalt be educated or informed is an increasingly out-of-date view. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

An informed public is essential to democracy and many academics such as McQuail (2005), Devereux (2008), Thurlow et al. (2004) and Herman (1998) would likely see this as a sad admission of the marginalisation of the public sphere. The emphasis is on attracting readers and that is done with stories deliberately selected to appeal, rather than inform or educate. The challenge now is creating the right kind of articles for the platform.

> It is your eye-catching story that pops up in your feed on your mobile and most people now consume Facebook on mobile, and in which case I almost think it is more about Facebook the medium, the platform, than mobile the platform. It is what kind of content do we need to create? (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

This is a clear example of the medium controlling the message. Even when the content of the story has not been changed, articles have been deliberately selected and promoted to suit the platform. An external influence, in this case Facebook, has a large amount of power over what news is shared and how. It was clear from the interviews that Johnston Press acknowledges that "audiences understand and enjoy the media in different and diverse ways" (Bignell, 2002:220). It is less apparent what impact that will have on audiences although it is likely to be what Bignell describes at the increasing "privatisation" of experience (2002:222) and Thussu (1998) as personal to the point of undermining newspapers' role as the "cement of society". Readers who only access news through their favoured social media may be connected with small and personal social networks but ignore the larger society (Glotz, 2005:13; Ling, 2009:183). This is again challenging traditional newspaper models, most notably in the role of informant and gatekeeper.

Generational issues about younger people engaging with democracy have long been discussed (Lüders, 2008; Pew, 2010). The changing role of local newspapers, in particular the different ways readers can select and consume news, is an issue that is likely to become more prominent as personalised news feeds grow. Mr Wilson said local newspapers had always been "a watchdog of democracy" and said readers' ability to register for certain news and avoid politics "could be a problem going forward". However he believed that, while local newspapers would continue to provide 'civic duty' content online, it was down to the reader to decide whether they were going to access it[39]. Mr Wilson said one of the strengths of local newspapers was being the direct impact on readers and their neighbourhoods, helping them stay connected. He said, despite the potential to select news and miss out on core issues, "if somebody wants to frack outside your front door they'll want to get engaged again pretty

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[39] To a certain extent this has always been true as readers could opt to turn the page of a newspaper.

quickly". The conclusion was that people will access local news if it is to their advantage to do so.

The selection of news has previously been examined with the view that editors create agendas and effectively choose the news (Zelizer, 2004:52). It is done through processes within the constraints of individual news organisations, with external influences also playing a role (Schudson, 2005). However the influence of the company which employs the journalists should not be underestimated, particularly if the main desire is to give mobile consumers what they want and increase audience (Cottle, 2000). Newspapers have always needed to attract audiences but digital platforms, particularly mobile, create the need to target readers based on how they access news. Difficult economics, fewer newspaper owners and increased competitors in the online market combine to create another direct challenge to how news is selected. Linking this to the previously examined impact of social media, personalisation of news, data driven content and the potential influence on communities makes a very different model of local journalism

7.6.6 The importance of hands-on journalism in mobile success

Johnston Press, like most other local news organisations, had been through major restructures to maximise staff efficiency, make cost savings and minimise the impact of falling employee numbers. This included creating a group-wide digital hub working to improve and share content across all titles as well as digital meetings to share amplification ideas. Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield said not enough priority was yet being given to mobile but such initiatives would help. He described the new team as helping newsrooms realise "what

they've got that will play out there on mobile, what they need to do with it and then help

amplify that kind of stories around the group".

> The editorial team decide which stories to put at the top but I don't think they're
> doing it based on what they understand about what a mobile consumer wants.
> (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

Mr Highfield said that social media, in particular Facebook, was vitally important to the

growth of the group's digital figures, especially on mobile, and that also needed to be given

priority. The combined initiatives of new apps, a central team providing platform specific

content for local editorial teams, and improved structures designed to encourage newsrooms

to amplify stories on social media were intended to increase audience. Training and

development manager John Wilson said that improved technology needed to be introduced

alongside editorial initiatives. He particularly highlighted the new apps' use of 'push

notifications'.

> So increasingly if there is a breaking story you can ping people, tell them it is
> there and pull them in ... we are going to get more sophisticated with the apps so I
> think you will get to the point where you are putting out push notifications to
> people, to those who are interested in football, and the things you know people are
> interested in. I think you'll get to the point where the market is more
> sophisticated, where the big news producers are putting out different types of
> material, where people get things they are really, really interested in, where you
> can notify them that things are breaking. So I think we will get sharper and more
> sophisticated at providing the content that they are really interested in. I see that as
> a continuing development. (Interview with learning and development manager
> John Wilson)

There was also frustration, balanced with an understanding of the constraints, that editorial

did not update and focus on headlines for the new apps to maximise their potential. More

generally it was felt that the technological design of the mobile site was important but part of

that 'design' was in the hands of its journalists. Training and development manager John

Wilson described a number of roles performed by reporters which were important to making the design of mobile sites a success.

> Sometimes I look at headlines and think that is far too many words for that. From a journalistic point of view and training, as the technology gets more sophisticated, we journalists are going to have to think about how this content appears in the package that we produce – I think there is a growth area in training as we get more savvy about how to present. (Interview with learning and development manager John Wilson)

Mr Highfield was also keen to stress the importance of editorial teams learning different approaches to mobile and apps, pointing out examples such as headlines which lost all meaning when they were cut short by the mobile layout design. The interviewees said that the group did not yet fully understood how to optimise mobile and therefore could not pass that knowledge on to journalists was echoed throughout the interviews. It reflected a desire to not only get the right kind of content but also target the right platform, improve headlines for search engine optimisation and select photos that boost engagement and attract as many readers as possible.

While much research has understandably focused on cutbacks and the challenges of resourcing more platforms with less staff, there are positive moves to support newsrooms. It should also be remembered what Ward argued in 2002 (Ward, 2002:22-23). The most expensive part of news production is gathering the information in the first place. Once it is in the newsroom, the sensible thing to do is get it out to as many readers as possible on all platforms. This was already taking place at Johnston Press but within the constraints of not having staff focus specifically on mobile. Nel (2011) described the industry as not doing enough to maximise the potential of different platforms. That accusation is similar to the frustration expressed in an industry which it could be argued has neither the expert knowledge nor the finances to fully explore mobile. Online headlines must also be enticing

enough for readers to bother clicking on them to access the full story. In comparison

newspaper readers have to turn the page to get past stories they don't want to read, rather than

turn the page to ones they want to read. All of these elements take time to develop on

different platforms. Therefore, the next section examines if there is a need or desire for

content which is specifically created for or tailored to mobile.

7.6.7 Examining the need for mobile specific content

This research has already established that local newspapers are not creating or prioritising

content specifically for the mobile platform. However, it was generally accepted within

Johnston Press that readers do want different information on mobile. That audience also

wants short load times because people accessing news on their mobiles often do so for just a

couple of minutes. Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield said figures showed that mobile

interaction peaked on 'quick' stories such as the weather and road closures. Training and

development manager John Wilson agreed that was because it suited people like himself who

were "a dipper in and dipper out". He described preferring "an instant digest of things that

happen" on his own mobile phone and only occasionally wanting something more in-depth -

saying content needed "to be tailored short and sweet". While opinions about the type of

content best suited to mobile were united, there was a range of views on whether content

should be created specifically for the platform. Some were clear that mobile must have

unique content, others said that was not possible within the financial restraints and some said

re-ordering existing content was sufficient or, indeed, the ideal solution.

Mr Highfield said he was not aiming to make mobile "a completely different platform" but

there was a need to reorder stories and be aware of "the duration of the platform". He gave

the example of mobile readers preferring a quick film or local band review to deep lifestyle

stories. However he again said that there was also the challenge created by the tiny percentage of readers who consume a large amount of news on the sites. Mr Highfield said a greater understanding of the mobile platform was needed to help editorial teams optimise the ordering of content. This need was particularly urgent due to the recent addition of new mobile apps associated with Johnston Press's larger titles and a desire to maximise their capability. Mr Highfield said more research was needed into which types of content worked best on mobile, whether there was a demand for exclusive mobile content and whether local newspapers could afford to create new content for mobile. Johnston Press was also exploring what the mobile platform could offer in terms of content based on handset and reader location. Mr Highfield said unique mobile content was particularly interesting when it was "super relevant" i.e. sent to the phone of readers based on where they were at a particular time. This is using the only platform that "is host to the entire purchasing process" as described in the 2009 report Winning Mobile Strategies (WAN, 2009:54)[40]. Johnston Press is examining a range of methods for the only medium open to newspapers which can capitalise on location and constant access.

The possibility of creating content specifically for mobile was being discussed within Johnston Press around the time of the interviews, with the status quo being that all content was shared on all devices. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford said content needed "to be unique but not completely unique" i.e. mobile needed some exclusive and some shared content. He said there was ongoing debate about how to get journalists writing content which only goes on mobile. The fact mobile "works differently" to other platforms was the main reason why it also needed different content, according to digital product manager Mark Woodward. He believed everything from load times to the cost of data packages should be taken into account

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[40] Some search engines, notably Google, started offering location-based news searches and services during the period of research. They do not create news or undertake journalism.

when populating mobile sites with stories. Beyond content created by journalists, he also stressed the importance of getting all elements right for mobile audiences which are notoriously impatient and hard to keep on any particular site. He gave examples of smartphone users not bothering to turn their phone sideways to watch a video, or click links to videos – preferring for it to be native and instantly available. Mr Woodward also said the group was exploring a number of ways to improve distribution via mobiles including Facebook Instant Articles, Twitter Moments, Apple News and Snapchat Discover, which were all capable of giving "a great mobile experience".

Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty agreed that, rather than creating exclusive mobile content, the focus should be on how it was displayed due to the fleeting nature of the audience. However he also challenged the view that people just 'snacked' on mobile content, believing that audiences were actually replacing i.e. reading on their phones rather than desktops, laptops or newspapers. Mr Moriarty added: "I do think there is a lot of snacking as well but I think it is not as different as a lot of people suggest and I think all the data shows that a proportion of long content will do just as well as short content so the jury is out on that." Despite differing views on if and what exclusive content should be created for mobile, the growing importance of the platform meant a lively debate was taking place within Johnston Press on the best ways forward. The information captured by this project creates a snapshot of developments at a key point in history, and could provide a valuable resource for future mobile research.

7.7 Conclusion

The findings within this chapter indicate that it is impossible to separate Johnston Press's approach and adoption of the mobile platform from the desktop sites and print production. It is clear that there is still much room for general digital improvements and while mobile audiences continue to grow without any extra editorial input, these are seen as more pressing. There is an acceptance that a better understanding of, and focus on, mobile would be beneficial because it would deliver larger audiences and potentially increase income through location-based advertising or monetisable content. However it is seen as sensible to focus on improvements which help multiple platforms because of limited resources, particularly since elements of that would naturally improve the mobile platform. The desire to optimise mobile content is not backed by either resource or knowledge. Workloads are such that there is no expectation of staff to focus on mobile alone. The vast majority of editorial teams work across all platforms. Decisions about mobile are taken within the context of its comparison to more established platforms and already overstretched journalists. That has a direct impact on the control journalists have on the platform. It is a clear reflection of the massive effect group decisions have on all titles, platforms and journalists.

The following chapter explores the role of digital platforms in the convergence of weekly and daily titles' operations, one of the key aims of the research questions. Several other influences have already been uncovered which impact both types of newspapers and challenge traditional models. These are directly connected to mobile and will be addressed in the thesis conclusion.

Chapter Eight: Mobile's challenges to traditional models within Johnston Press's shrinking newsrooms

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has already established mobile's impact on Johnston Press, lessons learnt from internet adoption and the challenges of digital platforms. The following chapter examines more theoretical aspects of mobile advances and wider issues raised within Chapters Two and Three (Literature Review). This leads to a focus on the differences between traditional daily and weekly newspaper models, a further exploration of how long-established models are being challenged by mobile advances and changes to the community roles of local newspaper journalists. This chapter draws on the initial content analysis findings, combined with results highlighted in the previous chapter.

8.2 Mobile dominance at Johnston Press

Mobile will become the dominant platform for local newspapers fairly quickly, all interviewees agreed. Device saturation, the point where everyone has a mobile, was highlighted by some as a possible limit to the number of users interested in local news. All agreed that desktop would remain important, largely due to different demands at different times of the day. Again, the boost given to newsrooms by live analytics and clear usage trends throughout the day was seen as important to predictions for the growth of mobile.

> I think mobile will become the dominant platform in the next couple of years. Desktop will remain important because of people using it at work so the middle of the day desktop is dominant, and you can see at about five o'clock it will switch over, on Chartbeat [real time analytics software], in terms of the real time analytics, it switches to mobile as people get home and they start checking. You can see it in the morning as well - the switch over to desktop - from about 8 o'clock onwards. And of course, tablets are quite important in the evening. So between tablet and mobile, evenings have been extended now. So you would see a five o'clock kind of hump and a drop off quite rapidly after that. Now you see that five o'clock and then it remains quite steady through the evening and maybe drops off about 11 o'clock. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward)

Mobile has already extended the times when people consume local news but there was a strong feeling that the platform was only just starting to capitalise on its potential among Johnston Press titles. The introduction of real time analytics across all newsrooms could be seen as an equaliser among daily and weekly titles. However it is also likely to highlight the equal pressure put on teams which are not equally resourced. This is one of many changes to traditional models which are examined in greater depth later in this chapter.

Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said mobile was already the most important digital platform but it could take another five years for it to overtake all other platforms, including print. Johnston Press experienced what Mr Moriarty described as a million users 'shift' throughout 2015 i.e. saw a million users decline on desktop and a million users gain on mobile[41]. He was also optimistic that the more the company made products that worked on mobile platforms, the more it would continue to grow. Mr Moriarty said the group could reach a much larger potential audience but believed there might be a limit to the amount of readers accessing stories.

Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield also said that mobile would become the largest platform in the future but believed it was not happening quite as quickly as predicted. He said there was some evidence that the market was already reaching device saturation, borne out by

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[41] The interviewee said it was not possible to show they were the same users.

research showing a flattening out of the decline in television for younger audiences, despite consistent previous predictions of a generation which would only consume video on mobile.

> There is a view that people are reaching saturation level with what they do on their mobile phone and that might be right for us and I think that maybe you could extrapolate now with real certainty about when mobiles are going to become the biggest platform. It is certainly growing exponentially, and you see this in print as well where the greatest decline in print, certainly for weekly papers that rate of decline is shallowing out – a 13 per cent decline of two years ago was a 12 per cent decline last year and we are tracking the level of decline. It doesn't look quite the same for daily. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

He added that the slower decline in weekly print titles compared to dailies and the rate of substitution to online and mobile might be due to sport. Sport, in particular football, counted for up to half of all the traffic of the daily papers and was increasingly viewed through mobile. Sport created a much lower percentage of hits for the weekly titles, thus a slower move away from print to digital. Therefore, sport could prove the key element and create a situation where mobile becomes the largest platform much more quickly for dailies. While this is not a challenge to the traditional model, it is an acceptance that differences extend deeper than just how often a title prints. The metropolitan dailies are likely to have more popular football teams with larger followings. These boost readership but increasingly that is online, in particular mobile. Weekly print circulations are decreasing at a slower rate than daily newspapers and sport is likely to be just one element contributing to this difference. However, it strengthens the argument previously raised, that mobile may be more successful as a platform for daily newspapers than weekly .

Johnston Press expected mobile to grow rapidly until it became the dominant platform, with some debate as to whether it should already have been acknowledged as the most important. The interviewees said the company needed to develop new tools to increase the numbers of mobile readers but that content had a vital role to play too. Training and development

manager John Wilson believed the future for mobile news would be shaped by newsrooms' ability to target people with specific news items as apps are developed and editorial teams become more sophisticated in dealing with content for the mobile platform. Mr Wilson suggested mobile would be the major platform in five years time. He envisaged readers able to access packages focusing on particular areas of interest, targeted content enabling readers to select news, and news streamed as it happens.

Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford highlighted three factors which had helped mobile growth: More people owning handsets; older people "becoming younger in their behaviour patterns so they are embracing mobile"; and people increasingly working from home and on mobile. Mr Clifford said mobile was already "not far off" being the dominant platform in terms of size, adding the platform would continue to grow in both size and importance. However he added a cautionary note with regard to when mobile could realise its potential to become the group's largest financial platform:

> Well you see money is a real challenge for us. Just when you think you have got the model right for charging on digital we now need to have a completely different model for mobile. The new websites that we've got that are responsive, enable a better what we call servicing of adverts on mobile, less intrusive so they appear at the bottom of handsets which is good, but you can't surface as much advertising on mobile as you can on desktops so I don't know the answer to that. (Interview with editor in chief Jeremy Clifford)

Content and editorial decisions cannot be completely separated from commercial activity in that both must work to offer readers and therefore advertisers the best platform. Newspapers need "smart digital strategies that can engage audience, and turn a profit (WAN, 2009:54)". The local newspaper industry is still exploring both elements and Johnston Press was very much in the throes of seeking solutions for mobile. The arrival of new platforms had proved challenging commercially as well as in terms of editorial resource. The lack of unique mobile

content and amount of resource attached to the platform created an image in 2016 which is very similar to the findings of The Preston Report. Then the conclusion was:

> Unless newspapers rethink their current approaches, there is little evidence to indicate that newspapers will have any more economic success with mobile than they have had thus far online. (Nel, 2011:11)

Interviewees said that readers were engaging with Johnston Press titles in a new way. Editorial had attracted larger audiences but there was now the challenge of being able to monetise the platform. There are many elements of mobile which have huge commercial potential but more research is needed into its limited success so far.

It is accepted, as asserted in earlier chapters, that editorial lessons were learnt from desktop adoption and used to progress mobile. However it is the unique characteristics of mobile which have proved the most difficult to properly address both editorially and commercially. A range of these potential issues specific to mobile news were identified in the literature review, most predominantly the mobile divide.

8.3 The digital divide extends to the mobile platform

A lot has been written about the digital divide, as examined in Chapter 2, and the rapid rise of smartphones created additional fears of a mobile divide. These range from exclusion from mobile internet or even phone calls because of poor reception to the prohibitive cost of handsets, data packages and Wi-Fi, or a lack of technical knowledge. Interviewees were invited to discuss all these aspects. Some concerns were raised but there was frustration that such issues remained at this stage in mobile development. Training and development manager John Wilson said: "That is one of the things that amazes me that after all these years

we are still talking about poor reception and poor speeds and all that." These words summed up much of what was reflected in the interviews, with people surprised that such issues remained. The world had changed yet not all of England had the mobile or internet capacity to take advantage. The general opinion was that as councils, governments and official bodies relied increasingly on people accessing information online, they would also have to ensure that everybody had a suitable level of access. Mr Wilson admitted such a change would take time and there was a danger that, in the meantime, people would be excluded because of poor reception. Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said the problem "might just make print stay around a little longer" but acknowledged that it could also slow digital developments. He added: "The UK is not really doing itself much service in terms of mobile coverage right now". He pointed out that similar connectivity and reception problems did not exist in other developed countries.

Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford agreed the mobile divide was a problem but said he believed it wouldn't be for long "because I don't think people will accept it". He and the other interviewees felt that the pace of technology would force the change and the divide would quickly disappear. Digital product manager Mark Woodward believed all such barriers would disappear, particularly as new generations of mobile phone users became the main consumers. He pointed out that phone companies were finding different ways to get coverage and keep people connected because "it is obviously in their interest to do that". He added: "I think it is always about the cost and about data and those charges mean that there is a divide but they will get cheaper, they will come down and so those barriers will come down." Mr Woodward also said existing handsets offered just a taste of future developments including augmented, virtual reality, lifestyle devices. These would all be mobile and create huge potential for local newspapers.

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New technology always raises questions about users, often older people, and their ability to adapt to it (Golding, 1998; Sooryamoorthy et al., 2008). This was addressed by several interviewees. The average age of local newspaper readers is usually acknowledged to be 'older', with regular presumptions made that there is a divide between older people reading the print version and younger readers accessing their news online (Ofcom, 2014c). During this research nobody raised concerns about a generational gap in ability or desire to use smartphones. They also gave no indication of a desire to acknowledge what has been described as the "lost generation" or abandon them (WAN. 2009:41). Those who agreed that generation may have been an issue in the past said it was quickly overcome. Several interviewees pointed out that their parents, aged in their 70s, had no problems relying on mobile news. Training and development manager John Wilson said the fastest growing area of social media recently had been the older market - people he described as having time on their hands and wanting to keep in touch. He also pointed out that people were growing older with a culture of online shopping and online news, often on their mobiles. This was also highlighted by editor in chief Jeremy Clifford who described older people as "becoming younger in their behaviour patterns so they are embracing mobile". These views contradict Golding (1998:141) and Sourbati (2009:1095) who highlight the lack of skill but also a blockage created by a perception of irrelevance. These assertions within Johnston Press would have to be investigated further to be anything other than anecdotal. However they are particularly interesting within the context of Ofcom research which found that 21 per cent of UK adults used a mobile to access news. Age was a major factor with the figure rising to 40 per cent for those aged between 16 and 34 but falling to four per cent for over 55 (Ofcom, 2014c:6).

There was a reoccurring message through the interviews that much about local newspapers continued to change, beyond the addition of new platforms. It would appear from earlier

findings that the most lasting and wide-reaching changes hit weekly newspapers the hardest. The most obvious was the move from one weekly print publishing opportunity to the internet's constant deadline. This also brought them into line with their daily competitors. The next section examines how Johnston Press views the differences between weekly and daily newspapers, and implications for the future.

8.4 The divides between Johnston Press's weekly and daily newspapers

Chapters Four and Five have already examined differences between how daily and weekly titles create, present and distribute content across platforms. Comparisons revealed that digital platforms were breaking down boundaries but the extent varied between titles. These findings were used to shape the interview questions investigating this within Johnston Press where daily and weekly titles had traditionally operated completely independently of each other. The most visible difference between weekly and daily newspapers are the printing deadlines but there are others including content, staffing levels and working methods of the editorial teams. The following section probes how much has changed with the arrival of the mobile platform.

8.4.1 New digital approaches defined by old print deadlines

Websites and then mobiles created the opportunity for all newspapers to compete in real-time without the geographical confines of print distribution, for weeklies to publish their stories as quickly as dailies and for differences to disappear. However, it became clear during the

interviews that weekly newspapers had fewer staff and resources as well as less experience

with more frequent publishing opportunities. In theory the digital age could have been an

equaliser as all news teams began working to the never-ending deadlines of the internet. In

reality most interviewees felt there were still differences in how some weekly teams

approached digital. It was acknowledged that attitude and aptitude varied between titles.

Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said the main difference between dailies and

weeklies was resource. He described dailies as having more people specifically focused on

digital and social media whereas everybody in weekly newsrooms had to do "a bit of the right

thing". Digital product manager Mark Woodward agreed. He said providing continual

coverage required a certain amount of people: "You have got to have a minimum amount of

bodies to physically cover that and one person in a newsroom of a big size has less of an

impact than in a small newsroom obviously".

Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford said there were "capability issues" on some of the smaller

weekly titles but there was no difference in how dailies and larger weeklies dealt with the

digital platform. He said: "They do the same thing, they break news on a website. Do they do

it as well? I would like to think that on the bigger weeklies they do." Mr Clifford said weekly

titles sometimes outperformed the dailies in "their adoption of what needs to be done". Chief

executive officer Ashley Highfield questioned whether differences should remain but

admitted they definitely did. He also pointed out that daily titles which had become weeklies

still outperformed their traditional weekly peers.

> It is very interesting that the weekly papers that used to be daily - either because
> of a mindset or because they are still better staffed - seem to have got by and large
> much bigger online web hits to similar sized weeklies that weren't dailies. So
> compare Northants Chron and Echo which sells about the same print now as

Harrogate but has a way bigger online presence. So yes there is definitely a difference[42]. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

Training and development manager John Wilson said the best weekly teams realised they could be competitive with dailies.

> I can certainly go to a large number of weeklies where their approach to digital is first class and as good as any daily. I think where the issues arise is quite often to do with staffing. In a small newspaper office you still have to feed the beast to a certain extent, you have a certain number of pages to fill and you've got a deadline and with the best will in the world there is still always that pressure you know to cover that. Better staffing may mean in the bigger areas it is sometimes easier for people to adopt a digital first attitude. But as I say, I have done this job for ten years now and there has been a considerable breaking down of barriers in news rooms in terms of digital. I think we are still finding places where there is still a residual resentment of digital. I think that as newsrooms are refreshed and you get a new generation coming through and getting into the new jobs, basically I think we have evolved through that. (Interview with learning and development manager John Wilson)

This thesis has previously established that the mobile platform has not been given the necessary or desired attention because of the lack of resource. What this section also makes apparent is the same is true of digital more generally. Filling print pages is so demanding within extremely tight staffing restraints that digital becomes viewed as an extra burden. Spending more time on mobile is seen as impossible or not sensible because of other demands such as simply filling print pages or uploading news to desktop, and thus automatically to mobile. This conclusion challenges the concept that newspapers failed to react to the internet and are therefore likely to do the same with mobile (Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Engel, 2009). Johnston Press made a conscious decision not to add extra pressure to already overstretched newsrooms by taking resource for mobile from other

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[42] There are likely to be several other contributing factors such as dailies operating in more populated areas, wider reach due to the original daily editions, and readers used to more regular news may have migrated to the website when daily printing ended.

platforms. The decision-making process around early adoption of desktop was not the same i.e. there is no evidence that newspapers decided not to invest despite a desire to do so. In fact, it was so haphazard it was hardly a decision-making process at all. Struggles to adapt and combat "a residual resentment of digital" are felt strongest in the least resourced newsrooms and these are invariably weekly publications. Therefore financial issues once again come to the forefront even in the debate about differences between weekly and daily titles. The next section focuses on readers' expectations of digital platforms and how the industry takes that into account with the online offerings from daily and weekly publications.

8.4.2 Comparing reader expectations with industry priorities

If it is accepted that weekly and daily titles offer a different level of online service, for whatever reasons, the potential impact on audience should also be considered. Readers who access news on mobile are generally acknowledged to have high expectations, as previously discussed, particularly in terms of design and load time. This section offers a more theoretical interpretation of readers to establish how that affects decisions within Johnston Press. It focuses on how readers might view the differences between the websites of newspapers that print daily and weekly. To some extent the industry accepts that such differences were created by an unbalanced distribution of resources, as previously established. This is exacerbated by daily titles being the first to receive improved technology, in particular mobile apps and responsive websites. However readers would not be expected to have such knowledge or interest in the industry beyond their own local newspaper therefore their expectations and demands are likely to differ from that of industry insiders. The majority of interviewees commented on only being able to theoretically address the question, adding "it

is an interesting one isn't it", or "I'm not sure I know the answer to that one", before answering.

It was widely believed that weekly titles generally served smaller communities which had different expectations of news. However it was felt that this did not extend to breaking stories. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford described weekly print titles as being "in more community-based environments" but that only applied to general content because "if it is breaking news people expect it to be up there pretty quickly". Training and development manager John Wilson agreed that readers had high expectations of breaking news online regardless of how regularly the newspaper printed.

> The recent floods, I don't think people went on thinking, it is a weekly paper
> website and it might not have anything. I think they go on with an expectation that
> it will be there and I don't think they differentiate with weeklies, they think it
> happened and there'll be something. I don't think the concept of weekly/daily in
> that sense, in terms of websites, counts at all. They just think we're a news
> organisation and we ought to have it. (Interview with learning and development
> manager John Wilson)

Digital product manager Mark Woodward agreed that readers of weekly newspapers expected "instant" online. The frequency of print does not change the demand for instant news described by Harvey (1990:59) and Ward (2002:27). Brand expectations were also highlighted by Mr Woodward as important to how readers perceived print and online news, stressing that it carried across platforms. He said the more newspapers accessed different social media, the more readers had different expectations of what "you can say" and "tone of voice". However readers still relied on the newspaper's reputation and standards of truth and accuracy. Daily newspapers traditionally covered larger, metropolitan areas and were therefore seen as more capable of reaching bigger potential audiences than weeklies. Using the example of a murder, Mr Woodward said such news would be "big in that small community" but interest would tend to remain only within that area. If it happened in a large

urban area "it can travel further and be of interest to the city even though it is a localised story". Mr Woodward said this created a vast difference in terms of potential online reach which then impacted on how much money was generated and ultimately the amount of resource invested. This assertion means weekly newspapers are at more of a disadvantage than just resource. In fact it would suggest that while traditional models have changed and all newspapers face very similar demands, it is unlikely that they will ever have similar staffing levels. Any company would focus resource on its most profitable elements and that is likely to remain the newspapers which print daily, even if or when they only produce news for digital platforms.

Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said weekly titles might be viewed differently because of their locations and highlighted that all local journalists, but with the emphasis on weekly teams, were now "curators as well as creators of content". However he said that people everywhere wanted to know what was going on right now and in that context "probably don't care" whether their local newspaper was daily or weekly. He went as far as saying, "so many people are not newspaper readers so they don't know if their newspaper is daily or weekly", adding if they couldn't find the news they were looking for online they would just think the site was not very good. Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield felt readers would expect daily papers to have websites that were "updated all the time", while the same might not be true of weekly titles. He added "but clearly there is no reason it shouldn't so maybe readers give a bit more slack to the website of a weekly title". Mr Highfield said he believed Johnston Press's smallest titles "probably don't meet expectations" online. Within the previously established context of daily and larger weekly titles being more digitally active yet most interviewees believing all readers generally expected the same level of service online, this is unsurprising.

The next section examines the existing and predicted differences between weekly and daily titles at Johnston Press.

8.4.3 Differences are disappearing but individual titles define to what extent

A general consensus existed that the digital differences between daily and weekly titles depended on individual teams. The progress made in recent months and years was often pointed out in relation to the shrinking gap between the two traditional print models. However there was also significant emphasis on changes and improvements yet to come. Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield said it was interesting "how little we know yet how far we've come in a year or so".

> Only two years ago we didn't have Chartbeat [real time analytics software] up in any of the offices. We didn't really know what worked on Facebook or Twitter, as opposed to which sites were working so we just bunged up five stories a day onto online, and just published and hoped. And now the sophistication - which times of day, which content to target which individuals - that is the most profound change. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

Real time analytics enables newsrooms to see which stories have the biggest audiences and gives reporters the information to attract more. It creates a new level of feedback and interaction between journalists and readers. Chartbeat was introduced at all Johnston Press and Mr Highfield thought the remaining differences between how weekly and daily titles operate online would quickly fade. Editor in chief Jeremy Clifford said the differences were largely disappearing already and editors wanted their titles to stop being referred to by weekly or daily as they already "behave in the same way". He did not believe the fact dailies are more profitable was a determining factor – but the group "just needs to solve that problem". Chief digital and product officer Jeff Moriarty said good content which "doesn't

take a ridiculous amount of resource to do it well" would help differences disappear, adding, "maybe it is an equaliser at some point".

Johnston Press, in common with many local newspaper companies, underwent mass restructuring as staff numbers fell, cost-cutting measures were implemented and newsrooms adapted to a growing number of platforms. The Newsroom of the Future project in 2015 saw further fundamental changes, including titles being grouped together with reporters working across several newspapers and the creation of specific digital roles. Digital product manager Mark Woodward said the online focus in newsrooms varied across the group and depended more on the individuality of newsrooms than the print publication deadline. He added that further progression depended on further structural changes which put more priority on the digital platforms.

> One of the things I would argue is we desperately need a structure where you have reporters, I've been saying this for a number of years, where you have a newsroom and if you want print, that is that person sat in the corner over there. We're gathering, we're writing, we're curating content in all its forms for whatever platform it needs to go on. So we don't see something as 'we need to get that ready for next week', we see it as, 'that's a piece of content I'm writing but even if it is a coffee morning it will go online today because people want to know about it now, not in five days time'. And you get into the long-tail arguments about having content up there for longer, naturally you can have more views on it. (Interview with digital product manager Mark Woodward)

Mr Woodward highlighted the example of one newsroom, in Sunderland, which had recently appointed a digital reporter and said while he anticipated a move in that direction over the next year, the company was "a long way" from that concept. He also pointed out that such changes should have been made before resources were lost and staff numbers fell as moves such as merging print and digital desks would become increasingly hard. This sentiment links back to Saffo's warning that when a new process is being adopted, people stick to elements of their old ways despite them not being 'relevant or necessary' (Saffo, 1992:20). It is also

adds strength to findings earlier in this thesis that even digital working methods are still inextricably linked to print.

In what could be viewed as a continuation of change taking place within Johnston Press under Newsroom of the Future, and perhaps a reflection of print mergers, there was some discussion around the possibility of smaller websites combining under the brand of larger sister titles. Training and development manager John Wilson predicted the merger of more print titles in the future but also websites evolving to cover larger geographical areas – still carrying the local newspaper branding but with a wider reach. He used the example of large websites which described themselves as being "powered by" specific newspaper brands. A comparison was also drawn with daily local newspapers which would have traditionally covered a much broader area than one city or town. Mr Wilson anticipated the death of the daily/weekly concept as people become more accustomed to getting news where and when they wanted it – but said the trust in local newspapers would remain.

> I think as we go forward, this is my personal feeling, that perhaps we will see bigger sites that cover bigger areas that are more sophisticated than they are now. In the end I think the concept of daily and weekly in terms of websites will die. People will just want the news and they don't think in terms of that. They just want it and they want it now and so I think that is the difference and I think in many ways that is quite a healthy thing. I would love to think we got people coming to us because we break it and we get it right – and the fact we carry those newspaper brands means quality and respect, but actually as I say I don't think people care about the daily and weekly thing at all. They just want good websites producing content they want. (Interview with learning and development manager John Wilson)

Chief executive officer Ashley Highfield said, while he felt readers "cut more slack" for smaller weekly titles, ultimately there was no difference on the digital platform. He said "old-fashioned" differences of when newspapers used to print had no relevance in the digital world but consumers would have expectations based on the size of the brand. Therefore, it made sense to "aggregate more of our small sites in an informed way".

> It may be still under the masthead of your home title but it might have within it a lot of different stories that it knows you keep clicking on, a certain genre, or you keep travelling to a certain place or you really like the offers we keep putting in front of you, and it has those for different brands. You take a strong brand and nest other newspaper brands underneath it. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

Mr Highfield described his vision as a website which selects news based on what it knows about the reader, and their location, with mobile central to the concept.

> This is where mobile does make a difference because it knows where you are and I've always been fascinated about aggregating news on a map basis or just in concentric rings in distance away from where I am - so you go to the website and it gives you content based on both how important it is because how much it has been picked up on social media and how far away it is from where you are right now. I think if you said this is my home address, this is my work address and this is where I am right now, then a very clever algorithm would order you news by a bit of traffic and travel for where you were but it would probably work out you are not that interested in the roads for where you work, a lot more in-depth stuff for where you live because you probably are interested in planning permissions for where you live, and different kind of content of where you are right now such as those retail offers, discounts on two-for-one. And that is a very interesting future world where each piece of content is tagged by its relevance to location. (Interview with chief executive officer Ashley Highfield)

Newsrooms which function in the traditional manner as daily and weekly producers of content are in large part historical and, resources aside, are expected to be confined to history fairly quickly online. While the future shape of many of Johnston Press's smaller titles is unclear, there is a focus on protecting brands and producing quality content to attract more readers on the desktop and mobile platforms. It is particularly interesting that Johnston Press's CEO sees a future where the mobile platform can not only transform local news but actually challenge the concept of what is local i.e. it does not have to be merely the area where you live or work, but could in fact be a combination of both and more. Mr Highfield raised this idea while discussing what he perceived as small titles not living up to reader expectations. He believes mobile technology could be the solution to not only making sure

readers have a good level of news service where they live but also making that relevant to where they read it.

This thesis has focused on news but also touched upon commercial opportunities which are unique to mobile (in particular see Section 2.3). Mr Highfield sees this as part of the platform's future development. Mobiles are accessible anywhere and anytime but are also "host to the entire purchasing process" (WAN, 2009:54). Johnston Press would be well placed to take advantage of location-based editorial and advertising because it owns large numbers of newspapers across the country. The importance of titles being locally based also directly links into what Gordon and Souza e Silva highlighted when they described net locality as changing the meaning and value of the web. They concluded that the web needs to be understood in its local context because people do not leave the context of their locality to interact within digital networks. While global networks shape conditions, "meaning is produced locally" (Gordon and Souza e Silva, 2011:179-180). This creates ideal conditions for local titles to capitalise on the commercial potential of mobile within what could be viewed as the traditional geographical boundaries of print. However it must also be remembered that while mobile allows constant connectability and freedom to move, people also have a desire to not communicate or be connected all the time (Baron, 2010; Schmolze, 2005). A balance is required as with so many elements of journalism.

8.5 Discussion

Mobile was Johnston Press's largest online audience and the fastest growing (see Pages 193 and 195). However senior managers said there had not been the initial investment needed to either avoid the mistakes of internet adoption or realise mobile's full potential (see Sections

7.5.3 and 7.6.1) Lack of resource was also blamed for remaining differences between the online services of daily and weekly titles, with an acknowledgement that smaller titles faced greater staffing issues (see Section 8.4.1). The bigger online potential of daily titles also indicated that the removal of print constraints could never truly be an equaliser in terms of audience (see Pages 228 and 238). That is despite the belief that readers did not have different expectations of breaking news at any title and sometimes the weekly titles did not perform well enough (see Pages 235 and 239). The combination of shrinking resources, expanding platforms and new online competitors created challenges beyond those previously experienced. Local newspapers have the analytics which enable them to focus on how to increase reach by targeting stories which work particularly well online (see Section 7.6.4). Clear reservations were expressed during the interviews about the potential impact of techniques such as click-bait but the drive to grow audience and engagement remained the same.

Newspapers have always aimed to attract more and loyal readers. They have always served specific areas but mobile is redefining terms such as community, nearness and locality. Robinson is correct with the assertion that techniques and technologies have globalised but community journalism remains intact in its focus (2017). This was confirmed by this research's content analysis finding that all content is local (see Tables 5.7 and 6.4) and strengthened by the interview finding that trust in the brand of local newspapers is the most important thing (see Page 207). It was also highlighted by Learning and Development Manager John Wilson who used fracking to illustrate that people access local news when it is to their advantage (see Page 218). The case study reflects a desire to offer location-based services which supports Robinson's belief that place can transcend geography as more readers access local news through mobile, regardless of their location (see Page 240). Local newspapers have an established trust which transcends the accusations of bias often aimed at

hyperlocal online journalism (Robinson, 116:2014). Of utmost relevance is Preston's assertion that the internet connects but does not have the community approval of local newspapers (2013). This was reflected by interviewees (see Page 238). The recognised brands of local newspapers have an increasingly important role to play as communities become more transient. However, the case study revealed that more focus and investment would be needed to truly realise the potential.

Local common interest has the potential to be more powerful when removed from the confines of location. Only local newspapers are in a position to do what Hess and Waller describe as connecting local news audiences with the most powerful in society but also with each other. They acknowledge communities are multi-layered. If that is extrapolated across news platforms, this research makes it clear that not all communities are being equally served. Those in urban centres get news in more ways, more quickly and in larger quantities (see Section 8.4.2). Mobile offers a method of remaining connected with places left behind physically, even if only temporarily, but not socially. However it is non-existent in many areas, even those still covered by a local newspaper (see Sections 6.3a and 8.3). The non-adoption of digital platforms to protect print may actually threaten community bonds. This supports Friedland's assertion that communities are fractured and complex to the point that physical interactions are no longer sufficient for maintaining community bonds (2001).

The decision not to invest in mobile specific content or sites designed for the platform could have wider reaching consequences than immediately obvious. This case study confirmed that weekly titles generally do not offer the same level of online service as daily titles (See

Section 8.4.1). Some are slowing print decline but all are still shrinking[43]. However, the result is communities are excluded from the flow of information without a viable online news service. This strengthens Nielsen's assertion that overstretched local newspapers foster community integration less (2015). This research has revealed mobile's potential for strengthening communities beyond locality, but also highlighted a lack of inclination to do so within the resource available to newsrooms. It is rural, smaller communities which are not only more likely to lose their local newspaper but also not have a mobile service of sufficient quality to reinvigorate community.

8.6 Conclusion

The content analysis addressed two of the broad aims of this research. The case study tackled the final one, how Johnston Press is adopting mobile and the platform's wider impact (aim three). Section 7.5.1 highlights that mobile audience is the fastest growing but, other than the introduction of responsive sites, has been left to increase organically. There is "no appetite" for mobile investment despite it being seen as necessary (see Page 202). Such decisions are driven by economics and taken at group level but influence the content and communities of all titles. The case study uncovered a belief that there may be less demand for mobile content in rural communities, which are served by smaller news teams. These were described as "our smaller titles when people want to know what is going on in their own communities", relying on an assumption that urban dwellers are more likely to use mobile news but do not have strong community bonds (see Page 197). However, it could be argued that it is these

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[43] Ashley Highfield highlighted that weekly titles tend to maintain better circulations (See Page 239). More research would be needed to establish if there is a connection between lack of online services and slower print decline.

communities which are most in need of local journalism 'glue'. It is not clear whether mobile

is a more successful platform for dailies than weeklies because of factors such as more

popular sports teams and wider interest, or because they are better resourced. More research

would be needed to establish if mobile news use decreases in rural areas because of external

influences and attitude, or is in fact created by it. What is clear though is that there are

multiple layers within readers of mobile news (see Page 207). The most attractive in terms of

editorial and commercial loyalty are those who engage most extensively with the brand i.e.

read more for longer. The case study showed that it is engagement times rather than numbers

of readers that may hold the key to not only monetising mobile but building community (see

Page 212).

The content analysis addressed RQ1, How the traditional models of England's local

newspapers are being challenged by the mobile platform. Primary conclusions were that titles

are still being driven by print methods and models (see Page 175). There remain disparities

between the websites of daily and weekly titles (see Page 173). The case study has furthered

this with the conclusion that a demonstrated desire to optimise mobile content is not backed

by either resource or knowledge (see Page 201). Although many other elements have altered

in newsrooms, this economic reluctance or inability could be described as the most powerful

protection of traditional models.

Content analysis showed that local newspaper continue to focus on, support and campaign for

their patches (see Tables 5.7 and 6.4). They still perform all the community roles of the past

but digital platforms have seen a rise in the prominence given to negative stories (see Tables

5.6 and 6.3)[44]. As there is no mobile-specific focus or resource, highlighted by the identical

nature of content on desktop and mobile, the opportunity to strengthen community integration

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[44] Further study would be needed to establish to what extent the dominance of negative stories online is driven by the desire for larger audiences, and the potential impact of this on communities.

beyond the traditional confines of print and patch is lost. This offers a partial answer to RQ2, How the community role of journalism within England's local newspapers is changing as mobile news grows. The case study showed that a deliberate decision had been taken on economic groups not to use mobile as a unique platform despite an understanding that this created a missed opportunity. Therefore, what Hess describes as the multi-layers of local and community could be steered by local newspapers through mobile but are not. Local mobile news sites could provide news based on the readers' present location and areas of interest not just a titles' patch (see Page 223); local newspapers have an unrivalled reach and trust within communities (see Pages 241, 246 and 255); an established history of providing news from within and for communities (see section 7.4); and the trend for people to access local news when it is to their advantage (see Page 218).

Mobile's intimate connection with individuals presents a unique opportunity for local newspapers to reassert their role within communities; grow readership and commercial opportunities. However, economics are overriding. Resources continue to shrink[45] regardless of increasing demands (see Section 7.5.3. Failure to monetise the platform therefore has implications not merely for journalism but also local communities and wider society.

This research is the first to establish that decisions are being taken to not invest specifically in mobile because of resources. That is accepted as tolerable within the industry's present circumstance (see Section 7.5.2). This project's access to Johnston Press's most senior managers revealed it was driven by financial decisions rather than failings though a lack of knowledge or inclination. While all interviewees would have liked to focus more resource on mobile, a platform that was unanimously viewed as a priority, overall it was felt that the balance was about right considering other demands on the news teams. In 2008 Katz

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[45] It was announced towards the end of 2017 that the BBC has entered a partnership with local newspapers, including Johnston Press, to employ Local Democracy Reporters providing content for the titles and funded by the licence fee.

described an opportunity to structure mobile in a "self-aware way that should be conducive to outcomes that are better than would otherwise be the case" (2008:181). In 2016 it was clear that this remained beyond the reach of the local newspaper industry and that situation was unlikely to change.

There are multiple layers within readers of mobile news (see Page 210). The most attractive in terms of editorial loyalty and commercial loyalty are those who engage most extensively with the brand i.e. read more for longer. The case study showed that it is engagement times as well as numbers of readers that may hold the key to not only monetising mobile but building community with it (see Page 200). The challenges outlined are considerable yet the interviews illustrated a palpable sense of optimism for the future of Johnston Press. Preston's comments about life being local resonate with a hope that continues in the industry.

> What comes next? Curiously enough, a certain renewal of old verities. Ray Tindle is still buying and rescuing papers. Northcliffe is buried deep inside Local World, which believes that bodies on the ground are what can revive local papers. Gannett and the smarter American local groups are discovering, to their surprise, that a combination of print and web can make good local money again. All life is local; most news, however conveyed, is local. And most thinking about the future down your way may be totally circular. What goes around, comes around. (Preston, 2013)

The concluding chapter of this project examines what these findings of this thesis mean within a wider context and how they could be applied to future research.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter provides a brief synthesis of findings which have emerged (9.2). It then discusses in greater detail a number of contradictions highlighted within them (9.3). Section 9.4 focuses on the limitations of this study, with particular regard to the quickly developing mobile platform. The next (9.5) examines how findings highlighted by this thesis can be extrapolated and applied more widely to the local newspaper industry. Then 9.5 focuses on the methodologies, and how they could be further used within mobile research. The final section (9.6) consists of the researcher's reflections on the findings and the future.

9.2 Summary of findings

RQ1, How are the traditional models of England's local newspapers being challenged by the mobile platform?

This thesis found that the lack of resources invested in mobile is protecting the traditional model of daily and weekly newspapers. The literature review showed that mobile theoretically allows all newspapers access to audiences, unrestricted by geography or location. The research revealed that many titles still operated within print restrictions, uploading around newspaper deadlines or using online sites merely to promote the print product. Weekly newspapers still have fewer resources and use the mobile platform less, although this varies between titles. This thesis found that differences are likely to always extend deeper than how often a title prints. However, there also remain similarities such as all titles continuing to focus very specifically on their local patch despite disparities remaining between both the priority given to content on print and digital platforms, quantity and timings of uploads. The content analysis findings were furthered by the case study which found that a

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demonstrated desire to optimise mobile content was not backed by either resources or knowledge. Economics is ultimately continuing to protect differences between weekly and daily titles, and the traditional models of local news.

These findings are particularly interesting within the context of newspapers failing to capitalise commercially on mobile. They have not managed to monetise their growing audiences yet continue to aim for larger numbers and more engaged readers. As more people access local news through mobile, these titles could include more areas than the traditional concept of local. This possibility would challenge traditional models, creating mobile sites which select news relevant to the reader's present location rather than a traditional news patch. A mobile platform powered by several different local newspapers would arguably be the first time news is defined by the platform, a major shift. However, this thesis showed that even within larger news organisations owning multiple titles, such concepts are not yet being examined in any detail within the industry.

RQ2, How is the community role of journalism within England's local newspapers changing as mobile news grows?

This thesis found that all of England's local journalists are community journalists. They remain uniquely connected to and informed about the communities they write about, live and work in. The content analysis found that despite the international possibilities of mobile, local newspapers still focus on their patches; they campaign and fight for their communities. That role has not significantly changed as more readers access news on mobile, largely because content is not produced or altered to specifically target that platform. Transient readers are now connected by geographical common interest rather than location. This allows new communities to form but also excludes those in areas served only by print. Local journalists have multi-faceted community roles and the 'glue' they create could be increasingly important within disparate

communities. There are many articles that remain of general interest to a community defined by geography, whether physical or virtual. However, others are more specific to interest groups within that community. This thesis found that community journalism could exist regardless of physical location but doesn't and won't without specific further investment. The potential for local newspapers to lead a resurgence in community beyond the traditional confines of print and patch is being ignored deliberately through decisions based solely on economics.

The demand for larger, targeted online audiences means less emphasis is placed on certain content and increasing use of real-time analytics compounds this. Journalists can see which stories are most popular and focus on them. The influence transfers to readers and could be described as journalism led by community. It is a shift away from those with most power or volume, to influence driven by the scale of interest. However, lack of investment means local mobile journalism is fundamentally hampered in all of the above.

9.3 Contradictions highlighted by findings and some implications

A number of contradictions emerge from the findings of this thesis which deserve further reflection.

- Audiences are increasingly choosing the mobile platform for news. It is hard to imagine a scenario where generations brought up on mobile would, in future, turn to print. However, it is not yet clear how or if news can be monetised on mobile. Journalism is an expensive commodity and while large, focused audiences lead to increased commercial rates, this has not been demonstrated on mobile. Readers are driving the move to mobile and it is for the industry to respond. The findings of this thesis show it is failing to do so in a manner which would drive editorial content or allow suitable business plans to develop.

- It is beyond the realms of this thesis to examine the economics of the local newspaper industry or arguments around profit and journalistic resources. However the demands on local journalism are growing at a time when resources are shrinking. So too is the need for 'glue' in communities increasingly weakened by distance and mobility. Local newspapers are businesses run for profit; however, their role in community creation and cohesion could arguably be seen as a public service. Their decline has wide-reaching implications far beyond news and traditional services offered by local journalists.

- Rural areas are seen as boasting stronger communities yet have fewer or no local journalists. Smaller weekly titles are less profitable, less resourced and the most likely to close. Yet these areas are arguably most in need of campaigning journalism which understands and defends readers, keeping them connected. The case study showed that these are also the communities which are seen as the least likely to adapt to mobile, despite print circulations continuing to decline. They are also the most likely to suffer from bad mobile reception.

- Increased mobility has fractured traditional communities created around location. Yet now the mobile platform and access to information on the move could allow the creation of new communities united by place but not location.

Such contradictions raise many questions about the future of local news on the mobile platform. The announcement of Local Democracy Reporters working for local newspapers but funded by the BBC is perhaps a way to fulfil the public service role of commercial journalists. It may be the occasion that dictates a structured way of news providers working together to better serve communities, regardless of profit. A desire for journalists and titles to work better together and a need to serve constantly changing audience demands are likely to be at the fore. That should include the possibility of local newspapers working in conjunction

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with hyperlocal news producers and citizen journalists. These are exciting possibilities which would resolve some of the contradictions highlighted in this thesis.

9.4 Limitations of the study

This thesis aimed to present a well-balanced view of developments on the mobile platform during the research period. However, the limitations of this part-time study are particularly apparent due to the rapidly changing nature of this platform. While developments on the platform were unexpectedly slow during the first half of the project, the opposite was later true. In order to present a concise and well-planned thesis, it was necessary to remain focused on previously agreed elements rather than confusing the picture with the many new avenues which arose during the research. This project had to find a balance between excluding information which would have a direct impact on the research questions and subsequent findings, and maintaining a steady focus. It was the speed of changes and growth of the platform which made this project of particular importance and relevance to all research on local newspapers. This was illustrated by the many updates required for the literature review, in a subject where figures quickly become outdated and irrelevant yet research is still relatively unusual. What emerged was a clear snapshot of the very latest findings regarding the mobile sites of local newspapers, with a plethora of suggestions for future research.

9.5 Applying findings more widely

The quantitative and qualitative focus of this research led to a wide range of findings. These can be applied more widely to the local newspaper industry. Among the most obvious

projects would be research into the profitability of the mobile platform and initiatives to make money from mobile content. Mobile research would also greatly benefit from newsroom-based observations among journalists and managers of all levels. Most importantly this thesis has highlighted a lack of research into mobile news which needs to be tackled at a local level. Research into the success of local mobile content with groups of different ages, genders, ethnicities and social standing could also help focus decisions.

The importance of access to senior managers within newspaper organisations should not be underestimated. The rapid nature of mobile change means it would be wise to maintain and extend such access in the future. It would also be intuitive to engage in debate with more independent news organisations. Audience demand for mobile news has the potential to transform news. Improvements to mobile sites, in particular location-based story selection, will come in the form of improved software rather than mass investment in journalism. However, it will be no less relevant to the study of local newspapers and, in particular, the content.

9.6 Applying methodologies more widely

The findings of this project provide a historical account of local newspapers' initial steps on the mobile platform and a solid foundation for future accounts. The combination of content analysis and interviews created an insightful template for digital news research. Significantly it has moved away from previous research which failed to take into account the most important element of all journalism, content. Examining the types of articles which appear on

each platform gives an insight which could be further developed in a range of ways. The triangulation of findings could further be strengthened in future research by the addition of newsroom observation and interviews with people occupying a wider range of roles. Questionnaires with readers across all platforms would also widen the scope.

9.7 Researcher's reflections

As a researcher and a local journalist, it seems appropriate to end this thesis with a plea for a more sustained and pragmatic approach to investigating an industry in crisis. Not enough research focuses on England's local newspapers, despite their dire predicament, particularly weekly newspapers. Areas not served by local journalists or newspapers will continue to grow unless solutions can be found to this long-term problem. Sustainable solutions are more likely if researchers and industry experts join forces. One of the most powerful elements of this thesis was the openness of Johnston Press executives. Such an approach was refreshing but should also serve as an example of what can be gained if universities and newspapers work together. The role of academics can at best help inform and guide journalists, but it is incumbent on journalists to accept and support research.

Mobile potential could put local newspapers in a driving seat rarely occupied since the arrival of the printing press. The industry needs to focus on what a mobile definition of 'local' means and how that can work commercially. These shifting models are about far more than following the audience from print to online. It is also about using mobile as an opportunity to redefine what readers want and where and how local newspapers can offer that. The mobile audience will continue to grow because of audience demand, even with little investment. However it will need decisive action to turn viewing figures into money able to fund local

journalism. Shrinking resources make it all the more important to find sustainable models not restricted by traditional models. Mobile advertising and editorial can be formed by local knowledge yet not restricted by local boundaries.

Appendix 1

Interview question guide

<u>General introduction questions:</u>

Name:

Job title:

How long at Johnston Press:

Summary of previous roles:

<u>Research questions</u>

<u>1, Adoption</u>

How important is the mobile platform (for the purpose of this research mobile is specifically devices which readers carry with them i.e. phones) to local newspapers today?

This research has monitored the mobile platform for five years. In your opinion, how has the importance of the platform changed during that time? What are your thoughts on the speed with which the mobile platform has grown during this time?

How important will the mobile platform be in two or five years from now? If or when will it become the largest platform for local newspapers?

<u>3, Content</u>

Why do you think readers like to read local news on mobiles?

Should the mobile platform have different content to other platforms?

Are there types of stories which might work better on mobile than other platforms?

How much priority is given to the content on mobile platforms in Johnston Press as a company, and by individual newsrooms?

When adapting to mobile, are there lessons which could or were have been from how local newspapers adapted to the internet?

<u>4, Barriers</u>

How important is the design of a mobile site and why?

Does the number of readers accessing articles directly from social media mean the priority and order given to stories on the mobile homepage is less important than on other platforms?

Now or in the future, do you envisage problems for local newspapers created by a 'mobile divide' eg the cost of handsets, poor reception in specific areas, generational problems with using technology?

7, Weekly and daily

Do weekly and daily newsrooms tackle digital differently?

Do web and mobile readers have different online expectations of newspapers which print daily or weekly?

If differences exist between daily and weekly newspapers, are they likely to decrease as digital grows and financial reliance on print declines?

Reminders

Probe for elaboration

Probe for examples

Probe for significance

ANY THING MORE INTERVIEWEE WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

Appendix 2

Interview overview, introduction and checklist

1. Introduction for interviewees and overview:

   a) description of research and its publication
   b) significance/purpose of interviews
   c) format of interview (timings, questions, openness) / recording
   d) consent/confidentiality
   e) any questions?

2. Read information sheet
3. Consent form
4. Questions
5. Conclusion: valuable information, thanks, what happens next, any questions?

Appendix 3

Research project information sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Title: Local News on the Move: Newspapers' Newest Platform

Researcher: Nancy Fielder, PhD student at The University of Central Lancashire

Description: The study will investigate how the mobile platform is changing the look and content of local; how the mobile platform is lessening the traditional differences between England's weekly and daily ; the future role of the mobile platform in England's local newspaper industry. The project is due to take place over a five year period to 2016 but your individual participation should take no longer than an hour.

Process: The research is an analysis of eleven local newspapers in print, online and mobile. It also includes a case study of Johnston Press.

Taking part: It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you are taking part in an interview you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Confidentiality: All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you sign a consent form to the contrary specifying that you wish to be identified.

Audio recording: If you are taking part in an interview the audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**Results:** The results of the project will be published in a PhD thesis and be available online.

Ethics: This project has been ethically approved via The University of Central Lancashire's ethics review procedure.

Complaints and contact: Any complaint or enquiries should be directed to the principal investigator Nancy Fielder. She can be contacted on 07922 632095.

Thank you for participating. Your help with this project is extremely valuable.

Appendix 4

Participant Consent Form
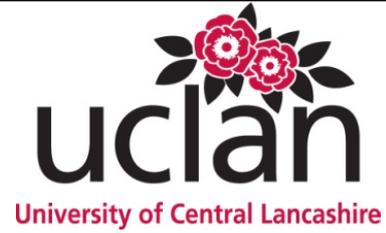
Title of Research Project:

Local News on the Move: Newspapers Newest Platform

Researcher: Nancy Fielder

Participant Identification Number: **Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated *[14/01/16]* explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. *In this instance I will contact Nancy Fielder on 07922 632095.*

☐

3. PLEASE TICK ONE OF THE THREE FOLLOWING BOXES ONLY:

I give permission for my **name and job title** only to be included in the report so that I am identifiable.

☐

I give permission for my **job title** only to be included in the report and understand that this may make me identifiable.

☐

I wish that my responses will be kept strictly **confidential and anonymous**. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised and audio recorded responses.

☐

I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

☐

4. I agree for my participation to be recorded on an audio device.

☐

5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

    ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

    ☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 5

Dates of content analysis

All three platforms – mobile, desktop and print – were analysed four times a day on seven days. This took place between 9am and 9.30am, 1pm and 1.30pm, 5pm and 5.30pm, and 9pm and 9.30pm

Data was collected from the daily titles on specific days of the month (ensuring a full week's data) in a random order (to avoid the data being affected by particular incident) in November 2014. The exception to this was the weekend, Friday to Sunday, when data was collected on consecutive days to account for no Sunday print editions. See Page 95 for more details.

Data collection dates of daily titles:

Monday: November 17, 2014

Tuesday: November 11, 2014

Wednesday: November 26, 2014

Thursday: November 27, 2014

Friday: November 21, 2014

Saturday: November 22, 2014

Sunday: November 23, 2014

The weekly titles were analysed over a period of two weeks to account for all online articles included in one print edition, dated Thursday, November 20 (see Page 96 for more explanation on method). The three editions examined were printed on Thursday, November 13, 20 and 27, 2014

<u>Data collection dates of weekly titles (2014:</u>

Week one: Thursday, November 13; Friday, November 14; Saturday, November 15; Sunday, November 16; Monday, November 17; Tuesday, November 18; Wednesday, November 19.

Week two: Thursday, November 20; Friday, November 21; Saturday, November 22; Sunday, November 23; Monday: November 24; Tuesday: November 25; Wednesday: November 26.

Week three: Thursday: November 27; Friday: November 28; Saturday: November 29; Sunday: November 30; Monday, December 1; Tuesday, December 2; Wednesday, December 3.

Appendix 6

Story analysis form

Date: Time:

Publication:

Story ID:

Platform: Newspaper Website   Mobile Site

Category: repetition, adaptation, representation, unique

Positioning:

Headline:

Theme(s) of Subject:

Length:

Number of photos:

Number of graphics:

Byline:

Geographical focus = local / regional / national / international / unknown

Overall impression = Positive news / negative news

Appendix 7

Negative or positive? Coding tone

Coding tone or issues is a particular complex concept and it is necessary to avoid stereo-typing categories, for example, assuming health articles are negative and charity articles are positive. To ensure this, a list of possible indicators was created for 'positive' and 'negative' stories, with the acceptance that judgment would be necessary in some cases as a comprehensive list was not plausible. Discussion ahead of the pilot led to this general question which coders asked when assessing the tone of an article: Is this story good or bad news for the geographical area this newspaper represents? When tone was unclear, an option of 'neutral' was available.

Tone categorisation	Positive
	Negative
	Neutral

Indicators of positive articles:

Awards, fundraising, volunteering, improved inspections, business success, charity work, research success, community events, scientific developments, entertainment.

Example headlines of positive articles:

'Exports to China boom to £200m'; 'Airline swoops in to create 40 new jobs'; 'Women invited to join new advisory panel', School celebrates outstanding Ofsted report', Hospital praised as waiting times fall'.

Indicators of negative articles:

Crime, court, accidents, redundancies, firm closures, injury, political conflict, fire, health warnings.

Example headlines of negative articles:

'Police find stash of cannabis inside Christmas tree box'; 'Cars damaged in fire'; 'Rail delays are ruining our lives'; 'Councillor accused of 'cover up'; 'Father killed in crash'.

Appendix 8

Johnston Press case study: Dates, locations and duration of interviews

1, *Jeremy Clifford, Editor in Chief*

Date: January 29, 2016

Duration: 75 minutes

Location: Yorkshire Post offices, No1 Leeds, 26 Whitehall Road, Leeds, LS12 1BE.

Ashley Highfield, chief executive officer

Date: January 15, 2016

Duration: 70 minutes

Location: Johnston Press head office, 2 Cavendish Square, Marylebone, London W1G 0AN.

Jeff Morriarty, Chief Digital and Product Officer

Date: January 19, 2016

Duration: 57 minutes

Location: Interview conducted by phone.

Mark Woodward, Digital Product Manager

Date: October 14, 2016.

Duration: 71 minutes

Location: Derbyshire Times office, Spire Heights, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 2WG

John Wilson, Learning and Development Manager

Date: January 14, 2016.

Duration: 43 minutes

Location: Derbyshire Times office, Spire Heights, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 2WG.

Appendix 9

Johnston Press interviews – initial coding schedule

Interviewee name:

Interviewee job title:

Adoption:

1a, Importance of mobile		Quotes:
	Not important	
	Significant	
	Vitally important	
1b, Speed of mobile change and historical view	*Unexpected/unpredictable*	
	Faster than predicted/foreseeable	
	Predictable due to industry specific past	
	Predictable	
1c, Mobile predictions	*Already biggest platform*	
	Soon to become biggest platform	
	Unlikely to ever become biggest platform	

Content:

2a, Popularity of mobile	*Speed, accessibility, cost, ease of use, social acceptable,*			Quotes
2b, Different content	No: Yes: Depends:			
2c,Suitable mobile content	All breaking news, traffic, crime, accidents, charity, business, positive vs			

	negative			
2d, Priority given to mobile	Too much, adequate, too little			
2e, Lessons from past	None			
	General approach			
	Financial			
	Training			

Barriers

3a, Importance of mobile design	Very important, average importance, irrelevant	Speed, accuracy,
3b, Social impact on importance of mobile homepage	Both equal Social more important Mobile more important	
3c, Mobile divide	Irrelevant	
	Highly relevant	Gender, age, class, geography, reception
	Doesn't matter either way	

Challenging traditional models

4a, Weekly vs daily approach	No difference	
	Minor differences	
	Major differences	
4b, Differing reader expectations	Same expectations	
	Some differences	
	Major differences	
4c, Will differences grow?	Yes	:
	No	:

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