



Slow Journalism Synthesises Emerging and Traditional Journalistic Practices

Kexin Li¹, Fei Shen², Tongchun Tan^{2,*}

¹University of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

²Jiangsu Normal University, Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China.

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***Corresponding author:** Tongchun Tan, Jiangsu Normal University, Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China.

Abstract

As a unique way of news production, slow journalism runs counter to the current era of speed and immediacy. As an extension of the "slow" movement, "slow journalism" is seen as a way to help the general slow down and take a closer look at the world. This paper first analyzes the process of combining the "slow" movement and journalistic practice. Secondly, the paper explains the birth of slow journalism and the typical journalism stories in the process of its development. It also analyzes the news content and distribution methods of the Spanish news agency Jot Down. From the analysis, this paper argues that slow journalism does not completely reject traditional journalistic practices, neither does it fully embrace emerging journalistic practices, but partially integrates traditional journalistic practices with emerging ones. It explores how slow journalism, as a combination of traditional and emerging journalistic practices, is being used and changing current society.

Keywords

Slow Journalism, "Slow" Movement, Traditional Journalistic Practices, Emerging Journalistic Practices

1. Introduction

Slow journalism, as a particular type of journalism being practised, has to some extent challenged the speed-centred journalistic practice. According to Drok and Hermans (2015, p. 543), "Slow Journalism as a counter-movement, a corrective to a kind of journalism that gives priority to the fast spreading of news." Whereas in terms of mass media, some argue that the emergence of slow journalism is a rejection of emerging media practices. As Juntunen states that "the news has to be told as soon as possible - perhaps at the expense of, for example, accuracy and sensitivity" (Juntunen, 2010, p. 171). In contrast, others see slow journalism as a convergence of journalistic practices. This essay will discuss why the journalistic practice of slow journalism is synthesising emerging and traditional journalistic practices.

2. Background theory

2.1 Emergence of slow journalism

In common perception, journalism is a fast-paced industry where journalists need to grasp the facts of newsworthy events as fast as possible, and it is not common to apply the word slow to journalism. Le Masurier's definition of slow (2014, p. 141, cited in Parkin and Craig 2006) sums up "Slow as a deliberate subversion of the dominance of speed in our everyday lives" as a social movement. The concept of slow originated with the Slow Food Move-

ment (SF), a social movement that began in Italy in 1986 as a protest against fast food. According to Petrini, the president of SF, Slow Food is not only a resistance to fast food, a call for consumer participation in co-production, but also "a critical reaction to the symptoms of incipient globalization" (Petrini & Watson, 2001, p. 8). The concept of slow journalism has gradually become more apparent based on the view of slow as a social movement and a social response to globalization.

Secondly, it is worth noting that SF is a social movement from the time and formed aspects of food preparation and cultivation. The concept of slow journalism as the penetration of SF in other areas of life can also be analyzed from both the temporal and formal aspects. From the perspective of slow journalism creation time, slow journalism is considered as "allowing journalists to take their time" (Le Masurier, 2014, p. 141). According to Le Masurier (2014, p. 141), "slow journalism requires the time for deeper reflection and/or investigation about an original subject". For instance, the book "Ten Days in a Mad-House" is a classic example of slow journalism in a temporal sense. Nellie Bly initially wrote ten Days in a Mad-House in 1887 for the New York World as a series of undercover stories about the conditions of the Blackwell Island Asylum for Women. Where Nellie spent ten days pretending to be insane, using her personal experience of horrific abuse as a way to investigate the conditions of the asylum. While Nellie's investigative approach, in this case, is a bit extreme, it also demonstrates the concept that slow journalism allows and requires journalists to take the time to reflect on or investigate their subjects more deeply. Thus, slow journalism from a time perspective means that journalists need to spend more time researching news events in depth, and stories cannot appear in the first place to viewers like breaking news. From the point of view of the form of slow journalism, it tends to choose an extended format with certain narrative principles. Since slow journalism tends to cover complex and ongoing issues that require journalists to go deeper into society and gather stories about all aspects of what is happening, a longer, narrative news format tends to do slow journalism more justice. For example, John Sudworth's 2018 news story for the BBC, China's hidden camps. What has happened to the vanished Uighurs of Xinjiang? This slow news piece reported in a rather interesting way that China was "locking up hundreds of thousands of Muslims without trial in its western region of Xinjiang" (Sudworth, 2018). The writing style of this slow news piece is quite different from the illustrative mechanical style of hard news. The author uses his narrative skills to tell the complete news story to the audience. In terms of length, it is clear that this slow news story has some length. It is also clear why the author chose to use an extended format, as a short format would not be able to convey the whole story, the whole investigation. As Le Masurier (2014, p. 143) says, in slow journalism, "the stylistic focus tends to be narrative storytelling [...] it is not necessarily long form, but usually requires length". Greenberg (2007, p. 15) also suggested that slow journalism is a collection of essays, reportage and other non-fiction forms.

Thus combining the definitions of slow journalism in terms of time and form in general, slow journalism refers to a certain extent to news that requires and allows journalists to spend more time uncovering facts. Moreover, due to the complexity of slow news reporting, a certain length and narrative are required in terms of article format.

2.2 Definition of slow journalism

The term "slow journalism" first appeared in 2007 in an article called "Slow Journalism" by Susan Greenberg in Prospect magazine, where Greenberg (2007, p. 16) stated that the term slow journalism, borrowed from the concept of slow food, is a term used by Craft, voice and care-driven journalism is becoming a "luxury". However, this essay does not believe that slow journalism was invented by Susan Greenberg. In a broad sense, slow journalism is generally understood by the mass media as a type of journalism, a particular way of practising journalism. As Barranquero Carretero and Jaurrieta Bargain agreed, "Slow journalism is not a new phenomenon since these journalistic practices have lived alongside a more ephemeral journalism throughout the modern history of the profession" (Barranquero Carretero & Jaurrieta Barriain, 2016, p. 524). Therefore, based on the above definition of the slow journalism writing form, the essay belongs to a type of slow news. Then the history of slow journalism can be traced back to the early days of journalism in the form of personal essays, the three books of essays produced by the Frenchman Michel de Montaigne between about 1570 and 1592.

3. Relationship between slow journalism and journalistic practice

Slow journalism as a journalistic practice is not a complete endorsement of traditional journalistic practices nor a complete rejection of emerging journalistic practices. Slow journalism can be seen as a synthesis of traditional and emerging journalistic practices. However, some practitioners of slow journalism see it as a "revolution" against

emerging news media practices. According to Rob Orchard, co-founder and creative director of The Slow Journalism Company, "the fundamental nature of news journalism has changed for the worst in the last 20 years [...] an antidote might come in the form of a new slow journalism revolution" (Orchard, 2014). This essay seeks to use the Spanish slow journalism publication *Jot Down* as a case study using instrumental case studies as a methodology. By examining its approach, channels and content of reporting news, it discusses the integration of slow news on traditional and emerging journalistic practices in terms of news flow cycles, news accountability and news value. *Jot Down* magazine first appeared on the Web on May 16, 2011, and the site reached 500,000 unique visitors in just one year with the launch of a print edition (WAN-IFRA staff, 2017); the content of the magazine is mainly based on narrative articles, interviews and supporting visual resources (Barranquero Carretero & Jaurrieta Barriain, 2016, p. 528).

3.1 Slow news and traditional journalism practices

This paragraph analyzes *Jot Down*'s endorsement and rejection of traditional journalistic practices as a slow news publication. The two main channels through which *Jot Down* presents news to its audience are online and offline. The offline news coverage channels are mainly based on magazines printed every three months, and print news magazines combine the traditional news practice of news distribution channels. In terms of the news flow cycle, the news flow cycle of publishing every three months tends to recognize the news cycle in traditional journalism practices. According to Bivens (2008, p. 117), "the flood of UGC linked to a breaking news item has reversed the traditional flow of news" in emerging journalistic practices, the flow cycle of news has become faster and faster due to the emergence of the Internet. From the perspective of journalistic accountability, *Jot Down* prefers to deny traditional journalistic practices. As the new media become more ubiquitous thanks to the Internet, news is more easily disseminated, reproduced and published than ever before, while the voices of non-journalists are becoming more prominent. Bivens (2008, p. 122) agrees that regardless of the medium used, new media have contributed to the growing organization and effectiveness of citizen influence on public opinion and have amplified the notion of institutional accountability in journalism. Thus, while *Jot Down*'s news articles are not directly visible on large globalized social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, its journalistic accountability no longer endorses traditional journalistic practices, regardless of the format *Jot Down* uses to bring news to its audience. In terms of journalistic value, *Jot Down* is more inclined to endorse traditional journalistic practices, but there is also a partial rejection of them. According to McIntyre (2016, p. 225), traditional news values include "power elite, celebrity, entertainment/oddity, magnitude/impact, follow-up, timeliness, conflict, and emotional impact." The journalism in *Jot Down* covers almost all values except timeliness, which shows *Jot Down*'s recognition of traditional journalistic values. However, there is little trace of immediacy in *Jot Down*'s news articles, reflecting *Jot Down*'s rejection of timeliness as a value as a slow news magazine. Le Masurier (2014, p. 146) states that editors and reporters in several newsrooms have responded to the value of timeliness by using longer production times to produce news. The news value of "timeliness" has been questioned by editors and journalists in several newsrooms by using longer production times to produce news. Thus, slow journalism does not wholly negate traditional journalistic practices, nor does it completely endorse them.

3.2 Slow journalism and emerging journalistic practices

This paragraph discusses *Jot Down*'s synthesizes of emerging journalistic practices, as mentioned above, not only through its offline print distribution channels but also through its online news reporting channels. The online journalism channel is mainly based on *Jot Down*'s online website, and this Internet-based journalism channel is closer to emerging journalistic practices. In terms of news flow cycles, it is clear that *Jot Down*'s news coverage cannot keep up with emerging media practices. Competition among emerging news industries has forced journalists to increase the speed of news production continuously. As Juntunen (2010, p. 169) agrees, the most apparent consequence of competition in the newsroom is, of course, the enormous deadline pressure on journalists. Moreover, thanks to the Internet and new media, journalists need to compete not only with their peers but also with citizen journalism. As Bivens (2008, p. 115) describes, "a wider variety of actors can direct news agendas while citizens increasingly capture the most memorable images of breaking news stories". So *Jot Down*'s slow news flow cycle is a denial of emerging journalistic practices. In terms of accountability of news, according to the above description, due to the Internet, the public can understand the content in news stories from more places and different perspectives. Furthermore, in the course of understanding *Jot Down*, this essay found that even many of the contributors to

the articles are not currently engaged in careers as journalists and that the use of journalistic accountability in emerging journalistic practices would be more evident for the articles on Jot Down. Therefore, even if Jot Down no longer chooses online communication channels, it cannot deny the emerging news practice of accountability. In terms of news value, Jot Down only partially identifies with emerging news value. According to Juntunen (2010, p. 172), as journalism continues to evolve to meet the public's high demand for information and to serve the public better, the value of speed in news reporting is becoming more and more apparent. Take Jot Down's online news coverage page as an example.

The layout looks more like a traditional newspaper, with news updated twice a day and ranging from 1,500 to 10,000 words in length. The content format does not conform to the "golden rule" of journalism. Looking through the content, one can see that Jot Down does not focus on immediacy, and the articles tend to have a different perspective on recent events. The timelessness of the subject matter and the quality of the text and images are the main focus of Jot Down. Thus in terms of journalistic value, Jot Down does not entirely dismiss, nor does it thoroughly acknowledge, emerging journalistic practices. Therefore, this essay can conclude that slow journalism does not thoroughly repudiates emerging journalistic practices; slow journalism synthesizes traditional and emerging journalistic practices in a way that partly negates and partly endorses them.



Figure 1. A screen shot of the Jot Down's web page.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, slow journalism requires journalists not only to spend time investigating social issues but also to reflect on the quality of their news articles. The emergence of slow journalism inherits some of the fluid cycles of traditional journalistic practices and recognizes the accountability and some of the journalistic value of emerging journalistic practices. There is no doubt that slow journalism is not a repudiation or revolution of emerging journalistic practices but rather a synthesis of emerging and traditional journalistic practices.

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