

Dear All

As I see the farmer protest in India or any other protest anywhere in the world, and any newsworthy item, I am amazed at how much the concept of news has changed over the last few years. In India, it is amazing to see the farmers organized so well about their views, their responses to questions, they run a 24 by 7 media center!!

My learning note is on what's happened to news, who controls it, who influences it now.

1. Original news started as writing on a wall, stone tablets. Citizens in Rome would come and read the news from a wall. Most of the original news was about military, political and economic (price) news. Most news in the early days was controlled by the king, he determined what could be communicated and what could not be to his subjects.
2. From this source, news then spread by word of mouth or by news couriers.
3. News would be communicated by smoke signals, pigeon travel, news on global trade came from ships and sailors. Their stories formed the early impressions of Asia, America, Latin America etc.
4. The first newspaper started in China and then spread to Europe. The first monthly magazine was printed by the Government of Venice. Most of the news was sponsored by advertising. As brands grew and as government tenders grew, they became the underwriters of newspapers and magazines.
5. The innovation of telegraph centralized news into a hub and spoke model. Havas was the first big news conglomerate started in 1832 in Paris and the alumni of Havas like Reuter's etc. went and started their own media conglomerates. Reuters started in 1851. Reuters slogan was 'follow the cable'
6. In 1865, Reuters was the first to report Lincoln's assassination in Europe, a full 12 days after he was killed in USA. The news centers in the 1990s were USA and Europe, notably Britain because of the English language. Most people expect India and China to become significant news hubs in the next twenty years.
7. BBC Radio started in 1922 and in 1926 when there was the general strike in UK and newspapers were not printed, radio became the trusted source.
8. Many big cities had a morning edition, an afternoon edition of a newspaper. So news came in 18 hour cycles.
9. CNN started in 1980 as a 24 by 7 news channel and became big when they reported the Baghdad war live in 1991. BBC world television started in 1992. In 1996, Qatar started Al Jazeera, all three are significant 24 by 7 news channels.
10. Internet news started in 1994, just 26 years ago. Internet news took off when they reported the California earthquake in 1994 and the Oklahoma bombing in 1995. People got hooked onto to the concept of up-to-date news, by the minute.
11. In 2010, the Arab spring was a precursor to the revolution that spread across North Africa and the Middle East. This revolution was people led, the same thing happened in the Philippines.
12. With internet news, there is no difference between a journalist and a reader. With blogs, Whatsapp etc., every citizen is a publisher when he posts something original or sends a picture. The biggest enabler to this has been the cellular network with a phone and camera. With a phone and camera, every citizen is a journalist.
13. With a cell phone, news is 24 by 60 by 60 by 7. There is no professional, there is no amateur, only content that is interesting. There is no alignment with digital news, there is no pro, no anti - government. In that sense the ideals of journalism have come back a full circle and the reader is the judge of what's right and what's wrong as all aspects of the news are presented by different people.
14. The era of digital news has brought in a new type of journalist, and the old power structure in the newsroom is not relevant. News cycles have shortened significantly.

This has also led to lower attention spans amongst citizens, a price to pay for the fast-changing nature of news.

15. Digital news is the way forward, and news reading on the phone is the dominant way of reading news. You can become a brand in your own right if you manage your digital channels well – LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, websites etc. You are the news and you are also the journalist. Some content becomes news and some news becomes content to go viral. What helps virality is human interest stories, of love, of affection, of sacrifice, of emotion basically. Things to do with children tend to gather a lot of virality, things to do with a unique hobby like the example of Eshna Kutty, the hula hoop girl. In a digital world, the world is literally your stage.

Enjoy, wr
Shiv