

Convergence Journalism

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study on convergence journalism, focusing on its definition and concept. This study covers different topics in two textbooks, namely “Convergence Journalism - An Introduction” and “The Handbook of Global Online Journalism”. The study In-depth interviews were conducted with two executive editorial members and two reporters. The interviews look into the use of social media in the news process. The researcher chose Nation Multimedia Group Public Company, one of Thailand’s leading media companies with high advancement in convergence media.

According to the study, media academics view that "convergence journalism" as the process where editorial members from each section integrate because of the technological development in digital media. This results in more media channels or platforms. On the concept of convergence journalism, there are three outcomes. The first is convergence as a product. The second is convergence as a system and the third is convergence as a process.

The topics covered in the textbooks include theories, politics, production, practices, contents and global contexts. The issues of editorial newsrooms dealing with convergence journalism comprise three phases. First, they used fax machines and telephones. Second, they turned to emails. Third, convergence includes two parts. The first part is individuals using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Line and etc. The second part is corporate level. It first creates a news basket, then reduces complexity of information, and later reduces the cost of production.

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Background of the Study

The advancement and converging of information technology and communication is becoming a turning point for journalists to cope with the change in the society and rapid exchange of information through technology that has affected journalism and communication businesses.

The change has also blurred the line that separates telecom service providers, broadcasting and information technology. This phenomenon is called Media Convergence (Somkiat Tangkittiwanich, 2002, p.45)

Convergence Journalism is considered to be a revolution to how news are produced and presented by newspapers and other broadcast medias. These businesses have to adjust their contents and information flow through several communication channels. One example is the convergence of telephone and television broadcast into videophone, where consumers can attend a meeting through videoconference. Or a convergence between computer and voice mail technology that allows consumers to communicate with one another through a computer.

Straubhaar and Larose (2000,p.23) stated that there have been such convergences in many forms. The internet, convergence of communication technologies and relevant businesses has affected the normal day to day lives of the people. Many new professions were born and many laws have been introduced into the society to adjust with the changes.

In the same regards, the cirliculums to journalism and communications educations have also been adapted accordingly.

With several communication channels created through convergence, the 'way of life' has changed with easier access to information. New ways of doing businesses, forging relationships, new ways of personality building, and new cultures were created through these communication channels.

We can also witness the reduction of social and business interactions as part of the changes for example, a supplier and reach out to consumers and eliminating the traditional way of using middlemen.

As earlier stated, the definition of Convergence Journalism can be used in many ways. The objective of this study is to find out the academic meaning of Convergence Journalism and explore its core concept in Journalism studies as well as define the scopes of its content. We will also look into the steps of producing news of the editorial department of Nation Broadcasting Company; Ltd as part of this study.

Objective of the Study

1. To understand the main concept and contents of Convergence Journalism textbooks.
2. To understand the process of news production of the editorial department of Nation Broadcasting Company; Ltd adapted to the new Convergence Journalism era.

Questions of the Study

1. What is the meaning of convergence journalism and its core ideas as well as academic scopes and contents which are provided in the subject's textbooks?
2. In what directions and what steps did the editorial department of Nation Broadcasting Company; Ltd take to adapt to the changes in the convergence journalism era?

Scope of the Study

This study on Convergence Journalism is a compilation of its definitions and its core concepts taken from 2 textbooks, i.e. 1. Convergence Journalism – An Introduction. 2. The handbook of Global Online Journalism.

The study aimed to identify the scopes of these books and presents their core concepts, followed by an interview with 2 executives of Nation Broadcasting Co; Ltd in regards to their perspective towards working in the convergence journalism era.

Definition of the Study

Journalism is defined as the study of steps in producing and presenting the news in print, broadcasting and new media. Convergence Journalism is defined as the changes that occurred in hand in hand with advancement and convergence of communication technologies that can further categorized into convergence as a product, convergence as a system and convergence as a process. The contents of convergence journalism textbooks is summarized from the books' table of contents, which are divided into 7 segments, which are, theory, politics, convergence journalism texts, production, process, contents and globalization in contexts.

Results of the Study

The results of the study will be presented in three main points:

The meaning and ideas of the main concepts of convergence journalism, scopes of education to converge several media available in textbooks and the adaptation of the editorial department of Nation Broadcasting Co; Ltd.

1. Definition of Convergence Journalism

From the study the meaning of convergence journalism can be divided into two categories: 1 definition of the term, 2. main concept of convergence journalism

1.1 Definition

Foreign academics have derived several definitions to the term convergence journalism, which has been summed up in this study.

Convergence journalism can be defined as steps needed to be taken by editorial personnels to adapt to rapid advancement of communication technologies. Expansion of media channels has affected journalists to adapt themselves to these technologies in

gathering and presenting news in new medias such as Facebook, Line, Twitter, Instagram etc.

The above definition is a summed up meaning of convergence journalism derived by several academics. Several academics have their own definitions to the term convergence journalism.

Quinn and Filak, (2005,p.3) stated that “convergence is a revolutionary and evolutionary from of journalism that is emerging in many parts of the world”.

Pavlik,(1996,p.132) defines “convergence as the coming together of all forms of mediated communications in an electronic. The concept of convergence implies the disappearance of the traditional frontiers between these sectors and the confluence of media platforms where new contents and new applications will come into being”.

Siapera and Veglis,(2012,p.24) said “convergence in the professional world do so to refer to the process by which editorial teams are merged together, which is one of the logistical solutions that is currently in vogue among media enterprises as a way of adapting to the challenges of the digital environment”.

1.2 Main Concept of Convergence Journalism

From the study of basic elements of convergence journalism, the term can be categorized into 3 points: Convergence as a product, convergence as s system and convergence as a process as shown in the picture below.

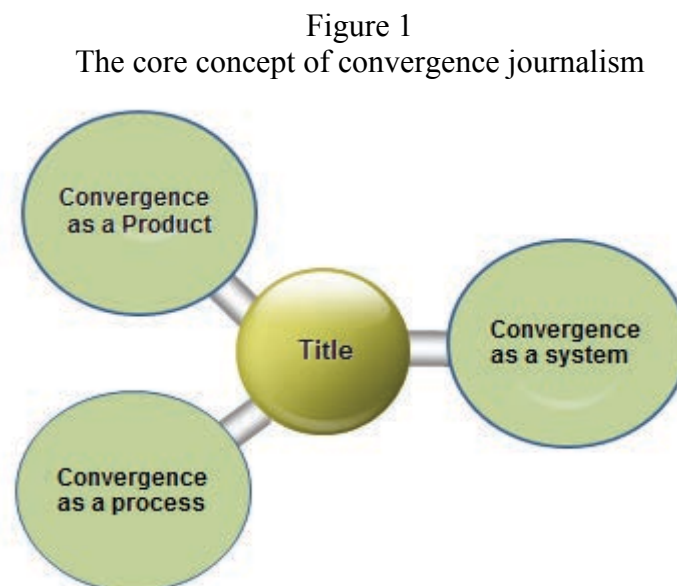


Figure 1 demonstrates the concept of convergence journalism, which is divided into three categories.

1.2.1 Convergence as a Product

Convergence as a product is a change in technology from analog to digital causing a change in work procedures of several departments, from administration department to

editorial department as part of the theory where communication technologies determines the way society functions in the aftermath of the internet age. The convergence theory expanded rapidly after 1990.

1.2.2 Convergence as a System

The concept of convergence had been formulated as the result of a confluence of technologies, concept of convergence it is necessary to consider not only the purely instrumental aspects, but also other facets of media production and consumption.

1.2.3 Convergence as a Process

Several academics such as Zavoina and Reichert, (2000) Dailey (2005), Lawson (2003) and Appelgren (2004) agrees that those analyzing convergence should not not solely depend on technological point of view. This has important methodological consequences for any study on convergence processes.

Peter Golding and Murdock, (1996,p.79) stated that age. The concept of convergence only designates the process of confluence of different technologies propitiated by digitalization... for related fields such as business organization or the profile of the journalist. This is a relatively reductive view, which is resonant of a certain technological determinism.

Starting from these premises, Appelgren (2004) recommends that we should distinguish between convergence itself and its consequences. According to her, we have to differentiate between the processes and the effects of convergence.

2. Main Contents of Convergence Journalism Appeared in Textbooks

Communication academics agrees that there are several aspects to consider, but the core aspects that needs to be taken into account are these seven categories as shown in the figure 2.

Figure 2
Main contents appeared in textbooks



Figure 2 Main Contents appeared in textbooks are these seven categories.

2.1 Convergence Journalism Theory

The ideology and theory of convergence journalism expanded rapidly since the 19th century, and has developed further in the past 30 years. Academics have shown interests in the concept. Sociologists interested in religions have agreed that communication and sociology are related to one another.

An academic, with keen interest on the topic, Pierre Bourdieu, said he was fascinated with Max Weber's sociological point of view that argues about the exploitation between people must not only be regarded solely from economical point of view but also from sociological and cultural standpoints as well.

From the cultural aspect, Weber's argued that a society can gain knowledge, and use that knowledge efficiently (Cultural Capital). The term is also associated with Economic Capital and Symbolic Capital and, therefore, the cultural aspect can be applied under sociological concept. On the other hand, the communication aspect, academics have shown interests in technologies in relations to social norms, especially the development of democratic values, as these values differs in the views of different social groups.

2.2 Politics

To look into the relationship between convergence journalism and politics, two aspects are often discussed: 1. Information Technology's role in convergence era in development of democracy and 2. The deterioration of democracy in the society due to advancement of technologies. The contexts of technology's role in the development of democracy are as follows:

Communication Technologies Role in Politics

Several academics have shown interests in how technologies have taken a prominent role in politics and political system as well as the development of democracy. Under this contexts academics argued that communication technologies have allowed people in the society to shape policies, political standpoints and dictate the role of information technologies in regards to daily lives. Another important aspect is the role of Corporate media; such as BBC presenting a pro-government news item about its conservative policies. The sub-text is to create a positive view of the government in the minds of the people. This example also reflects the concept of how media can shape the mindset of the society.

2.3 New Forms of Publications

With the participation of Civic journalists, bloggers, online media population and social media a new form of publication has emerged.

Civic Journalism

With growing role of participatory or civic journalism, society has changed from passive consumers into active consumers by reporting news, writing articles, providing pictures, personal views and comments, which is considered to be a part of

journalism studies and these civic journaists can develop themselves into professional reporters.

J-Blogging

J-Blogging was formed by the society that wants to have an active role in news reporting. Many bloggers enjoys a huge amount of followers and interests from readers. J blogging differs from civic journalism in two aspects:

1. J-blogging is not news reporting but rather provide personal views and comments on a subject and share them with the public
2. Bloggers can provide information on news articles on their blogs, but they are not in the form of news reports.

Video Journalism

Video Journalism is where a professional or non –professional journalists provides news reports with a recorded video of the incident and post it on new media such as Youtube.

News Aggregators

News Aggregators are responsible in providing electronic form of news reports, often in packages, to libraries or media firms. They collect information and provide them to firms on contractual basis. Customers can often request on particular news items.

Mainstream Online Journalism

Mainstream online Journalism is reporting of news by professional journalists. Several varieties of news are offered to consumers, such as, business news, politics, economy, lifestyles, travel, etc and also reporting on views about relevant news topics e.g. Guardian Online.

Social Media

Social media journalism has become part of journalism study cirliculum where recievers of news also engage as ‘senders’.

2.4 Production

Production process includes production of news and presenting of news in different media platforms.

Different platforms allows different forms of news presented to consumers. Some platforms are suitable to present news stories through texts, some other are suitable to present pictures of the events and while some platform allows video and voice recordings as news broadcasting choices. With emerging of different types of platforms, several studies have been conducted to differentiate the concepts of online journalism and journalism online. Both these concepts differs where online journalism is equavalant to ‘putting the newspaper on a website’ while journalism online

integrates computer technology to journalism where media companies use new form of media platforms in broadcasting the news to the public efficiently.

2.5 Methodology

Researches and studies of communication technologies in the past are often conducted on the basis of technology development and formation of media businesses.

Most researches study the adaptation of media companies to keep up with advancement of communication technologies, individual adaptations and the formation of 'Newsroom' from ordinary editorial department.

An academic, Erdal (2008), conducted a study on the Newsroom of a Norwegian media company, Norwegian public service broadcaster (NRK), by analyzing the news reports from a newsroom called "Ostlandssendingen", located in Oslo. He collected data through interviews and observations by using textual analysis methodology. His study lasted for four weeks, where he analyzed his research on Platform and individual news story.

2.6 Content

In this section, contents of the news that is presented on websites focus on the 'language' where content and language used on each platform are different from one another. For example the language used in the newspaper is always different from the ones broadcasted through radio. Similarly the language used in TV broadcasting also differs from the earlier mentioned platforms.

2.7 Context of Globalization

The importance of "context" in regards to society of several countries across the world, such as bloggers in Brazil have created a platform via web blogs, Facebook and several communication channels. There are possibilities that in the future, we could see massive mergers among communications industry who, as the result, will be able to control the way of lives of people in the society.

3. Adaptation of News Editorial Department

The editorial department that have to adjust to production of news in convergence journalism era is the department from the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd. The company owns several platforms from newspapers (Bangkok Business Newspaper, Kom Chad Luek Newspaper, The Nation Newspaper,) to Television platforms (Nation Channel, Bangkok Biz Television, Kom Chad Luek TV, Mango TV and Emergency response channel).

The results of the study of the process of the adapted news editorial are as follows:

3.1 Production of News of the Editorial Department of the Nation Broadcasting Corporation Co; Ltd

Before the convergence technologies were invented the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd consisted of Bangkok Business Newspaper, Kom Chad Luek Newspaper, The Nation Newspaper in print platform and The Nation Channel on TV broadcasting.

News submission via communication technology can be divided into 3 eras:

3.1.1 The First Era of News Submission

In this era the reporters are sent to gather news on different locations and compiled them before sending the story to the editorial department via

Fax - which is one of the quickest and most reliable form of sending stories to the editorial department

Telephone- a quick way of sending news, but often limited to who, where, when, why and how contexts.

3.1.2 The Second Era of News Submission

With the invention of communication technology called the internet in the second era, a communication channel called E-mail was introduced. Sending of news became easier and quicker. However, the receivers were limited to only a few whose e-mail addresses were available to the sender and were not able to be broadcasted to the public.

3.1.3 The Third Era of News Submission

This era, which is called the convergence journalism era, has seen a rapid advancement of communication technology. In this era, reporters can, directly, present the news to the public through new platforms. In this convergence journalism era, sending of the news can be divided into two ways:

Individual Level

In this era, news sending on individual level is different from the first two eras where reporters had to send back the news to editorial department for rewrites before presenting them to the public. But in the convergence journalism era, reporters can present the news directly to the public through new platforms.

Chutinthara Wattanakul, deputy director in charge of new media for the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd said the convergence journalism era has allowed consumers to know more about the reporters. Earlier, consumers have no idea about the identity of the news writers.

One of the advantages is quicker communication between all parties. He said “when a reporter use online tools to reach out ot society he must be careful to uphold journalist ethics and the credibility of his organization.”

Noppathachak Attanon, a reporter from the Nation Channel, emphasized on the importance of “platform” in the convergence journalism era. He said “Twitter” was the most used in comparison to other platforms.

He said “The communications, internally within the organization are done via Line while using Twitter to report news, however, it is limited to only 140 alphabets. Reporters also use Facebook to share the news among themselves”.

Wutinan Nahim, another reporter from the Nation Channel, said in the convergence journalism era reporters carry smartphones which can record video and sound clips as another way to present the news. “Normally, we use Twitter. We take photographs of the incidents and tweet them and share them internally. If any reporters’ pictures are used regularly they get credits for their work.”

Organization Level

With rapid advancement in communication technology organizations have to adapt to keep up with the changes. Nation Broadcasting corporation co; ltd did that by merging their newspaper and television editorial teams together to become the biggest news team in Thailand. This has allowed them to continuously open new communication channels e.g. Now 26 TV station. The company’s 3 newspapers. The Nation, Bangkok Business Newspaper and Kom Chad Luek has also adapted the way they produce news to adjust with advancement of communication technology and economics. The study found that setting up of a news medium, a collective brainstorm of news department and production cost cutting was used in its adaptation.

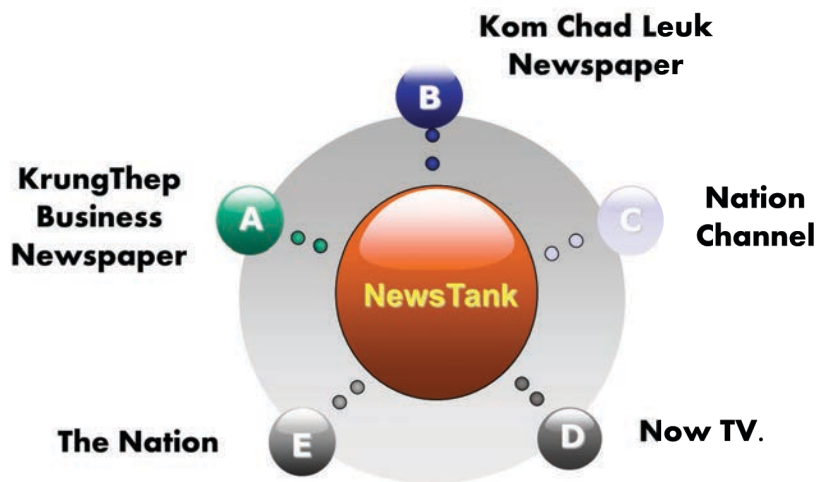
News Medium

To prevent double work or reporters covering same news and sending them to the editorial department, the board issued an order to adjust these changes to enhance efficiency. Since the newspaper team are the company’s strong suit, reporters in charge of other platforms were advised to use news reports and content from the newspaper and adapt them as suited for different platforms.

Prakit Chompookham: editorial director of the Nation Multimedia Group co; ltd said that in the past, the firm’s reporters often “collided” with one another on the field, and the result of which was several reporters were submitting same stories to the editorial departments. The board then decided to form a “neutral” editorial department to oversee the appointments of reporters. Setting up of the editorial department can be classified as adaptation to the convergence era.

The concept that reporters submit their stories and any department can retrieve the story and use them on respective platforms. The concept can be further described with Figure 3.

Figure 3
Convergence Journalism in the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd



Convergence in Organizational level of Nation Broadcasting Corporation Company includes:

Brainstorming

The executive of the Nation Broadcasting Corporation Co; ltd have issued a policy for editors of the company to have a daily meeting to discuss hot issues everyday. The editors will choose interesting topics gathered from the meeting and produce stories and present them in respective platforms. The convergence newsroom at the the Nation tower consists of a crystal wall monitor which shows contents of hot issues being discussed in online medias. The monitor also display tweets from Nation's reporters and allow the editors to catch up with daily issues around the world in the meeting.

Cost-Cutting

Setting up of the 'neutral' editorial department to assign newspaper and TV reporters their daily work, the company was able to cut cost of production by eliminating "double-work" being submitted to the editorial.

Discussion of the Study

From the study on Convergence Journalism the author have laid out these topics to be discussed:

1. The definition of Convergence Journalism, derived by academics in communications field, is "the process in which the editorial department has to adapt to the change in communication technologies, which have created several communication platforms i.e. Facebook, Line, Twitter and Instagram.

The phenomenon in which the editorial department has to adapt and learn about these new technologies is in line with the convergence journalism theory, which influences

the cultural and behavior aspects of the society. The theory also mentioned that reporters in the convergence era has to learn to use new communication technologies that have created platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Line, and Youtube, to remain competitive. The study also reflects the Thomson's (1999) theory, which states that Journalism convergence is the merger of the Internet, the telephone and the television technologies.

Under this theory, the telephone technology in this era can be used in different ways such as video recording and sound recording. Reporters in the convergence era can use the inventions to send stories to the editorial department instantly via the internet. This also reflects the theory of Golding and Murdock (1996,p.79) which discuss the mergers of the technologies in the digital age will affect the working of several organizations, especially the media industry.

The result of the study which states that personnel in the editorial department have to adapt and learn the new technologies individually (convergence in individual level) means that the reporters must make efficient use of new platforms (Facebook, Line, Twitter). While convergence in organization level, the study of the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd, has shown the adaptation of its editorial department. The merging of several editorials into the biggest news team in Thailand has proven productive by collecting stories and presenting them through different platforms. Recently, the company launched a new TV station called Now 26.

2. From the study on the texts available in convergence journalism textbooks shows that the important concepts of convergence journalism includes communication theories, especially modern communication tools, economic and politics theory, which gauge into the phenomenon and changes in culture, society and media's role in shaping the mindset of the population.

As mentioned by several communication academics, such as Zavoina and Reichert (2000), Dailey (2005), Lawson (2003), Appelgren (2004), who agreed that the analyzing convergence should not be solely on technological aspect alone and must take other aspects into consideration. These forementioned aspects include Economics and politics, the affect of communication technology to society, cultural aspect, production of news, the research methodology of studying the change in communication technology. The study of merging of computer and networks, new platforms created by advancement of these technologies and the context of technological evolution and its effect on communication conglomerates.

The study also justifies the political aspects and political economy of media, which explains the changes in the structure of media and the creation of new platforms as well as the focus of the news within the capital rather than the whole country. In other words, the population living in the capital (Bangkok) is likely to benefit more from the news than those living upcountry.

Moreover, the study also justifies the economical theory where the evolution of communication technologies will merge the media industries and with wide selection of platforms, the content of the news are quite similar. This can benefit media businesses in production costs while allowing them more connections to the population. This also allows them to influence the mindset of the society. The

statement further justifies the theories stated by Baran and David (2003,p.234) and Karl Marx's ideology that upper classes and aristocrats exploit their political and media standings to control other institutions in the society. They can make the society to agree with the contents provided through the media and that no matter how advance the technology can evolve, the aristocrats will always be able to control the news and the media.

Politicians and aristocrats continue to use their influence to control the news and blocks the opposition to allow only "pro" for favorable news to reach the masses.

3. From the study conducted on the Nation Broadcasting Corporation co; ltd, and its adaptation to produce news in the convergence era by forming a central news editorial for all departments to share and utilize has helped in eliminating "double work", which justifies the theory of Siaper and Veglis (2012,p.24) which stated that convergence journalism is the phenomenon where editorial departments are merged due to the advancement in communication technologies. It also justifies the theories of Straubhaar and Larose (2000,p.23) which stated that the merging of communication technologies will affect the changes to media conglomerates' policies to remain competitive and affect the working of the journalists. People will have easier access to political news through new platforms. The idea also justifies

Pavlik's theory (1996,p.32), which stated that the advancement of communication technologies will cause the decline of old medias and replace by new platforms and applications.

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