


## ON PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF JOURNALISTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF VIDEO CONTENT

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### ABSTRACT

*The availability of video production tools has been a great incentive for user-generated content. Due to digitalization, traditional genres are being transformed and new models of content distribution are emerging. Video storytelling is widely used to draw attention of the audience to various topics. It allows for creation of engaging content, thus educational institutions should ensure that journalism students know how to use its techniques and are, at the same time, aware of professional standards. Multimedia journalists who acquire multiple skills related to content production need to constantly hone them to remain competitive on the media market, as they have to keep up not only with their colleagues but also with the rising stars of YouTube and other social media influencers. The survey we conducted among the journalism and public relations students of Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University and Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics showed that most of them watch videos mainly for entertainment. It also revealed a certain level of indifference to current affairs and keen interest in culture. In the so called post-truth era, development of critical thinking and understanding of the universal values should be at the core of the future journalists' training regardless of the topics they choose to cover. As audiovisual content becomes more ubiquitous, it is important for students to understand its nature and learn – while working hands-on with their universities' experimental multimedia platforms – how to deliver a high-quality video product that promotes what is true, humane, and what brings people together.*

**Key words:** video storytelling, journalism competencies, diversification of content and video forms, digitalization, media literacy

### INTRODUCTION

A steady rise of online video consumption encourages journalists to employ new forms of presenting information and experiment with genres and technologies to produce appealing and engaging content. Convergence once became a condition for accelerating the process of video diversification, which today demonstrates the interpenetration of traditional media platforms. The transformation of video formats, which is accompanied by the emergence of new content creation techniques, communication systems, and new models of content distribution, continues and gains pace, all due to affordability of equipment and software and accessibility of the internet.

On the one hand, there is this multidimensional character of journalism as a profession that requires a wide range of skills, including video production (hence, the term *multimedia journalist*); on the other hand, there is digitization and development of skills important for filming and editing among non-journalists.

Due to the over-saturation of the media space that significantly reduces our attention span, multimedia journalists must present their stories in a way that would pique the audience's interest in less than three seconds. Video storytelling is used not only for the literary genres of journalism, but also in the news shared on social media.

Video has always been an effective tool for influencing and manipulating a mass audience, and this is what makes it so dangerous. It has become one of the major weapons of propaganda and misinformation, and therefore needs to be carefully studied as part of the media literacy curriculum. Information adequacy and security in both global and regional media spaces is the subject of interdisciplinary research in various fields, e.g. communications, media psychology, sociology of media, media culture, media pedagogy, media law, etc. Contemporary media space allows us not only to consume audiovisual products, but also add and share our own interpretations. With the distribution of audiovisual content being so simple and intuitive, a new screen reality is taking shape, with its own set of values, aesthetic and ethical preferences, and understanding of the place of an individual in the world [1].

### **1. TRANSFORMATION OF VIDEO FORMATS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS AS AN ELEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOURNALISTS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES.**

Analysis of the state-of-the-art research and publications. Today there are great many studies on the unique nature of moving images and the impact of audiovisual content on the mass consciousness, in particular those that are authored by S. Bezklubenko, J. Baudrillard, O. Vartanova, V. Gorpenko, V. Kisin, L. Naidenova, I. Pobedonostseva, G. Chmil, to name just a few. There were also attempts to streamline the concept of “audiovisual / video content” by V. Poznin, D. Protsenko, D. Tupchienko, H. Kulakovska. The theory of TV genres in journalism and the process of their transformation in the modern communication and information spaces are covered in the works of V. Goyan, D. Moj, M. Ordolff, A. Yakovets, D. Plakhta. Our article is largely based on the findings of the Ukrainian and foreign scientists specializing in development of convergent media and cross-media (both theory and practice), namely O. Vartanova, A. Dosenko, J. Gola, A. Kaverina, R. Craig, U. Leshko, B. Potyatynyk, Sh. Primbs, M. Stevenson, I. Tonkikh, M. Chabanenko, V. Shevchenko.

The study of new forms of audiovisuals production among Ukrainian academics and practitioners is mostly reduced to the traditional understanding of its application and is presented by experts in cinematography, in particular V. Viter, G. Desyatnik, L. Naumova, G. Pogrebnyak, R. Shirman. Whereas L. Kruglova, T. Lazutina and E. Manskova, E. Futerman, K. Shergova, G. Shchepilova, A. Shorin provide a contemporary view taking into consideration the emergence of new mixed audiovisual forms, i.e. transformation of the genre with respect to the marketing strategy of a particular media.

Once the number-one player in video production, television has lost its title to the internet. Some journalists stick to traditional TV genres, others are experimenting with different forms. The multimedia framework opened up vast opportunities for the rapid dissemination of all sorts of information. Thanks to this, online media outlets have significant advantages over traditional ones. “The most important consequence of media convergence is the replacement of the product itself: the text, graphics, sound, video are integrated into a single information product, which is denoted by the term “multimedia”[2, 46].

To understand the power of audiovisual content, let's focus on its unique trait, which is to influence the mass consciousness. According to V. Poznin, the dominance of audiovisual information in modern society has given rise to a phenomenon called "new syncretism": "modern media (including television) create a screen product that is perceived as art by the mass audience (even when this product has little in common with the concept of art), as a new mythology and as a discovery of the world, its screen ersatz; and this artificial model is increasingly perceived by the user as more real than the reality itself" [3]. We spend a large part of our days in front of the screen (a computer monitor, tablet, or a mobile device), which leads to psychological and social dependence on information presented to us in such form.

A typical mass viewer prefers information that appeals to his/her emotions, easy to understand and draw conclusions from. Capturing life in an image that reproduces it in a completely natural flow has always been used by the audiovisual media either to convince the viewer of the veracity of information or for manipulation. The impact of audiovisual content on the individual has been studied for a long time. However, with the democratization of the information space spearheaded by social media, it is now becoming increasingly difficult to stay up-to-date. According to D. Protsenko and D. Tupchenko, "the audiovisual realm is changing so fast that researchers are not keeping up with the pace of transformation: today they are just trying to systematize various phenomena of audiovisual culture" [4, 11].

When discussing the concept of audiovisual, we use terms such as "work", "show", "product", "information", "media", "content". We have already tried to single out some of them, formulate the general definition of audiovisual content and identify how it differs from and what it has in common with the concept of video content [1, 3]. There is no uniform definition of audiovisual content, but it can be considered a combination of audiovisual products broadcasted by traditional and convergent media, with some of them specializing exclusively in video production [1].

According to German researchers D. Moj and M. Ordolff, "with the help of moving images, television allows you to look into the fascinating, unknown worlds. Music and ambient sounds bring about emotional moments and dramatic climaxes and convey moods. The author's text structures your thoughts and tells you about the important circumstances and background, or hard facts. In short, information, objective knowledge, as well as experiences and conclusions should be processed and presented to the audience in an appealing form" [5, 13].

With the advent of the internet, researchers have believed that there are certain threats to traditional media. J. Dimmick wrote about this back in 2003 [6]. An interesting work on the interaction of different platforms was published by O. Westlund and M. Fardigh. They argue that publishing content on different platforms allows us to best meet the needs of our audiences that have different preferences [8, 56].

The competition between the latest technologies and the traditional ones has contributed to the emergence of a mixed variety of content, the development of new channels of information as well as new services and platforms. Traditional media became



supplemented with new elements. For example, TV channels announce their programs and provide information about them online. Almost all of the most influential broadcasters have websites, YouTube channels, and social media pages. The business model for video content distribution is changing, as is the process of expanding the range of platforms. At the core of every contemporary content strategy for video are video-sharing platforms, such as YouTube and Vimeo, and social media –such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and, more recently, Tik Tok –where short videos are cherry-picked by AI algorithms for everyone according to their interests. Today, a convergent media journalist needs to adapt the content to different channels of communication [8, 118].

Traditional media have become media corporations and media holdings with convergent newsrooms that produce a great variety of content for every taste. Associated Press publishes about 300 video per week [9] and The New York Times uploads approximately 6 to 12 [10]. Many of their reporters can produce texts and audiovisual content all by themselves.

As German researchers D. Moj and M. Ordolff point out, among the most common options for distributing video are home pages (the easiest way is a YouTube video), video blogs (vlogs), video podcasts (episodes can be viewed both online and offline), video libraries (archives), video platforms, social networks, and live internet broadcasting.

Today there is plenty of user-generated content (UGC), some of which we can classify as citizen journalism (e.g., reports from areas where the war is being waged or the very epicenter of a natural disaster). It is quite often used by professional TV and online journalists as a source for their own coverage[5, 204–205].

In Belarus where the anti-governmental protests are taking place and the state is trying to suppress the freedom of speech with harsh censorship, UGC became vital to support a round-the-clock continuous feed of news.

When thousands of people were protesting in Minsk in August 2020, and when the first blood was spilled, the country's main TV channel, Belarus 1, was broadcasting a detective story. Most of the country's news websites worked intermittently or were blocked. Similarly, Twitter and Facebook experienced numerous attacks. The Telegram channel NEXTA (which in Belarusian means "someone") became an important source of information about what is going on in the country. It has been publishing anonymous photos and videos of users from all over Belarus and providing the last updates to millions of subscribers. Thanks to NEXTA, video reports and a streaming from Belarus are watched all over the world [11].

Rapid development of Telegram channels in Ukraine led to an idea to define it as one of the media under certain conditions. Though the implementation of the new Ukrainian laws "On Media" and "On Audiovisual Services"(developed with the assistance of Council of Europe experts under the Ukraine-EU Agreement), which is supposed to replace the old ones "On Television and Radio Broadcasting" and "On the National Council of Ukraine for Television and Radio Broadcasting", was for now put on hold [12].

Online video consumption differs in terms of age groups. Researchers define five generations: "baby boomers"(1946–1963), "generation X"(1963–1982),

“millennials”(1982–2000), "iGeneration" (2000–2015), and the generation “alpha”(2015–2035) [23]. While the today’s adult audience consumes more textual content through Facebook, the "iGeneration" prefers Instagram and the youngest among us choose video content, mostly short and sweet videos. It is the “alpha” people who are most enthusiastic about Tik Tok. “There is a great demand for motivating and positive content. The media should provide more good news, success stories (especially for those people who now live in the war-torn eastern part of Ukraine), as well as content for children and adolescents, entertainment and educational shows” [13].

According to the statistics provided by the director of the Isobar Ukraine agency H. Zhukovska, more than 50% of Ukrainian citizens uses the internet every day. It’s likely that in the next ten years people will not stop watching TV as it is expanding online establishing even more close relationships with its audience with the help of social networks. O. Mironova, Director of the audience research department of the Television Industry Committee, assures that a typical Ukrainian on average spends 4 hours and 7 minutes a day watching TV (for EU and the whole world this figure is 3 hours 54 minutes and 3 hours, respectively). About 60% of the content consumed by Europeans is related to sports, 18% – entertainment, 13% – movies and TV series, and the rest –less than 10% –the news and live broadcasting [13].

The international online advertising agency Zenith expects that in 2021 users will spend on average 100 minutes a day watching online videos. In Ukraine, at least 55% of the internet users watch videos. The most active audience is 12–29 years old. 59% of them watch online videos at least once a week [14].

G. Shchepilova and L. Kruglova believe that the discussion on the impact of digital technologies on journalism and media revolve around several aspects: we are talking about media as a system, in terms of its business models, content and the audience’s consumption patterns [15]. The traditional linear video consumption has been rapidly transforming. You can watch whatever you like any time, anywhere and on various platforms. “From 2019 until 2025, mobile traffic will be growing by 31% each year. Much of the traffic will come from video,” suggests the research center of the Swedish mobile company Ericsson [16].

In the context of our study, we payed attention to the huge impact of video used to generate information noise and manipulate the audience. D. Boyd, the founder of Data & Society and a visiting professor at New York University, identified the manipulation strategy components for screen entertainment: create a show and use social networks to get the news, adapt the show so that the new audience can easily find it with the help of search engine algorithms, become a “digital victim” to radicalize others [18, 17].

According to the latest Internews poll (August 2020), a third of Ukrainians learn the news from YouTube. They became more active in using this platform—as an alternative to television and Telegram –often to get short videos to keep abreast of current events [19]. The task of the contemporary media is to employ the best of all possible forms of journalism to become the counterweight to the aforementioned. There is one which is incredibly powerful, captivating, and syncretic: video storytelling. It contains both journalistic and artistic

elements and allows for application of a wealth of expressive means, such as moving picture able to convey emotion, color, rhythm, sound effects, music, etc.

Why stories? The authors of the book “Storynomics” R. McKee and T. Gerace looked for the explanation in the field of neurobiology. Scientists looked into the part of the brain called Brodmann area 10, which is responsible for memory and decision-making: “When a story engages the mind, its virtual events play out in the theater of BA10. Memory then stows these ostensible events in an “as if” state alongside real-life events.” That is, the mind combines patterns of real and unreal events and creates a basis for future action. The mind creates stories to bridge the gap between itself and the universe, between itself and the past, present and future like magicians who have just touched something unknown, the authors conclude [19,93]. McKee and Gerace remind that information and a story are not the same. The difference is that information lists what happened, contains a dry list of facts, and a story explains how –it connects the dots, which is so important for every human being, for we can’t survive in a place bereft of meaning [19, 8].

R. Pratten in the process of developing video content for transmedia storytelling proposes to focus on the following aspects: concept, plot, synopsis, design, as well as channels (story delivery), project evaluation and methods of measuring the audience’s engagement [20].

## **2. CONTENT ANALYSIS AND SURVEY OF FUTURE JOURNALISTS REGARDING OFFICIAL AND STUDENT MEDIA: CONTENT, ISSUES, VIDEO STORYTELLING**

For content produced by journalists who use story telling techniques it is important to promote universal values and present the role models for human behavior based on humanistic ideals. An example of this is Chastime, the video project showing real human stories. One of a great many of them is a story of an Australian man Ash Graham who is looking for his dog lost in a forest fire. Despite the miserable living conditions after the fire, he doesn’t leave the area and keeps looking for his best friend [21]. With intimate close-ups, details, and soulful music, the video, which has been viewed for more than 4,000 times, evokes emotions and is very touching.

Modern media journalists who create video stories of real people, are getting involved in the process of outlining and solving important problems in society, including gender issues. For example, Coca-Cola launched a multimedia project “#JaZmožu” in which famous Ukrainian women recorded short video interviews, which were then published on YouTube, where they told their life stories [22]. “#Vidkrytinibyvperše” is a similar video project offering conversations about openness, optimism, and the ability to appreciate important things in the “new normal” Covid-19 reality [23].

The 1 + 1 TV channel launched a video project “Women: the key to peace”, which tells about the important role of women in resolving conflicts and peace talks. Its goal is to show real stories of unique women, to prove that there should be more of them in power and international institutions [24].

Ukrainian news agency / public association “Suspilne oko”(Public Eye) has created a number of video stories on various topics: “Success Stories”, “People’s Heroes”, “Unconquered”, “Good News” and distributes them via social media [25].

YouTube has more than 1 billion visits each month and continues to gain momentum. According to a study commissioned by Google, for millennials, YouTubers are more influential than traditional celebrities, including TV personalities. 40% of the platform’s subscribers who belong to the Generation Y say that their favorite content creators understand them even better than their friends.

With fast-paced nature of the media, in some situations, video stories published on social media help to spread false information which gets picked up even by journalists.

In the end of August 2020, Andrei Șelaru, 19-year-old vlogger known online as Selly, fabricated a video to make it look like he had been involved in a car accident and sent it to the editorial office of the most-watched programme in Romania. In a few hours, it was all over the news. Șelaru then explained that by this experiment he wanted to demonstrate how easy it is to prank the mainstream publications into anything[26].

In the beginning of November 2020, nearly 300,000 Americans kept an eye on the YouTube channel of 29-year-old Millie Weaver, an ex-correspondent for the conspiracy theory website Info wars, who offered her right-wing commentary on the results of the presidential election. She called it fraud and as a proof of illegal ballot stuffing aired footage of a man pulling a red wagon into a ballot-counting center in Detroit. In reality, it was a cameraman pulling his equipment [27].

During the pandemic, the exposure to video content has been growing. YouTube has removed hundreds of thousands videos containing misinformation about the corona virus and lockdown. Together with Facebook and Twitter, it is taking increasingly more aggressive action to limit the reach of fakes, but live-streamed videos that attract a lot of views are difficult to scrutinize, in part because it is harder to search video content as opposed to text.

Taking into consideration the sheer volume of sources competing for our attention, it is important that we acknowledge our limitations and always ask ourselves why are we shown what we’re watching and try to divide facts from opinions.

Development of critical thinking and understanding of the universal values are crucial for the education of future journalists.

At the Institute of Journalism of Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, there is a TV journalism research and production workshop where well-known journalist sand students work together on creating joint video products. This creative experimental laboratory, which brings together experienced professionals and beginners, has created a number of successful projects and is unique for Ukraine. A great example is SlovOpys [28]. Founded in 2013 as an initiative promoting interesting and rare Ukrainian words though short videos published on YouTube, it has been rapidly gaining popularity and now has its own YouTube channel, website and pages on Facebook and Instagram. Its videos were produced by students, teachers, famous experts, linguists, journalists and celebrities [29].

As of the end of 2020, SloVOpys has nearly 60,000 subscribers on social networks. This result was achieved without any commercial tools. This multimedia cultural project is among the top-5 Ukrainian resources for learning the Ukrainian language (according to the leading Ukrainian media watch-dog organization Detector Media). Its audience consists of mostly young people focused on self-development. The project has a wide geographical coverage: in addition to Ukraine, its supporters are scattered around 45 countries (the United States, Italy, Poland, Canada, Japan and many others). The project produces other types of content too, but video storytelling remains at its core. Its main video segments cover the following topics:

- Rarely used Ukrainian words, their etymology and meanings
- Ukrainians share their childhood memories related to certain words
- How to use the words correctly and avoid mistakes
- The importance of learning the native language
- Idioms, their meaning, and how to use them in different real-life situations
- Ukrainian traditions and crafts [30].

SloVOpys also has its “Video dictionary” with six sections: “Forgotten words”, “Modern words”, “New words”, “My favorite Ukrainian word”, and “Language etiquette”.

SloVOpys became an incentive and means for thousands of people to learn about the Ukrainian language and culture. So what did the use of video storytelling help the team behind the project to achieve? It significantly expanded its audience and helped to build a community of like-minded individuals united by a common goal: be literate.

Another successful project launched by the Institute of Journalism of Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University is *Live is true*, which is an experimental video production platform where the classic methods of storytelling meet the latest techniques and know-hows [31].

The project operates on 3 platforms: YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Its four main segments are:

- Human-interest stories—about people and their social initiatives
- Reviews—about various events that are of interest to students
- Inspiration—about art, culture, and creativity
- Live differently—about staying optimistic despite the pandemic and lockdown
- In addition:
- LiT\_news—a brief news digest focusing on the Ukrainian cinema, festivals, and all things video.
- LiT\_review—a review of movies and series about manipulating the public opinion and fake news.
- LiT\_interview—short interviews with people who produce videos for Live is true, in which they talk about their ideas and share their point of view on certain issues [32].

*Live is true* was developed as part of the audio and video production curriculum and has proven to be an effective way to put theory into practice and bring the university's education closer to the needs of the market and help students to master new skills maximizing their competitive advantage [33]. The results of the project showed that it

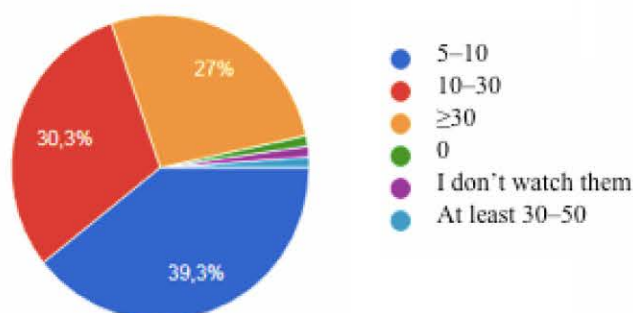


successfully fulfills its goals : forms a creative community within the university, give students opportunities to discover their creative potential, help journalists develop competencies necessary for producing high-quality audiovisual content.

To better understand the video consumption patterns of “Journalism” and “Advertising and Public Relations” students, we conducted a survey in Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University and Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics.

It showed that 46.1% and 39.6% of young people watch videos for 1–2 hours and 2–3 hours per day, respectively. The majority of respondents (66.3%) find them on social networks. Most of respondents say that they spend not more than 10% of their time on videos covering current affairs produced by journalists.

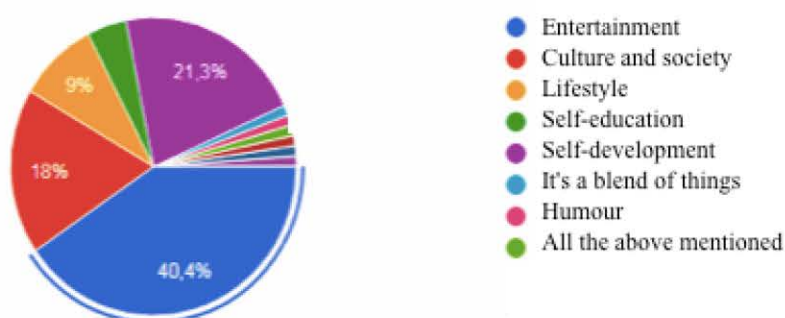
How much of your time (in percentage) you spend on watching videos produced by journalists that cover current affairs?



89 answers

40.4% of students prefer video entertainment, 21.3% video on self-development, 18% on culture and society, 9% life style video.

What topic does the video you prefer cover?



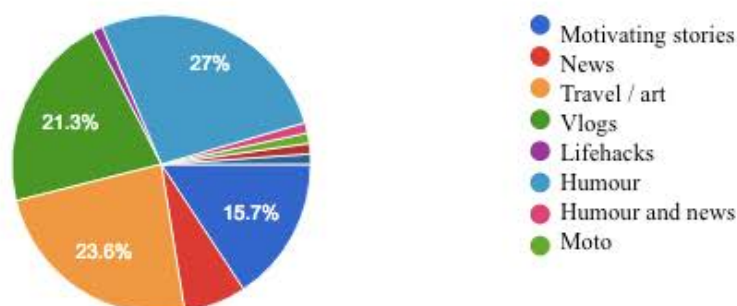
89 answers

The most in-demand among types of video are TV series and movies (37.1%), but news and interviews are still watched by 23.5%.

Opinions were divided on the attractiveness of video content created using storytelling techniques: 57.3% consider this form to be the most interesting, 40.4% on the contrary, yet note that it is important. On social networks, 27% watch motivational videos, 21.3% prefer vlogs, 23.6% opt for videos about travel and art.

What video do you watch most often on social networks?

89 responses



Thus, most future journalists and PR professionals who participated in our survey spend about 2.5 hours a day watching videos, mainly on social networks, mostly for entertainment, self-development, or self-motivation. Current affairs are not among their priorities, although almost a quarter of respondents watch the news.

## CONCLUSIONS

In today's media space, everyone has the opportunity to find their own "information bubble" as online there is content for every taste. Technologies and video formats as well as communication systems and distribution channels continue to evolve. Today multimedia journalists who are able to produce various types of content have a competitive advantage over their colleagues who don't know how to make a video. But even for them it is not easy to keep up with the rising stars of YouTube and other popular online platforms. Therefore journalism students have to constantly hone their audiovisual communication skills that are among their essential professional competencies, know their audience, study its preferences, and try to apply the latest know-hows to video production.

The survey we conducted among the journalism and public relations students of Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University and Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics showed that most of them watch videos on social networks, and mainly for entertainment. It also revealed a certain level of indifference to current affairs. However, the young people seem to be particularly interested in self-development and culture.

In our opinion, educational institutions that provide training programs for future journalists should focus first and foremost on media literacy, which implies the development of critical thinking, and understanding of the universal values. As audiovisual content becomes more ubiquitous, it is important that media professionals understand its nature and learn – by applying a wide range of techniques and working hands-on with experimental multimedia platforms – how to produce audiovisual content of different forms and substance to debunk what is false, immoral, and polarizing and promote what is true, humane, and what brings people together.

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