
UNIT 14 MOBILE JOURNALISM

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14.0 INTRODUCTION

As a student of journalism and mass communication, you would have observed that journalists all over the world have adapted themselves to diverse technologies to excel in their profession. New technologies have immensely helped them to upgrade their professional skills and perform better in their vocation.

Mobile technology in general and smartphones, in particular, have helped them make their jobs faster and effective. Online editions and mobile applications of newspapers, magazines, radio and television, the newest news gathering device, have evolved and facilitated their performance over the years. Journalists have also progressed with the efficient support of the 3G, and 4G enabled Smartphones. Thus, smartphones have proved to be the real game-changer in modern journalism.

Mobile journalism is fast emerging as a new creative trend in the media industry; it has revolutionised the way news is gathered and disseminated to diverse audiences. Reporters and correspondents are trained to handle their mobile devices to broadcast news content using smartphones, tablets, digital cameras and laptops. Since the emergence of smartphones, news media personnel have become more mobile and independent. 'Pop-up' news gathering has become the order of the day among the media industry, where a single reporter can report from his/her beat.

In this Unit, we shall discuss the concept and opportunities of Mobile Journalism, also known as 'MoJo' and how it's different from Citizen Journalism. We shall also study the tools and accessories required for MoJo and the potential professional challenges it poses. We will critically examine how reporters and news organisations use fast-emerging mobile devices to gather news and disseminate it through diverse media forms.

14.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- define mobile journalism;
- identify the tools needed for shooting, editing and distribution of the content for mobile journalism;
- describe the process of using smartphones for MoJo;
- outline opportunities and challenges of MoJo; and critically assess the ethical issues in MoJo.

14.2 WHAT IS MOBILE JOURNALISM?

Mobile Journalism (MoJo) is a form of digital reporting where trained journalists use mobile devices to gather news. A mobile device refers to a Smartphone or a Tablet with iOS or Android operating systems. Reporters use mobile devices as tools to shoot, edit and broadcast news content. Media persons have become more mobile and independent in executing their assignments using Smartphones. It is gradually gaining popularity among reporters and news organisations as it helps the organisations to spend less on hiring crew and on expensive equipment.

MoJo is cost-effective as smartphones are more convenient than traditional cameras that are heavy and require additional human resources to operate. Sometimes, it is not possible to send Outside Broadcast Vans (OBV) to cover news breaks at several spots simultaneously. It is during such situations that smartphones come in handy for timely coverage of news occurrences. As smartphones are thoroughly equipped with built-in audio-video settings with different MoJo apps, reporters can easily shoot, edit, and upload their news content on the web or their organisation.

The term 'Citizen Journalist' has become exceedingly popular in recent times. Newsrooms all over India, in fact, the world, have opened their doors for citizens to report civic, social, political and, other reader-interest issues. Citizen Journalism has also helped establish vital links between the government and common people, as they offer suggestions to the government through various media platforms. Since it is not humanly possible for reporters to be present at every news location whenever a news event occurs, it is the citizens who send reports of the event using their mobile phones. In many cases, television news channels have acknowledged the use of footage sent by citizen journalists, attributing the source.

From company executives to the rickshaw puller, vegetable vendor, daily-wage labourer, everybody can own a smartphone these days. Owning a smartphone has nowadays has empowered common people with the ability to express themselves more openly than ever before. This increased access to mobile phones has facilitated citizen journalists enormously to perform their job promptly. They can instantly record the news event and upload it to web outfits or news media establishments. However, it is important to be responsible before uploading videos and audios, as truth and credibility are essential features of objective and ethical journalism. The same is expected from Mobile journalists. It is also important to verify, check and recheck the facts under coverage before uploading.

Strengths of Mobile Journalism

It is often said that owning a smartphone is like carrying a portable newsroom. There are several occasions where breaking news has been flashed using mobile phones and exclusive news stories uploaded on the web from all over the world.

MoJo is gradually becoming popular with journalists, media, and news broadcast organisations because of its various benefits. Of late, the work of a journalist has become much easier and faster, thanks to smartphones. The benefits of mobile journalism are that it is prompt, helps reporters beat deadlines, and is affordable. Also, smartphones are easier to carry, and trained reporters can broadcast breaking news or events from unlikely locations, where the broadcast crew find it hard to reach on time.

MoJos have been able to capture shocking incidents and sights while happening and have drawn international attention. Accidents and disasters happen without warning, and in such cases, smartphones capture the authentic moments of the story. There are numerous opportunities for mobile journalism where videos can capture historical moments, which is instantly transmitted to the web. You may recall videos of people or cattle marooned in floods in different parts of the country or landslides taking place in the hills of Uttarakhand captured on smartphones making a way in news bulletins.

Smartphones have made the life of reporters easier as they have become 'mobile' in their work and can work independently without being assisted by

a large production crew. It is also cost-effective for media organisations as they do not have to hire additional professionals and instead spend funds on modern equipment for improved production techniques.

Mobile journalists can also go to those places where it's difficult to place camera equipment and hold interviews of people who are uncomfortable facing the production crews. It has been observed that most people are willing to speak in front of smartphone cameras, while they get conscious or nervous in front of professional cameras with large crews. Even from remote places, reporters can use their smartphones to cover news events without depending on computers or heavy broadcast equipment. The LIVE news broadcast with the help of a smartphone is generally viewed as authentic coverage because people trust live reports of news events.

Mobile journalists must first be trained on using a smartphone for news gathering, editing, and broadcasting before being sent for field reporting. Once a reporter is trained in MoJo, it becomes convenient to telecast exclusive news from any corner of the world.

Activity – 1

Identify some news items in a television news bulletin using smartphones. Analyse the types and focus of these stories.

Check Your Progress: 1

- Note:** 1) Use the space given below for your Answer.
2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What is Mobile Journalism?

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2. List some strengths of Mobile Journalism?

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14.3 TOOLS AND ACCESSORIES

While citizens can record any event, trained reporters must handle the smartphone camera for professionally appreciable results. They are expected to follow the process of news selection and collection and the ethics of journalism. The following are some equipment required for MoJo:

14.3.1 Equipment Required

Smartphones: Any smartphone with iOS and Android with good Internet connectivity can be used for Mojo. These days, smartphones are available with a high-quality video and audio features.

Tablets: Tablets are also equipped with high-quality audio and video facilities to record so that the news can be live-streamed easily.

Digital Cameras: Digital cameras, like smartphones, are light, convenient, and easy to carry. High-quality images and videos can be recorded using digital cameras, later conveniently transferred to the computers and/or laptops for streaming online.

Tripod: For stability, a light tripod is required. A tripod mount is also needed to support the smartphone.

Grips: It is attached to the tripod to move the camera around as you film.

Microphones: A clip-on microphone is useful in capturing audio in an environment where it's noisy and windy.

Video Light: All smartphones come with in-built camera lights, but external light is also crucial for better results. However, natural light gives good results while shooting outdoors, compared to artificial lights.

Power-Bank and Extra Batteries: Smartphone batteries do not last long when it is used for shooting videos. Therefore, it is always advisable to carry a power bank and extra batteries for shooting.

Backpack: A light, sturdy backpack is needed to carry all the equipment.

14.3.2 Mobile Applications

Mobile Applications for MoJo are more useful than other audio-video editing applications, which are convenient to learn and use by mobile journalists. To master the software, users have to be adequately trained. These apps help in recording, editing and distributing the news content.

14.3.3 Webcasting

Webcasting is the same as the LIVE broadcast of an event with the help of cameras. In webcasting, a mobile phone is used to do LIVE coverage of an event with the help of Social media platforms. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are popular social platforms where live streaming of videos can be done for news channels and independent reporters. Even mainstream mass media often rely on social media to reach their target audiences.

14.4 PRODUCTION ASPECTS OF MOBILE JOURNALISM

Shooting videos for journalism has to be taken seriously and done professionally. Reporters have to follow certain rules while shooting and preparing storyboards with proper sequencing. There are certain production

aspects that every trained journalist need to follow to produce quality news content.

14.4.1 Shots

While shooting for news content, it's important to know the shots and present them professionally. A shot is a single photographed scene taken from continuous filming. It is a single piece of action taken by the camera. There are several types of shots:

Extreme Wide: It is also known as the 'establishing shot' – to show the viewer the scene's surroundings being recorded.

Wide: Popularly known as a long shot, it includes a full view of the scene or shows the full body from head to toe.

Mid-shot: A shot framing the person from their head to their knees.

Medium: Medium shots are usually taken during interviews or dialogue sequences. This shot is important to capture the emotion and body language of the participants. This particular shot is aimed at showing the object from head to waistline.

Medium Close-up: The shot focuses on the face of the subject. It is taken from the head and cuts off around the chest. This shot is also commonly used during interviews with a focus on the subject and not the surroundings.

Close-up: This shot shows the subject from the head to the neck. The frame is filled with the subjects' faces while it captures the emotions and expressions.

Extreme Close-up: This shot focuses on a particular part of the subject – such as the eyes. It frames only a part of the face to highlight the emotions during the interview.

Two-shot: This shot is often used in interviews to bring into the frame both the interviewer and interviewee.

Over the Shoulder: The shot is taken from behind a person taking the interview of the subject and may also show the interviewer. The shot is commonly cut in between the conversations, alternating the view between the two speakers.

Reverse over the Shoulder: The interviewer's frame is taken from over the shoulder of the interviewee.

Cut-ways: During interviews, extra shots are taken of the hands and eyes engaged in an activity to create variety and give context to certain points. Cut-ways can be taken for a maximum of 10 seconds because, during the edit, only 3 or 4 seconds will be used for the content.

Overlay: The shot is taken of different scenes from internal and external locations that support the story. Overlay shots are important during edits.

14.4.2 Sequencing and Storyboards

Sequences are important to support the visual narrative of the content. It is a well-established form of narrating the story with a video. Sequences are formed using different types of shots that we have discussed above.

Storyboards or Filming for Editing Shots: Storyboards are graphic illustrations of stories created before any film shot and are used in filmmaking, documentary making and dramatic films. The drawings are the sequence of shots to make the edit much easier. The series of graphic drawings are also known as filming for edit. It is impossible to create a storyboard for live events, but it's useful when the story is offline and based on news content. A storyboard will have some of the following information:

Title of the story:

Date:.....

S. No.	Voice-over	Type of shots	Bytes

Those who wish to use MoJo professionally should read more in this upcoming area and attend seminars to enhance your skills to become successful professional MoJos.

Activity – 2

Prepare a storyboard of a feature of two minutes duration on the implementation of Poshan Abhiyaan in a neighbouring area. Before proceeding with the shoot, write a voice-over, description of the shots and bytes as explained above.

14.5 CHALLENGES OF MOBILE JOURNALISM

With the advent of 2G, 3G, and 4G technologies in India, mobile companies produce high-end smartphones at affordable costs. The prices of smartphones are quite competitive, and consumers have wide choices to pick and choose the brand of their preference. Let's discuss some of the challenges faced by MoJos.

Several technological, financial and logistical issues may arise while shooting with mobile phones. Some of these are listed below:

Battery Related: The average life of a smartphone's battery is low, especially while shooting. To avoid abrupt disconnection amid important shoots of an event, carrying extra batteries and chargers is advisable. Solar batteries can be used to prevent such challenges. A power bank can also be helpful in such situations.

Quality of Shots (4K or HD): Mobile Journalists should be familiar with the quality and standard of shots because whatever the medium of output is, it is

highly important to shoot with 4K or high definition cameras. 4K is also known as Ultra HD, and its dimensions are 3840 x 2160 pixels. It is called 4K because its pixel size is four times the resolution of HD that has a pixel size of 1920 x 1080 pixels. While shooting with mobile phones, the format should be set before the shoot commences. While buying a mobile phone, it is important to check for high-resolution camera phones.

Internet Related Issues: Despite the fourth generation 4G-network connectivity, sometimes due to poor network, journalists have to face problems in broadcasting live news content. While covering a live event or managing live chats, uninterrupted Internet connectivity is very important. If there is no Internet connectivity, it becomes very difficult to execute the job.

Reporting Challenging Situations: MoJos may face uncertain situations. For example, while covering protest demonstrations or riots where police or agitators indulge in violent clashes, police may use water canon to thwart the agitators. The reporters could become victims of such circumstances in which expensive reporting equipment and smartphones could get damaged or even destroyed. To safeguard one's equipment and gadgets during such situations, it is advisable to cover the smartphone with a waterproof casing. Selfie sticks and mobile tripods should also be taken adequate care of.

Additionally, reporters may not be able to send live feeds to their stations. If there is no connectivity, reporters can look for a place with a Broadband connection or a Wi-Fi facility. If reporters cannot send live feeds, they can record the events and send the tapes or the clips at a later stage, when internet connectivity is restored.

Theft of mobile phones: In the event of theft, valuable inputs and news recordings already collected may get lost; therefore, it is always advisable to keep mobile phones safe to avoid theft or loss. The recording should be transferred to Google drive or saved in a pen drive. An extra mobile phone helps during emergencies.

Quality and Cost of Smartphones: The prices of smartphones are currently very competitive, but the quality of cameras can often be compromised. Smartphones are designed to be user-friendly with diverse inbuilt applications which feature advanced audio-video settings. People can shoot images and videos and share them with social media subscribers, becoming active social media reporters and citizen journalists. While the common people have the freedom to choose any smartphone, MoJos should not compromise on the quality of cameras. They should survey the market before opting for a brand of smartphone that is equipped with an inbuilt high-resolution camera and supports the apps needed for production and editing.

Check Your Progress: 2

Note: 1) Please use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What are the challenges of Mobile Journalism?

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2. What points should be kept in mind while buying a smartphone for MoJo?

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14.6 ETHICAL ISSUES IN MOBILE JOURNALISM

As discussed in the previous sections, Mobile Journalism has emerged as an integral part of journalism today. Hence, certain professional standards of journalism need to be adhered to during gathering and broadcasting news or an opinion piece.

14.6.1 Credibility

Though reporters have the freedom to shoot and film, edit and broadcast news coverage through smartphones, the standards of professional journalism must be maintained at all times. Multifarious skills and deep knowledge of regional and national issues for journalists is an essential prerequisite to approach the right source of information, report it accurately and follow the basic rules of news reporting.

Reporters should consider smartphones as just a newsgathering tool and must not forget the basic tenets of news writing. If a mobile journalist does not follow the professional regulations, s/he could be accused of defying fundamental norms of professional journalism. The Information Technology Act, the Official Secrets Act, laws relating to defamation and contempt of legislature, and contempt of court are some of the most stringent laws and must be abided by at any cost. Any infringement of any of these could cause serious damage to the credibility of the news organisation and the MoJo reporting stories containing any such elements.

14.6.2 Fake News

One of the biggest threats to the news industry today is 'fake news'. The Internet is flooded with information on social media platforms, so it is very important to separate genuine videos from fake ones. Many fake videos go viral and may lead to heinous crimes such as lynching, abduction, rape followed by murders or suicides. Therefore, the role of a trained MoJo reporter would be to comprehend the credibility of the news content and check, recheck the accuracy of the subject being covered.

MoJo reporters should endeavour to be impartial and fair in their narrative. While covering news stories, they should try to contact as many sources and parties involved as possible. Unauthorised and non-licensed versions of mobile applications should not be used. The credibility of the content is very important; therefore, it becomes imperative for trained reporters to use apps with great caution and take due care while shooting and editing the journalistic content.

14.6.3 Sensitivity

MoJos are often compelled to work under tremendous pressures. However, they should not be overwhelmed by their situation and unduly dramatise the events, which might deviate from the real situation. While covering serious events, such as rapes, murders, road accidents or other heinous crimes, proper precautions should be taken. Reporters should not reveal the identities of victims of sexual harassment or their relatives. It is always safe to avoid live coverage, and footages not allowed by law should not be shared or uploaded on the web.

Reporters are expected to know how, where and when they should capture videos. Though it is very tempting to push the red button on the mobile phone to capture critical moments and sensitive times, it is better to restrict oneself from transmitting any such information which might pose serious threats to the public and national security. They should strictly follow the guidelines laid down by the Press Council of India and other regulatory bodies.

<p>Activity – 3 Interview of 2 minutes duration with a public figure of your area, with the help of your mobile phone. Note that, Care needs to be taken so that both the interviewer and interviewee are visible in the frames (Selfie stick of your mobile phone will be helpful in this exercise).</p>
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Check Your Progress: 3

Note: 1) Please use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Why should Mobile Journalism follow the codes of ethics of journalism?

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2. What is 'fake news'?

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3. How fake news can be identified?

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14.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you were exposed to different aspects of mobile journalism, which is a form of digital reporting using mobile devices. You have also learned the strengths of MoJo and how it can be optimally utilised to create news content using professional formats and techniques. Mobile journalists face challenges, and issues related to the authenticity and credibility of mobile journalism, including its ethical aspects, were also explained.

While smartphones enable users to take video shots of whatever is happening around them, it has propelled media experts to understand the complexities of news being circulated without any firm basis and truth. Therefore, certain essential criteria need to be followed by Journalists. In this regard, it was emphasised that mobile journalists should consider smartphones as just a tool for gathering news content and take adequate care in reporting. The report should be accurate, unbiased and obtained through ethical means without violating any rules or laws of the land. It is always advisable to contact the authorities concerned for their permission to avoid any legal issues.

14.8 FURTHER READINGS

1. Adorna A, 2018, Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide. Sage Publications.
2. Burum, Ivo & Quinn, Stephen., 2018, Mojo: The Mobile Journalism Handbook, Routledge Publication.
3. Hill Steve & Bradshaw Paul, 2018, Mobile Journalism, Producing news for social and interactive media, Taylor & Francis Publication.
4. Stephens Mitchell, 2018, Beyond News: The future of Journalism, Kindle Edition
5. Montgomery R, 2014: A Field Guide for Mobile Journalism. Visual Editors

17.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. Mobile Journalism or MoJo is a form of digital reporting in which trained journalists use mobile devices to gather news. A mobile device may be a smartphone or tablet with iOS or Android operating systems.

2. MoJo is gradually gaining popularity among reporters and news organisations as such news content can be easily shot, edited and broadcast with just one mobile device. The growing popularity of MoJo can be attributed to the use of a single mobile device for newsgathering. Smartphones have made the life of reporters much easier as they can work independently without depending on a large production crew. They can also use smartphones to cover news events without depending on computers or heavy camera equipment. It is also cost-effective for media organisations that do need not hire many professionals.

Check Your Progress: 2

1. Mobile Journalism has some technical, logistical and financial challenges. The average battery life of smartphones drains fast during video shooting, and the reporter could miss crucial shots while filming if the battery runs out. It is, therefore, advisable to carry extra batteries and chargers. Solar batteries can be used in this regard. At times due to various reasons, internet connectivity may get completely cut off. In such situations, reporters are not able to send live feeds to their stations.
2. Markets are flooded with smartphones of varied qualities and features. While buying a phone for MoJo, one should ensure to buy a good quality phone with a high-resolution camera, and the device should support apps that may be needed for production and editing.

Check Your Progress: 3

1. Mobile Journalism follows the process of gathering news and broadcast content and high standards of journalism. Reporters should consider smartphones as just a tool for gathering news content and follow all ethics of journalism. The report should be accurate, unbiased and obtained through ethical means without violating any rules or laws as per the constitution of India.
2. Fake news has become a great menace and threat to the news industry all over the world. Fake news is misinformation and often does not have any credibility or a reliable source. With a huge amount of information available on the Internet, it is difficult to differentiate between real and fake news. The role of a trained MoJo reporter would be to understand the accuracy of news content and conduct research on the subject to be filmed.
3. Fake news can be identified by checking the content and the source from where it is coming and cross-checking the information received from other sources.