

Internet on Smartphones: Exploring the Potential and Challenges for News Media Professionals

Nikhil Eyeroor

Research Scholar, SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Uma Kanjilal

SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

Abstract - The emergence of social web friendly high-end mobile phones and gadgets add fuel to the realization of the next generation journalism. The capability and performance of Smartphones have improved considerably since their first introduction, and are no longer simple voice centric devices. Smartphones now provide computing power equivalent to that of personal computers of a few years ago and can be used for several purposes. We are only at the start of the revolution. This study explore the possibilities of Smartphone in enriching the professional activities of news media professionals.

Key Terms: *News Media, Smartphones, Mobile phones, Internet , Social Media*

I. INTRODUCTION

There is an estimated 2 billion mobile phones in the world today and the mobile phone is seen as an essential accessory to maintain an active social life. It is interesting to understand that about 80 % of the world's population lies within the range of cellular network. There has never been a technology as available to citizens as mobile telephony. Mobile Phones aren't just a device for communicating each other. Nowadays and in fact, in recent years there have been quite a few successful examples of them being used for professional activities.

Mobile Phone Revolution

The origin of mobile phones can be found in the early days of the development of radio. The inventor of the first practical mobile phone is considered to be Martin Cooper, a Motorola researcher. In 1984 Bell labs had developed the technology of the cellular phone. By 1980s mobile phones based on 1 G technology become quite popular. The first generation differed from the modern mobile phones is that 1 G phones were essentially analogue.

The 2G digital standard was launched in Finland in 1991. This utilized digital signals and was based on the new popular GSM technology. SMS was introduced in 1993 in Finland. Ever since them, mobile phones have not looked back. 2G give way 3 G and 4 G revolutions.

The major development occurred when cell phones gained the capabilities of personal digital assistants (PDAs) and merged connectivity. The different types of connectivity available through mobile devices are: wide area network (WAN), local area network (LAN), and personal area network (PAN). The progress of the mobile technology is based on the development of set of protocols which standardize the mobile services. GSM, UMTS, GPRS, SMS, MMS, WAP.

It is assumed that by the end of 2014 the number of mobile-connected devices will exceed the number of people on earth. The revolution brings with it a new generation of mobile only Internet users, who only access the Internet through web enabled mobile devices and it can be called as Smartphones.

II. SMARTPHONE

A Smartphone is a mobile phone built on a mobile operating system, with more advanced computing capability than a feature phone. The first Smartphone combined the functions of a personal digital assistant (PDA) with a mobile phone. Later models added the functionality of portable media players, low-end compact digital cameras, pocket video cameras, and GPS navigation units to form one multi-use device. Many modern Smartphones also include high-resolution touch screens and web browsers that display standard web pages as well as mobile-optimized sites. High-speed data access is provided by Wi-Fi and mobile broadband. In recent years, the rapid development of mobile app markets and of mobile commerce has been drivers of Smartphone adoption.

The mobile operating systems (OS) used by modern Smartphone include Google's Android, Apple's iOS, Nokia's Symbian, RIM's BlackBerry OS, Samsung's Bada, Microsoft's Windows Phone, Hewlett-Packard's webOS, and embedded Linux distributions such as Maemo and MeeGo. Such operating systems can be installed on many different phone models, and typically each device can receive multiple OS software updates over its lifetime. A few other upcoming operating systems are Mozilla's Firefox OS, Canonical Ltd.'s Ubuntu Phone, and Tizen.

Social media and Smartphones

Social networking proved to be a particularly popular activity on Smartphones with several brands demonstrating

exceptionally high engagement, in some cases higher than the corresponding time spent by users via traditional web access. Smartphones continued to drive the mobile landscape in 2012, finally reaching 50-percent market penetration in 2012. The Android platform also hit a 50-percent milestone as it captured the majority of the Smartphone market for the first time. The innovation and sophistication of these mobile devices is somewhat parallel to social media technology due to the rapid adoption of Smartphone based internet access. The average person looking at a Smartphone screen right now is more likely to come across latest news through a Facebook or Twitter app than through any other news source. After all, the ubiquitous nature of a Smartphone is synonymous to social media. Nevertheless a Smartphone and the social online sphere are important resources at the present time.

Smartphones and News media

Social media, a combination of interactive tools on internet for sharing information in various forms, is grown into a vital tool for news media professionals to find out leads to news, sources, feel the atmosphere of public opinion over the information and even conduct journalistic activities for producing news. News is no longer gathered exclusively by reporters and turned into a story but emerges from an ecosystem in which journalists, sources, readers and viewers exchange information.

Smartphones has left the status of the new born child now, it is helping newsmedia professionals in production, distribution and consumption of news even from the palm or in the pocket. Smartphones offer a unique and unobtrusive way to record video and audio, take stills, identify location via GPS or meta-data coordinates, and communicate with sources and media organizations. News media professionals can film in places where camera crews are banned, or use Smartphones to interview people who might be uncomfortable with a full television crew. It is note essential to carry large and very expensive equipment for their routine tasks.

The handheld devices could serve as computer replacements in which currently, there is multitude of devices available ranging from PDAs to video players to cell phones. Add-ons to mobile devices such as cameras, barcode readers, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are also popular.

Why Smartphone for news media professionals?

Now internet has become a common platform for all types of media and Smartphone has become the facilitator. Print and electronic media meets in common point now. After a news programme each and every news media guide their clients to their web pages for detailed video reports. Research published by Ofcom, the UK telecoms regulator, has shown that almost half of Britons aged 12 to 15 own a Smartphone such as an iPhone, BlackBerry or Android

mobile. This study is applicable in our context also. This trend is occurring world-wide. As teenagers become adults they will continue to use their Smartphone, which has implications for media organizations around the world seeking to interact with these people. In a mobile media world, it is important for a news media professional to be able to quickly adapt to technology advancements in the field.

The small screens of mobile devices have created a need for different formats and styles for news, too. Sentences and paragraphs tend to be shorter, headlines and subheads need to do more work, and stories are concise so that consumers can read quickly on a small screen. Also, more videos and photos are used along with text.

The new generation news media professionals should be with the potential to manipulate Smartphone functionalities. Now Smartphones are with reasonable price and allows internet access equivalent functional to personal computers.

Professional advantages of Smartphones

1. Act as a media platform combining audio visual recording tools with networked communication.
2. Images can be captured and disseminated around the world within seconds.
3. Ubiquitous nature of Smartphone positively affected the practical process of newsgathering.
4. Smartphone allow location-based information (Geo-location and location-based content Geographic journalism)
5. Live Reporting is possible with Smartphone.
6. Greater Portability.
7. Distinct line between those who consume the news and those who produce becomes indistinct.
8. Broadcasting capabilities. The apps make it simple to broadcast video, audio and the rest to social networks such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

Media companies want to get their content to the people no matter where they are or what device they are using, so its no surprise that newspapers, TV networks and major news sites have offered up mobile service for years, providing mobile users with news articles, videos, weather reports and more. The growing body of data suggests that the move toward mobile holds some promising options for news producers, including increasing the amount of overall news being consumed. Mobile devices are drastically changing the production, distribution and consumption of news . There is no doubt that Smartphones are revolutionizing the news media.

III. CHALLENGES IN REALIZATION

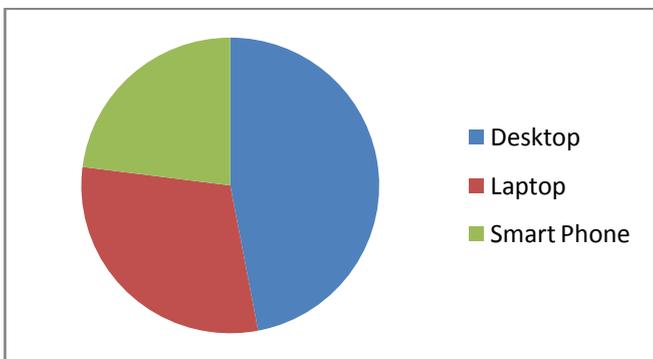
1. Poses policy issues
2. Problems in battery life
3. Data security
4. Problems in screen size
5. Memory and file size
6. Signal can be poor away from wi-fi hot spots
7. Built in mice is prone to noise
8. Editing video in built in app is difficult

Sample survey

In this context a mobile survey is conducted among news media professionals randomly selected from all over Kerala. Direct telephone interviews were conducted. 30 news media professionals were interviewed over phone. Core questions were limited to 4 nos. It is evident from the survey that, though some of the professionals are not familiar with Smartphones, acceptance to the potential of social web friendly Smartphones are gradually gaining momentum.

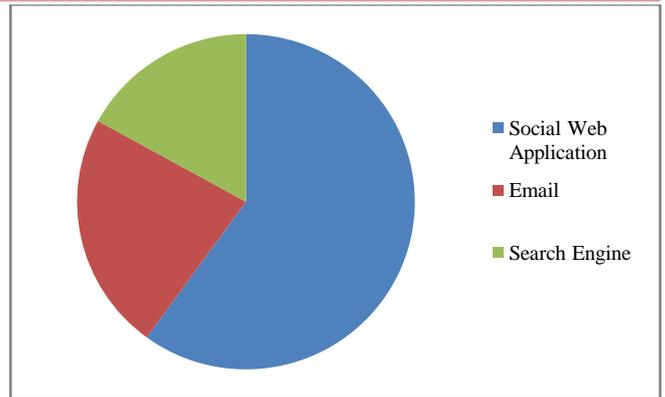
1. As a professional which of the following device do you use to access Internet?

Device	No of users	Percentage
Desktop	14	47
Laptop	9	30
Smartphone	7	23
Total	30	100



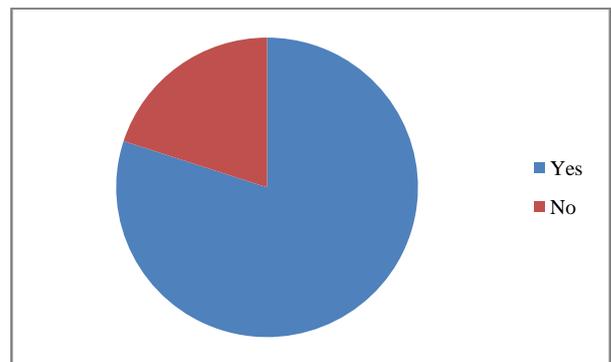
2. If Smartphone is used which are top services used most.

Service	No of users	Percentage
Social Web Application	18	60
Email	7	23
Search Engine	5	17
Total	30	100



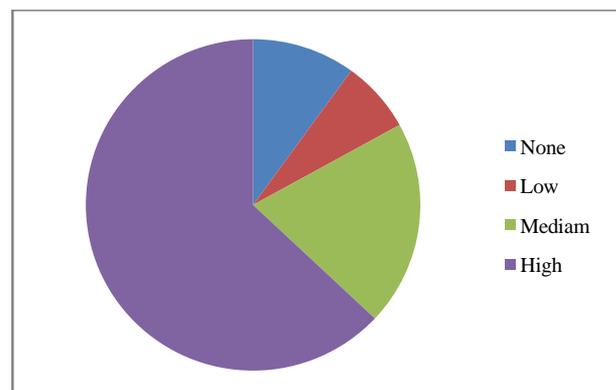
3. If you are not using Smartphone, are you planning to switch to Smartphones.

Opinion	No of users	Percentage
Yes	24	80
No	6	20
Total	30	100



4. What potential do you foresee for Smartphones to contribute to your profession in future?

Potential	No of users	Percentage
None	3	10
Low	2	7
Medium	6	20
High	19	63
Total	30	100



IV. DISCUSSIONS AND SUMMARY

It is highly positive to note the findings that 80 % of professionals are ready to switch to Smartphones and 63 % of professionals are foreseeing a bright future for Smartphone as a supporting tool to journalism. Professionals are aware about the potential of social web and recent technological innovations. They view Smartphone as a fitting tool to modernize their profession.

V. CONCLUSION

Innovations have always presented opportunities and historically, people have welcomed communication breakthroughs. No time in the history of communication has news been so present all the time, and it has changed how we think about news and its availability. Smartphones has the potential to improve efficiency and expand opportunities. It is sure that if properly implemented this pocket computer will change the way, both inside and outside newsroom. The current uses and applications of emerging mobile technologies such as geo-location, augmented reality, voice-to-text, social web friendly apps etc are capable to generate all the necessary elements for a hi-tech professional. This paper also finds attitudes of professionals towards these technologies and it seems highly positive. The rapid global diffusion of mobile technologies creates exciting new opportunities for news media professionals.

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