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The Impact of Video Journalism Practice on News Production and Content Quality

Video Gazetecilik Uygulamasının Haber Üretimi ve İçerik Kalitesi Üzerindeki Etkisi

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has become a new mass media that integrated with traditional media, such as print, radio, and television. Together they bring up what is called media convergence. With the media converged, media institution needs to innovate in order to survive the technological era and to meet the audience's demand for up-to-date and real-time information. One of the big changes that can be seen in the media is how the journalists work. To produce news content, journalists require more skills and knowledge. The person who makes such news productions is called a video journalist. Many media institutions are now relying more on video journalists to produce multiple content on different media formats.

However, there are many critics that video journalism practice has reduced the quality of news since the journalist could not focus on a certain news issue and format. This is qualitative descriptive research that aims to examine how video journalists work to produce multi-format and multi issues news content and whether video journalism practice has reduced the quality of the news. To collect the data, an in-depth interview with two video journalists in two leading Indonesian news media has been performed. The result indicates that video journalism practice has reduced the quality of news

ÖZ

İnternet, basılı medya, radyo ve televizyon gibi geleneksel medyayla bütünleşen yeni bir kitle medyası haline gelmektedir. Onlar birlikte medya yakınsaması denen olguyu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Medyanın birleşmesiyle medya kurumları teknolojik çağda ayakta kalabilmek ve tüketicinin güncel ve gerçek zamanlı bilgi ihtiyacını karşılayabilmek için yenilik yapması gerekmektedir. Medyada görebileceğimiz en büyük değişikliklerden biri de gazetecilerin çalışma şeklidir. Günümüzde gazeteciler haber içeriği oluşturmak için daha fazla beceri ve bilgiye ihtiyacı duymaktadırlar. Bu tür haber prodüksiyonları yapan kişiye video muhabiri denilmektedir. Pek çok medya kurumu artık farklı medya formatlarında çok sayıda içerik üretmek için video muhabirlerine daha fazla önem vermektedir.

Ancak video habercilik uygulaması belirli bir haber konusu ve formatına odaklanmadığı için haber kalitesini düşürdüğüne dair pek çok eleştirmen bulunmaktadır. Bu nitel tanımlayıcı çalışma video gazetecilerinin çoklu formatta ve çeşitli konularda haber içeriği üretirken nasıl çalıştığı ve video haberciliğinin haberlerin kalitesini düşürüp düşürmediğini incelemeyi amaç edinmektedir. Yöntem olarak derinlemesine görüşme tekniği benimsenmiştir. Bu kapsamında Endonezya'nın önde gelen iki haber medyasında görev yapan iki video muhabiriyle görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Toplanan verilerin analizi ve değerlendirmeler video haberciliği uygulamasının haber kalitesini düşürdüğü sonucuna götürmüştür.

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution along with its sophisticated technology has made some rapid development in the mass media industries. The presence of electronic devices such as radio, television, and computers has led to a communication revolution that requires information to be delivered quickly. Now with the emergence of the Internet, the speed of information is very essential. Audiences demand for up-to-date and real-time information.

The improvement of the Internet has led to changes and development in mass media. Internet brings up a new mass medium that enables the integration of traditional media, such as print, radio, and television. This is what is called media convergence. According to Negroponte, the technology of the media industry was merging and the media products are eventually began to resemble each other (Biagi, 2015: 178). Convergence is driven by three elements. First is the digitization of nearly all information, which provides a common means to represent all forms of communication. Second, high-speed connectivity so that network is faster and more pervasive and wireless. Third, technological advances that do not limited to speed, memory, and power improvements allow a device to do more (Biagi, 2015).

As the media converges, the way journalists work and how the media content is produced also revolves. Journalists in convergence media are expected to have various skills and capabilities. Journalists should know how to multitask and are required to operate multiple types of equipment to produce news content. In convergence media, journalists should be able to produce news content in multiple formats, from text, pictures, audio to video.

The term video journalism emerges in the convergence era. Bock defines video journalism as the practice of video news production whereby one person shoots, writes, and edits news stories using digital technology to be disseminated via broadcasting or broadband internet (Messineo, 2015: 1). The person who conducts such kind of news production is called video journalist, in which they should perform the research, interviewing, taking photos, video recording, and video editing all by themselves.

Many media institutions are now relying on video journalists to produce their news content. One of the advantages of hiring video journalists is that they can reduce the production costs by cutting single-perform journalists, since video journalists able to multitask and produce news content in different formats, unlike single-perform journalists which usually only focus on producing content in one format.

However, the video journalism practice has led to many critics, as it said to reduce the quality of news. This study will examine whether video journalism practice has affected the quality of news and how video journalists work to produce multiple formats and multiple issues news content. To complete the research, an in-depth interview is conducted with two video journalists who work in two leading Indonesian news media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Convergence

The presence of the Internet has simplified human life, especially as digital media technology arises. Media is not only limited to traditional media like newspapers, magazines, radio, and television anymore but also digital media. Digital media describes all forms of communications media that combine text, pictures, sound, and video using computer technology (Biagi, 2015: 176). Since digital media communication is compatible and integrated with one another, one can receive and send information in real-time without significant obstacles.

The existence of digital media technology brings up what is called media convergence. Media convergence is the merging of mass communication outlets, such as print media, radio, television, and the Internet along with their portable and interactive technologies through various digital presentation platforms (Arismunandar, 2010). Flew (2017) defines media convergence as a phenomenon involving the interconnection of information and communication technologies, computer networks, and media content. It brings together the three C; computing, communication, and content and is a direct consequence of the digitization of media content and popularization of the Internet.

Nicholas Negroponte, a media technology expert from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was the first to identify the convergence theory. He stated that the media industry began to intersect and combining economically, as media companies began to buy and sell each other. The technology of the media industries also merging and the products of media companies began to resemble each other. He also listed three segments of the media business; print and publishing, broadcast and motion pictures, and the computer industry (Biagi, 2015: 178). The three segments of the media industry have fully overlapped and cooperated with each other and known as media convergence. In the industrial context, media convergence can be reflected in a group of companies that have several media products on different platforms. For example, CNN owns television channels, radios, and news websites.

Convergence in digital media has the ability to combine the functions of electronic computing, electronic communication, media, and information. Chen and Zheng stated that media convergence function is reflected in several aspects. First, functional convergence gradually delivers information and media content to users through computer information technology and broadband communication networks. Second, industrial convergence encourages alliances, acquisitions, and mergers. Third, product and service of convergence refer to an integrated form of the media and information industry that uses the power of combining broadband facilities, digitization functions, and service products to meet consumer needs (Alatas, 2014: 5–6).

Dictionary of Media and Communications mentions two meanings related to the term convergence. First, convergence is related to the erosion of traditional distinction among the concentration of ownership, globalization, and audience fragmentation. Second, convergence is related to a process where previously separated technologies, such as television and telephone, are then brought together through the same industrial strategy. The best example of convergence is the Internet since it combines several technologies; sound, images, and text in one device (Alatas, 2014: 7).

As the media converges and digital technology grows, the way people get news and information has become easier. People now can access news everywhere and anywhere they want, without any obstacles. The advantages of media convergence are as follows:

1. Convergence has expanded the existing broadcasting channels and allows consumers to archive, explain, and recycle media content in a new and easier way (Jenkins, 2006: 18).
2. The media convergence had encourages creative content production in multiple platforms that led to the creative media industry.
3. For media companies, media convergence enables them to reduce production costs by hiring video journalists to produce multiplatform content.

Video Journalism

As the media industries are converging and the traditional media merged with the new media, the news production process is adjusted to meet the new demands. Audience also demands for digitalized and interactive news content, which they can access anywhere and anytime. With the newsroom also converged and integrated, multimedia reporting is now a common practice in the media industry. This transformation has affected the working practice of journalists in many ways. In the converged media industry, video journalism practice then emerged to fulfill the new demand for effective news production.

Messineo (2015: 1) defined video journalism as the practice of news production whereby one person shoot, writes and edits news stories by using digital technologies and then disseminate it via broadcasting or broadband Internet. Meanwhile, Morgan (2007: 1) stated that video journalism is a term to describe a style of producing media content, where a journalist uses a small lightweight video camera to film and report a story, instead of working with crew, consisting of camera person, sound technician, and lighting technician. Since the convergence trend is applied evenly in the media industry, video journalism practice is now occurring in not only digital media, but in traditional media as well with their added digital features.

In this ever-developing technological era, video journalism practice offers various conveniences, be it for the journalist itself or the media institution. These advantages are also the reason why media institutions should apply video journalism practice in producing their news content. The first advantage of video journalism is easy accessibility, in which the journalist could produce news content with just only one device, name it a mobile phone. Since news content could be produced with only one device, it means it also increases the mobility of the journalist. Reporting and taking footage become faster and easier because video journalists don't need a lot of reporting equipment and a lot of news crew. The use of minimal equipment also makes it easy for video journalist to interview their sources, since they become less intimidated. Another advantage is video journalism practice enhances the journalist's creativity, where they can experiment with different ways of news production and different angle of the story.

Video journalism practice also enables media institutions to efficiently reducing the number of journalists working in the newsroom. Although this reason is quite controversial because the journalist profession is threatened by the state of technology, but the practice of video journalism is proven to provide budget efficiency for media institutions. In the era where audiences prefer digital content, video journalism practice also enables media institutions to simultaneously produce news content and publish it on a different platform, from their own news website to social media. This makes news content become more reachable and accessible to various types of audiences. News content that uploaded to the social platforms such as Youtube can also bring in advertisement and be monetized, thus generating profits for the media institutions.

Media industries rely on video journalism practice to accomplish multitask journalism at a fraction of the cost of traditional news (Gee, 2019: 35). More media companies are using video journalism since this approach is affordable and easy to apply. Video journalism practice provided indispensable opportunities for media to reduce the production cost, increase speed, and enable effective time management in the newsroom (Koşar, 2015: 37). In traditional journalism, a group of reporters, cameraman, and other crew are involved in the newsgathering and news production, but now all this work can be done by only one person. But along with this practice, video journalist is expected to produce content for multiple media format.

The person who conducts video journalism practice is called a video journalist. This term sometimes differs as a multimedia journalist, backpack journalist, solo journalist, or mobile journalist. Although the terms are different, their way of work and producing news content are basically the same.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to determine how to search, collect, process and analyze the data available. According to Moleong (2017: 17) descriptive qualitative method is a research method that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example, the behavior, perception, motivation, or certain action. Meanwhile, according to Bungin (2011: 8) qualitative descriptive research aims to describe, summarize various conditions, situations, or social reality phenomena that exist in a society that is the object of research, and try to pull that reality to the surface as one trait, characters, traits, models, signs, or descriptions of a certain phenomenon.

The object of this study focuses on news production by video journalists in two leading Indonesian news media; CNNIndonesia.com and detik.com and how the video journalism working practice has affected their news quality. The data source is divided into two, the primary data which collected through the in-depth interview with video journalist from each media mentioned above, and secondary data is data obtained through literature or documents, such as books, journals, thesis, or articles related to video journalism.

To test the validity of the data conducted in this study, the author uses the increasing persistence method (Sugiyono, 2009) by checking the data carefully and conducting continuous observations, to check if the data has been found false or not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Video Journalism Practice

The emergence of the Internet has affected the media industry. Now media is not only limited to traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. The development of technology has brought out what is called digital media, which are the emerging communications media that combine text, graphics, sound, and video using computer technology (Biagi, 2015: 176). The existence of digital media technology has brought up what is called media convergence, where different media formats (text, photo, audio, and video) merge into a single media, mainly into online media, which can be accessed on the Internet.

This technological development is causing a transformation in the newsgathering process and affects the rhythm of journalism. News content is now produced and delivered according to technological changes and audience demand for real-time information and multi-formats content. Pavlik stated there are three stages of news development in the era of media convergence (Hadi, 2009: 74). First, online media only relocates content from the printed version to the online version. Second, online media has created innovative and creative content with interactive features such as hyperlinks and search engines that make it easier for readers to access any information they want. Third, the content of online media news is fully made specifically as a communication medium.

The media convergence process has made significant differences in working habits and the roles of journalists. Convergence is reshaping the landscape of journalism in a variety of ways, from newsroom structures, journalism practices, and news content (Pavlik, 2004: 28). Media convergence then brings up the video journalist concept as an efficient way to produce news content.

Morgan (2007: 108–109) stated that a video journalist should have the ability to easily engage with people, have an inquiring mind to ask pertinent questions, have visual awareness to combine visual with words, have a value system and objective view of the order of things, and have a good sense of a moral, ethical, and legal issue that affects the news production. A video journalist works for detik.com said that to be a good video journalist, one should be tenacious, have high mobility, and also good knowledge of the issues that they will cover.

The Guardian writes the day of specialism in print, broadcast, or even online are gone. Today's journalists must be multiplatform wonders and those who fail to adapt to these new expectations will find it increasingly difficult to compete (Whelan, 2008). We can say that the video journalist's work is the integration of all the traditional news crew. A video journalist should know how to gather information like a reporter, write the script like a writer, become the videographer, audio technician, and later become the video or news editor who edits the content. Most of the video journalists are expected to perform all those works by themselves in producing news content.

In CNNIndonesia.com newsroom, regular journalists who responsible to produce news in the text form are divided into several departments according to the issues. Meanwhile, their video journalists are work under the multimedia department and not assigned to any particular issues. In detik.com, their video journalists are work under the 'detik20' division, which is a program similar to the newsflash program. Both CNNIndonesia.com and detik.com require their video journalist to produce news content in multiple formats, from video, text, and photo.

“Since we have to produce news content in multiple formats, we have to be smart about choosing different news angles for each format.” (detik.com)

Even though they have to produce news content in different formats, a video journalist on detik.com said that he could cope up with that kind of newsgathering process. He said that the smoothness of the newsgathering process depends on how he manages his priority and choosing what kind of news is more newsworthy and important.

Both of the video journalists interviewed for this research said that they are not assigned to cover certain issues. Instead, they are responsible to cover different issues, from politics to entertainment. Since video journalist is also expected to have multi-skills, so they also have to produce the news by themselves, from the research process until its published.

“As a video journalist, my everyday work starts from pre-production to post-production. When I produce content, I do the research, scriptwriting, shooting, editing, and send the content to the newsroom content management system (CMS) to get reviewed by the editor. All by myself.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

The expansion of technology has affected the working practice of journalists. Multiskilling in writing, photography, and video editing is a basic requirement in the convergence newsroom. Multiskilling is a trend with increasing acceptance in news media, as journalists have to cope with a widening range of responsibilities in order to get their job done (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008: 3). detik.com's video journalist said that all video journalists have to know the basic technique of videography and news writing skill. These increasing demands on journalists have increased the journalist's workload, create a pressured working environment, and the deskilling of journalists, which all have a negative impact on the declining quality of the news output (Cottle and Ashton, 1999).

In the convergence media, journalist is expected to gather facts, assemble the content, edit the photos, sound or videos, and deliver the news via several platforms, such as print, TV, radio, and Internet. Avilés and Carvajal (2008: 225) introduced this as a multiskilling concept and they stated that it would at least affect three levels of the news-making process;

newsgathering, production, and distribution. Meanwhile, Domingo et al. defined multiskilling in three forms; media multiskilling is when journalist produce content for different media, issue multiskilling refers to professionals reporting on news related to different subject areas, and technical multiskilling that occurs when the journalist is responsible for performing most of the technical production tasks (Wallace, 2013: 100). Penniman (2009) said that it is hard for video journalists to apply various skills while producing news content, including having an ‘eye’ for visuals, the ability to tell a compelling story, and rigorous researching skills.

Those three forms of multiskilling are applied to CNNIndonesia.com’s news production process. All the video journalists in CNNIndonesia.com are required to understand technical multiskilling in writing, photography, and video editing. They also have to produce news content on multiple issues. The same approach is also taken by detik.com, where all video journalists have to cover multiple issues news content since the video journalists are under the ‘detik20’, a newsflash program that covers the latest issues.

“Since all the video journalists are under the multimedia department which is distinct from the other news department in the newsroom, so we didn’t work according to new department disposition, besides we cover all the issues, from the national, international, economy, automotive, sports to entertainment.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

In the convergence newsroom, the flexibility of daily planning of news production is increased. Journalists could easily shuffle between different media formats when needed since they have the ability to produce news in different media formats. In CNNIndonesia.com and detik.com, all the video journalists have the ability to produce news in a different format. However, the video journalists should have outstanding videography skill, since their main content is video.

“We have to understand the basic technique of videography, even if it’s only from the mobile phone.” (detik.com)

“Videography is a must-have skill for every video journalist here. We also required to understand video editing, scriptwriting, photography, and understanding English is also important since sometimes we re-produce news from international news agencies. Different from other journalists that required to have excellent news writing skills, video journalists in CNNIndonesia.com must have an excellent videography skill.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

In the practice of video journalism, video is the main content. This makes it easier for the media to utilize their content on various platforms, one of it is social media. In this digital era, the demand for visual news content is very high. Visual news content produced by video journalists can easily grab the audience's attention and they tend to enjoy the content for a longer time, compared to the news text format. Visual news content is also able to explain the stories or the event better than the text. These advantages can certainly be one of the reasons why media institutions need to apply video journalism practice in order to survive the convergence era.

The challenge for most video journalists is they have to produce the news content by themselves and the deadline is tight. A video journalist in CNNIndonesia.com admits that she often feels exhausted in using different equipment for news production.

“Sometimes I was assigned to create news content in automotive issues. In other news institutions, to produce automotive content it usually requires two or three crews. But in CNNIndonesia.com, the video journalist has to do it solo. While making it, I had to use three different cameras; DSLR, drone, and GoPro. I also have to set the camera and the tripod, interviewing people, write the news, and then edit the video all by myself. It is sometimes exhausting for me.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

In contrast from CNNIndonesia.com that have to produce news content with a lot of equipment, video journalist in detik.com said that his main equipment is only a mobile phone, but admits that his responsibility is just as complicated as other journalists.

“In detik.com, I am assigned on ‘detik20’ program which is the pioneer for mobile phone video journalism practice. The challenge I faced with this practice is when I have to do a live report by only using my cellphone. I have to be fully concentrated to do that since I don’t have fellow crew to help me. Also getting many informants to interview for the news content is sometimes hard since I work alone, so it was quite hard to approach them.” (detik.com)

It is said that since video journalist is no longer required to work with other news crew, they experience greater autonomy (Blankenship, 2016). The multiskilling ability of journalists in video journalism practice has also made journalists have more flexibility. With their own flexibility, journalists often feel more motivated, satisfied, and become more creative in producing news content.

“In CNNIndonesia.com, video journalist is responsible to cover many different issues. I enjoy being a video journalist since I could learn more things than being a normal journalist. I can explore many issues and try different tools.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

Due to the limited production time, video journalists experience more time pressure and tight deadline. They rush their time to do the research, writing, and interview. In CNNIndonesia.com, the deadline for daily news is every day, so after the journalist produces the news coverage, it should be edited and published immediately. Whilst the feature news’ deadline is every two days. In detik.com the deadline is faster, since the video journalist work under the newsflash program. Video journalists in detik.com even sometimes have to do a live report. This tight deadline often makes the video journalist cut off some interesting aspects of the story, so they can have more time to do the post-production.

The Quality of Media Content on Video Journalism Practices

As the media industry is converging and adapted to the latest technological development, many traditional media institutions are forced to innovate. This also means that the news production process is also changing following the technology. Journalists are now demanded to understand multi-formats and multi-issues reporting. The newsroom also integrates as the audience demanded multimedia content.

Journalists in this technological era are required to master many skills, from news writing to video editing. They are also expected to be fast and efficient in producing news content. Some critics said that combining skill sets might jeopardize the quality of journalist presentation (Gee, 2019: 35). According to Wallace (2013: 100), multiskilling in video journalism has been considered to have implications for journalism output through its impact on the changing working practices. Pavlik (2001: 8) also stated that one-person crew in media industries are increasingly common and increasingly pressured to produce a broadcast-quality video without much concern about the quality of the journalism. It is also reported that technical workers like cameraperson are eligible to become video journalists as long as they know videography. However, this has rise some critics among journalist because of the cameraperson don’t understand the principle of journalism and are not bound by journalist ethics.

“I admitted that some of my friends who did not have experience as a news reporter before or have a journalism background, the quality of the news content they produce are not that good. However, CNNIndonesia.com isn’t too concerned about writing skills. Instead, the video quality should be remarkable. That’s why some of

the video journalists here are lack in writing skills, but outstanding with their videography skill.” (CNNIndonesia.com)

During the production, video journalist has to divide their concentration into many aspects, so they can't focus on one. For example, video journalists tend to lose their concentration while having an interview because at the same time they also have to film and set up the camera. It reduces the journalist's competence to ask in-depth and challenging questions to the interviewees. Also, since the video journalist spends most of their time conducting interviews, it also left them a little time to write and edit the story. This, of course, has a negative impact on the news output.

As video journalism practice continue to be a trend among the media industry, journalists often felt that the positive impact of this practice only benefited the media institutions to reduce the production cost. When the scope of the video journalist's work broadens to other aspects of production, it could affect the quality of the output since they could not work optimally. Deuze stated that when a journalist working alone, the added pressure of multitasking and the stress level of the journalist tend to increase (Wallace, 2013: 101). A report by the National Union of Journalists said that employing a single journalist to produce video has a clear impact on the news quality (Messineo, 2015: 17). Blakenship (2016: 12) stated that most journalists believe that they were producing lower quality of news and reported less job satisfaction.

The effect of strict production time is also significant in this media convergence era. For the journalist, multitasking, and producing news in multiple formats tend to be stressful, especially in the competitive media industries (Wallace, 2013: 110). These factors could affect the quality of the news the video journalist produces.

The video journalist working on CNNIndonesia.com stated that she set a very high standard for every content she produces. It should be good, in terms of writing, video, and photos quality. Since she had experienced as a news reporter before, so compared to other video journalists in her department, her news writing skill is favorable. While the video journalist in detik.com feels like the quality of the content he produces is not as good as the regular TV reporter.

“Sometimes I feel like I can't produce news content as good as the TV reporter since I only use a mobile phone, while TV journalists use proper camera and tripod and get helped from other crew. Though our needs for the audio and visual is the same, but I think video journalist, especially the one who only use the mobile phone, couldn't compete with the regular TV reporter in terms of the news output.” (detik.com)

In a convergence newsroom, journalists are equipped with multiple skills, rather than just one skill. Journalists from various departments can work together and share their strategies, sources, and material for the news content. So it means that in a convergence newsroom, the large number of journalists are inapplicable anymore. For this reason, media institutions then trying to reduce the number of journalists working in the newsroom.

In CNNIndonesia.com, there are only three video journalists involved in the newsroom production and each one of them has to produce different content from different news department each day, which also means different issues. Since there are few people involved during the news production in a convergence newsroom, video journalist has to edit their own news content, presumably, they have less time available for gathering background information and planning and producing their stories (Avilés, León, Sanders, and Harrison, 2004: 97). This likely leads to editorial error when the news is published and reducing the quality of the news itself.

The way video journalists work with their multitasking requirements has been overwhelming for them. As a result, the news they produced wasn't optimal with less research and various editorial errors. It then can be said that the quality of news produced by video journalists is not as good as the one produced by the regular journalists, which only focuses on a single news issue and format.

CONCLUSION

This study has considered that the changing workflow of journalists in the media convergence era along with its multiskilling and multi-formats production has transformed the traditional journalism culture and practice. When the journalists are forced to become video journalists due to technological development and are not ready with all the changes, it can affect their increased assignment. Video journalists are often feeling overwhelmed due to their tight deadline and just work to complete their news output and ignore the quality of the news. It is seen from the lack of news writing skills the video journalists have, editorial error on the news content, and the multitasking and multi-formats production that leads to video journalists' workloads and stress level, which in any way affected their work.

As the use of video journalism practice keeps increasing in the future, it is important for media institutions to apply it carefully to avoid the abuse of traditional journalism value. But overall those obstacles in video journalism practice, Whelan (2008) argues that journalist is now being trained in additional skill and technology to compete in the convergence era. The video journalists interviewed for this study also said that their media institution has provided several training programs to increase their video journalists' skills. Regardless of the pro and cons, the media industry is moving to multiplatform journalism and video journalists are here to stay (Mcalister, 2019).

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