Chapter 21
Convenience Prevails Over Homemade:
How Local and Regional Newspapers (Mis)use Online Videos

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ABSTRACT

This contribution analyses the online video offer of local and regional daily newspapers. A sample of local and regional landscape press of 15 German newspaper[1] websites offering online videos was investigated. The investigation was carried out with the method of a quantitative content analysis on the basis of an artificial week. The findings show that daily newspapers mainly place purchased videos of external providers (92 percent) in the local and regional area and hardly produced any material by themselves. The videos are themed accordingly: Only 16.2 percent of the videos deal with regional or local topics, and the lion's share is taken by international topics (44.7 percent), while topics related to Germany in any way achieve about one third (31.5 percent). Almost half of the videos can be assorted to the "miscellaneous" desk and, the reporting on political, economic, and social topics, as well as about sports and culture, is less comprehensive. It is also shown that videos are hardly used as a supplement of the remaining editorial offer of the Internet sites and that internal links to other pieces are hardly ever made. In conclusion, online videos are a fixed component of many local and regional news offers of daily newspapers on the Internet, today, but are however hardly used as an addition to the own local reporting competence.

INTRODUCTION

In the past two years, the moving image became one of the most important information sources in the World Wide Web. Technical progress such as larger band widths of Internet transmission as well as simple and affordable possibilities of production of journalistic providers and recipients leads to an increased offer.

Many local and regional newspapers already use online videos as journalistic contents on their websites.[2] This is supposed to make the offer of information more attractive and to open up new target groups – taking decreasing circulation numbers into consideration. However it must be questioned how newspaper providers use the new possibilities of simpler and more affordable production of the moving image and whether they use these in a targeted manner – in the sense of their local and regional orientation.

Research on online videos with daily newspapers in general and with local and regional daily newspapers in particular is only its forefront. Until now, there are hardly any reliable statements regarding the type and quality of online videos. Existing studies are already very often restricted to the mere description of the offers in general and rarely go beyond qualitative statements about tendencies.[3]

This contribution shows how newspapers in the local and regional area make use of the new possibility of the journalistic transmission of information by means of online videos. In this, it shall not only be considered whether and how many online videos are offered but interest is rather targeted at the length of the videos, the technical and journalistic implementation and integration as well as at the placement of the videos on the websites. Moreover, it will be interesting to see whether the materials are produced internally and/or especially for the respective internet appearance or whether deliveries of external service providers such as agencies dominate the offer. In addition, it will be investigated which topics the videos deal with, from which geographical area such topics stem and how the users are included in the offer. In this, the focus is intentionally not placed on user generated content but on the possibility to assess and comment on professional journalistic contents.

ONLINE VIDEOS: DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

Online videos, often also referred to as moving image or web videos, are video contents, which are distributed via the Internet and made accessible to the recipient in this way. In connection with the distribution of online videos, there are mainly three forms: online television as streaming offer of a website, video portals and video platforms. IPTV as a pure technical way of distribution will not be discussed here.

Online television is the form of online videos which comes closest to classic television. In this, online television includes streaming offers of individual television providers – i.e. the "reflection" of the programme which can otherwise be received via common ways of transmission – as well as the offer of service providers offering streams of several stations. A stream is the linear non-recurrent transmission of content and thus differs from video on demand. According to Gerhards and Pagel (2009: 14), eleven of the 24 websites of television stations investigated by them offer live streams of their own content at least temporarily (e.g. n-tv[4] or Phoenix[5]). A bundled offer of live streams of several stations is provided by service providers such as Zattoo[6] or Livestation[7]. These offers in general are used occasionally by 18 percent of the online users in Germany according to the study of ARD/ZDF of 2009, while six percent of the online users use them at least once a week and thus regarded as on a regular basis (Eimeren/Frees 2009a: 341 et

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