



Journalist Fellowship Paper

Becoming bilingual: strategies for adapting TV news content for social video audiences

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Introduction

As a morning TV show host, I've often heard the saying: "If it's not on TV, it didn't happen." It's a phrase meant to glorify our medium as the most powerful.

And, in Serbia – despite the surging global popularity of video-led social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, and streaming services like Netflix – it's a boast that still rings largely true.



Project author Nevena Madžarević on the set of Serbian morning TV news show, Probudi se

The average Serbian viewer spends more than five hours a day watching TV content, according to Nielsen figures – more than any other European country.¹ It remains the [most-consumed media](#) and main source of news and information about political, social, and economic developments in my country.²

There is surely no better place in the world to be a TV journalist, right? As the host and editor in chief of TV Nova's *Wake up (Probudi se)* for the past five years, I can tell you it's not quite so straightforward.

With more than 200 TV stations, the market in Serbia is saturated. Attention is dominated by stations granted license for national terrestrial coverage. These

¹ AGB Nielsen, average TV watching per day in 2024 (live and as live) was 05:17:08

² Crta, Attitudes of Serbia Citizens About Participation in Democratic Processes 2020, multiple answer question, <https://link.crta.rs/21>, (accessed 24th February, 2025)

include public broadcaster RTS 1, and four major commercial networks: TV Prva, TV Pink, Happy TV, and TV B92.

The coverage across all five is eerily similar, and lacking in plurality: largely pro-government messaging with little-to-no critical analysis.

That sort of coverage is left largely to cable networks like my own, TV Nova, and outlets such as TV N1, both operated by United Media, as well as TV Insider and a few investigative portals like KRIK, CINS, and BIRN.

But independent cable stations face distribution challenges: they are only available on the [cable network SBB](#), which reaches just 37% of cable subscribers in Serbia.³ The majority of the cable market is controlled by state-owned Telekom, [which holds 57%](#) of the market and refuses to broadcast our program.⁴

Are we in a checkmate position? The Reuters Institute's [Digital News Report 2024](#) offers a possible work-around for teams like my own:⁵

“Video is becoming a more important source of online news, especially with younger groups. Short news videos are accessed by two-thirds (66%) of our sample each week, with longer formats attracting around half (51%). The main locus of news video consumption is online platforms (72%).”

This shift is backed by behavioural trends too. By mid-2024, there were over 5 million internet users aged 12 and above in Serbia. Nine out of 10 internet users are online every day. Not only are they online daily, but for [more than four hours a day](#), with Gen Z (aged 13-28) spending an extra hour.⁶

³ During the production of this project, on 12 February 2025, United Group agreed to sell SBB Serbia to PPF Telecom Group BV, and Eon TV International to Telekom Srbija a.d. Beograd. United will continue to own and operate its key media outlets in Serbia, including N1 and Nova S, and will be available on SBB and to Yettel customers. More on the sale [here](#).

⁴ Overview of electronic communications market in the Republic of Serbia – Q3 2024 <https://www.ratel.rs/storage/upload/2025/02/Pregled-trzista-Q3-2024.pdf> (Accessed 24 Feb 2025)

⁵ Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024 <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/dnr-executive-summary> (Accessed 24 Feb 2025)

⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ipsos-strategic-marketing/posts/?feedView=all> (Accessed 25 Feb 2025)

I came to the Reuters Institute, with this opportunity in mind, in October 2024. One of my first interviews was with Eliseu Barreira Junior, Head of Product Marketing, Licensing, and Advertising Formats at Grupo Globo, who has played a pivotal role in the company's digital transformation. He told me: “You must become part of the consumer’s routine beyond the show itself. In order to reach new audiences, you need to generate engagement. You’re not just on television during that time slot.”

But how? What do we need to understand about the differences between these mediums? What does adaptation look like in practice? What kinds of stories perform well? How do we choose between what is newsworthy and what is viral? And how do we structure our editorial teams to succeed?

To answer these questions, I’ve spent six months reading the latest research and speaking to 11 peers at BBC, ITV, Sky, Al Jazeera, Brazil’s Globo, Catalonia public service 3Cat, and at ABC’s Good Morning America to understand how best to reach new audiences through social video platforms.

List of interviewees

Name	Role	Organisation
Eliseu Barreira Junior	Head of Marketing for Products, Licensing, and Advertising Formats	Globo (Brazil)
Kelly Crawford	Deputy Editor, BBC Breakfast & BBC News at One	BBC (UK)
Matt Brindley	Managing Editor	ITV News (UK)
Matt Williams	Executive Digital Editor	ITV News (UK)
Rebecca Emmett	Head of News	ITVX (UK)
Owen Jones	Social Media Editor	ABC News (USA)
Mark Hanrahan	Senior Audience Engagement Editor	ABC News (USA)
Nabila Bana	Former Editorial Manager	AJ+
Ashfaaq Carim	Former Director General	Al Jazeera Media Network
Jordi Ferrerons	Executive Coordinator	3Cat (Catalonia)
N.B. (pseudonym) ¹	Former Executive	Sky News (UK)

¹ Name withheld at request of interviewee.

Table 1: List of project interviewees

The answers aren't definitive – platforms will keep evolving, and so will the strategies. Yet, despite the lack of a clear directive I hope that – like me – you find reassurance in hearing from so many excellent TV teams. And with that reassurance, the confidence to experiment.

Why TV journalists struggle with social

To understand how TV journalism must evolve to thrive on social platforms, we must first understand the underlying logic of the medium we've trained in.

This tension has been well documented. As Bennett and Strange noted in their 2018 study of UK television production, [*Adapting to Social Media: Commerce, Creativity and Competition in UK Television Production*](#), many people coming from traditional broadcast backgrounds struggle to grasp the nature of social platforms: "It's just that stuff is so far away from their comprehension, [you] may as well be talking a different language."⁷

TV logic versus Social logic

We are trained to prioritise control: to be first on the scene, to capture the perfect visual, and to distil a complex story into a two-minute package. Every second is accounted for, and every shot earns its place. We are taught to listen to people with a specific mindset: identifying the strongest soundbite for a headline while determining what to use for the rest of the interview.

Through this training, we learn that every story can be condensed into a two-minute package, that interviewees must deliver their message in under 30 seconds, and that no single shot should last more than two seconds. Our core belief has been that once something has happened, been seen, and heard on television, there is no need for it to exist anywhere else. It has already been seen by everybody.

But social platforms demand something else entirely. They are iterative, informal, and fuelled by feedback. Videos are vertical, immediate, and often rough around the edges. The most compelling content is not always the most polished – it's the most relatable, the most human. And critically, the audience is no longer passive: they respond, remix, repost. The conversation continues long after a segment has ended.

At Al Jazeera English, digital producer and strategist Nabila Bana described how this disconnect shows up in the field. "[TV journalists] are under heavy stress and often lack the time to prioritise digital formats," she said. "Many are unfamiliar with mobile shooting techniques, vertical video, and explainer content. They need

⁷ Bennett, J. and Strange, Niki. (2018) *Adapting to social media: Commerce, creativity and competition in the UK Television production*.

training for content creation and equipment usage.” As a result, digital storytelling is often an afterthought – despite being where younger audiences are most present.

TV logic vs Social logic

TV journalism	Social video journalism
One-way delivery	Two-way conversation
Highly produced, polished	Authentic, often raw
Final product airs once, then it's done	Content is iterative, reposted, remixed
16:9 horizontal format	Vertical, mobile-first format
Stories fit rigid formats (e.g. 2 mins)	Formats are fluid and platform-dependent
Controlled message	Constant audience feedback and unpredictability
Emotional restraint	Emotional connection is often key
“TV is the main event”	Digital is its own destination: not just promotional
Anchored in routine	Anchored in spontaneity and shareability

Table 2: A working comparison of TV logic versus Social logic

Even seasoned anchors feel this tension. *BBC Breakfast* presenter Charlie Stayt [publicly reflected](#) on what he learned from JJ Olatunji (known as KSI), a British influencer, musician and boxer with a following on 25 million on YouTube.⁸ “Presenting TV news is one skill. Doing it on social requires something else entirely,” he said.

Mark Hanrahan, Audience Engagement Editor at ABC News, told me: “Our more seasoned colleagues, I think, realised the importance of [social media] but don’t really know how to go about it.”

It’s a discomfort I can personally relate to: I’ll have great footage of an exclusive guest on my programme, but when we transfer it to social media, it doesn’t perform as well as I expected.

⁸ BBC Breakfast. (2022). KSI gives BBC presenter Charlie Stayt a lesson in social media [YouTube video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZsSHBRfY-8> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2025].

Connecting with audiences on social media requires an entirely different set of skills – directness, looseness, a sense of intimacy that’s hard to manufacture behind a studio desk.

Becoming bilingual

Understanding this shift is the first, and perhaps most difficult, step. It’s not just about acquiring new skills; it’s about reframing our assumptions.

We don’t need to unlearn TV. But we do need to become bilingual – fluent in the grammar of broadcast and the rhythm of digital. That’s what this project is about.

What we've tried (and what's working)

To quote Bennet & Strange (2018) again: “Many TV executives and producers wish to know how to make ‘good’ social, how to make it ‘go viral’... there is no magic formula to answer such questions, there are some commonalities emerging around ‘where’, organisationally, effective and impactful social television is produced, what is produced and when it is posted.”

Across all of my interviews, a pattern emerged: no newsroom has fully cracked the code, but most are trying to extend the reach of their content using some combination of YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, or TikTok.

Others are experimenting further with their own digital streaming platforms (like Globo Player, and ITVX), and experimenting with the development of homegrown influencer voices (see chapter five: [Navigating the newsworthy vs viral dilemma](#)).

Some strategies are stopgaps, others feel like real progress. Together, they reveal an industry in motion – experimenting, adapting, and learning in real time.

The three most common approaches to adaptation are:

1. Repurposing TV content for social platforms
2. Reworking footage into platform-specific formats
3. Creating native digital stories from the ground up

Each has its strengths and limits.

1. Repurposing TV content

This is the simplest and most common strategy: taking broadcast content and reposting it on digital platforms. Often, this means uploading a finished TV package to Facebook or YouTube, or clipping interview highlights for Instagram.

Kelly Crawford, Deputy Editor of *BBC Breakfast*, explained that this kind of repurposing is often the default for busy broadcast teams: “The show comes first. So we cut bits out afterwards and post them online – it’s not planned in advance.”

This approach has clear advantages: it’s fast, makes use of existing footage, and helps push out content across multiple channels. But the downsides are increasingly evident. What works on TV doesn’t always work on TikTok or Instagram Reels. Clips can feel too formal, too slow, or too disconnected from the tone or style users want.

How content orientation and tone shift across legacy and social platforms

Format type	Platforms	Content style	Example uses
Legacy TV (horizontal)	TV broadcast	16:9, scripted, polished, formal	Anchor-led bulletins, studio interviews
Horizontal social	Facebook, YouTube (classic), LinkedIn, X (Twitter)	16:9, lightly edited, repurposed	TV segments, full-length interviews
Vertical social	TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Snapchat	9:16, informal, fast, relatable	Direct-to-camera explainers, native clips

Table 3: Tone and orientation shift from legacy to social

2. Adapting raw material

The second approach is a step forward. Instead of simply cutting and pasting from TV, teams take the same raw footage and rework it with a digital audience in mind. That might mean editing interviews into square or vertical formats, cutting to the punchline faster, or adding on-screen text for clarity in sound-off viewing.

“The first thing to understand is that we are storytellers, no matter the platform – television, radio, social media, or podcasts,” said Globo’s Barreira. “Our role is to adapt stories for each medium while staying true to their essence. The era when one medium was seen as more important than another is long over.”

At Independent Television News (ITN, the news provider for ITV), bosses leveraged their established position as a TV production powerhouse, and chose to publish content simultaneously across all social media platforms and their own streaming service, ITVX. Becky Emmett, Head of the News Segment for ITVX, told me: “We shouldn’t fear cannibalization. Rather, we should view new platforms as opportunities to reach audiences who may not even know we exist on TV. Our presence across all platforms is the key to building our brand.”

ITVX also gives reporters the opportunity to present extended versions of their TV work online. For example, while a few-minute interview might air on ITV News, the raw material is repurposed into a 15-minute conversation (so-called “middies”) for ITVX.

Platform-specific formats: horizontal vs vertical

Platform	Horizontal formats	Vertical-native formats
YouTube	YouTube Classic	YouTube Shorts
Instagram	Grid posts, carousels	Instagram Reels
Facebook	Timeline video posts	Facebook Reels
X / BlueSky	Native video uploads	Vertical video possible (less prioritised)
TikTok	–	Fully native (always vertical)

Table 4: Platform-specific formatting across horizontal and vertical formats

At Al Jazeera English, Nabila Bana described how their digital team takes newsroom material and transforms it into more direct, visual storytelling: “You can’t just cut it differently. It’s a different tone, a different narrative. Even if the footage is the same, the shape has to change.”

This model recognises the need for platform specificity without requiring entirely new production for every post. The result often feels more native than a repurposed TV clip, but still carries the limits of working from pre-existing content. It’s adaptive, but not audience-first.

Creating adaption-ready content may require an adjustment in set design. In 2022 and 2023 respectively, BBC News and *BBC Breakfast* unveiled significant studio overhauls that included the introduction of a large vertical LED video wall. According to set designers [Jago Design](#), the redesign was intended “to reference social media and the BBC mobile app.”⁹

The shift wasn’t just visual – it reflected a change in posture and presentation. Presenters now stand more often than they sit, echoing the dynamic, informal feel of vertical video formats like TikTok or Instagram Reels. Studio design choices signal a deeper alignment with mobile-first storytelling: content that can move fluidly between broadcast and social, without feeling out of place in either.

⁹ Jago Design. (n.d.). BBC National News. Available at: <https://jagodesign.co.uk/projects/bbc-national-news> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2025].

3. Creating native digital stories

The final model is the most ambitious: building content from the ground up for social platforms. That means filming in vertical, scripting for platform tone, and designing stories with scroll-stopping visuals, subtitles, and real-time relevance.

At Globo, Eliseu Barreira described how their team had moved towards platform-first production, especially for YouTube and Instagram. Rather than waiting until after a broadcast airs, digital content is planned in parallel, with its own pacing, scripting, and editorial logic.

ITV and Sky News have also invested in building native teams for platforms like TikTok and YouTube Shorts. These teams work closely with traditional journalists but are given the freedom to design their own tone and formats.

Matt Williams, executive digital director of ITV News, told me: “As TikTok grew into a bigger platform with more users, especially among those under 30 and under 25, we recognized its reach. In response, we decided to create our own concept. We focused on using younger journalists to produce bespoke explainers, videos, and journalism that speak to this audience in a way they understand.”

Native content performs well, but it also requires more time, more training, and often more trust from leadership. It asks producers to think in platform logic, not just broadcast logic. When it works, though, it feels like something new, and not simply recycled.

There is no single formula among these three approaches that will guarantee a successful expansion of reach through social video. But news teams might benefit from adopting a phased approach to adaptation. For example:

Phase one: Facebook (horizontal, repurposed)

- Post bulletins cut into segments
- Post highlights of interviews

Phase two: YouTube (horizontal, repurposed, then vertical, adapted)

- Post full-length TV interviews, including unaired footage (horizontal)
- Use other raw materials to give the audience “backstage access” (vertical stories)

Phase three: Instagram (square and vertical, adapted, and native)

- Post clipped TV news segments to your Feed (square format)

- Use Stories (expiring) and Reels (extended life) to post highlights from interviews, adapted for vertical
- Use Stories to share breaking news in a vertical format. Breaking news ages rapidly, and is not well suited to Feed or Reels.
- Experiment with the creation of Instagram-native content, such as show previews or post-broadcast reviews featuring straight-to-camera selfie-style vertical video.

Phase four: TikTok (vertical, native)

- Videos conceptualised, filmed, and edited for this platform (there may be some cross-over content created for Instagram Reels)
- Support the development of homegrown TikTok influencers on your team, especially young voices with niche expertise.

Newsrooms are increasingly moving away from duplication and toward deliberate design. The more intentional the format, the better the performance – and the stronger the connection with audiences.

What performs well (and why)

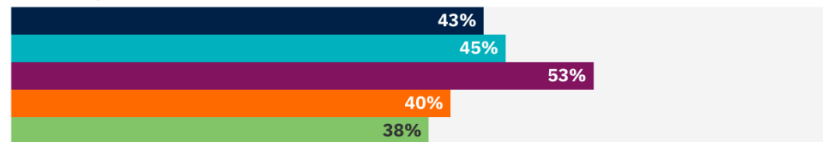
As the latest Digital News Report confirms, young audiences still care about news – but how they find, engage with, and share it has changed dramatically. On platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, users are more likely to pay attention to online personalities, creators, or even ordinary people than mainstream journalists.

Proportion that pay attention to each source of news on each network

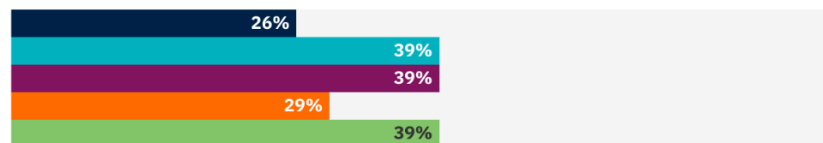
All markets

■ Politicians/political activists
■ Online personalities/celebrities/creators
■ Mainstream news brands/journalists
■ Smaller/alternative news sources or journalists
■ Ordinary people

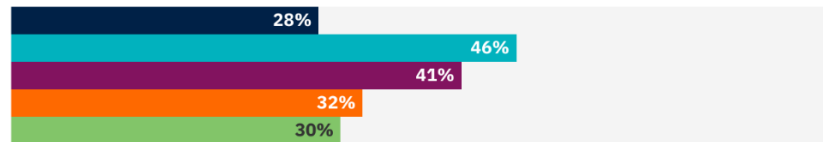
X (formerly Twitter)



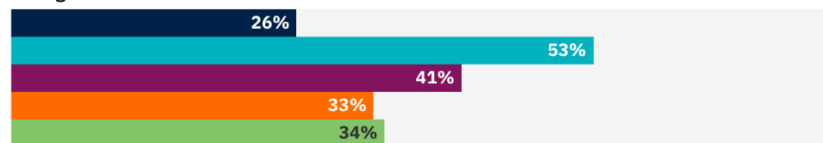
Facebook



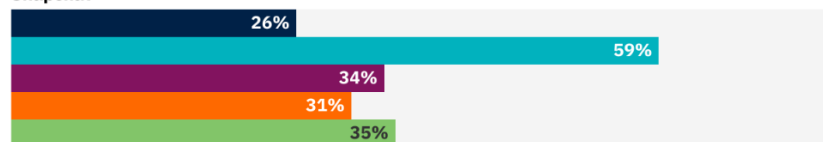
YouTube



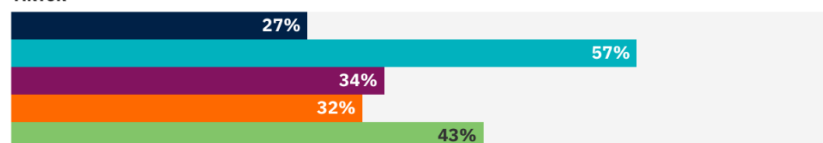
Instagram



Snapchat



TikTok



Who users pay attention to for news across platforms. On vertical-native apps like TikTok and Instagram, creators and ordinary users command more attention than mainstream journalists.

(Source: Digital News Report 2024, p15)

This doesn't mean younger audiences reject journalism, but rather that they are more likely to respond to content that feels native, emotionally resonant, and directly relevant.

A 2021 report by Víctor García-Perdomo, *How social media influence TV newsrooms, online engagement and video distribution*, supports this idea.¹⁰ “The lack of engagement and distribution of the classic television narrative in digital settings is due to television reporters telling their stories in a very predictable, plain way and pretending that the same TV stories work online without considering the characteristics of networked audiences,” he said.

From breaking news to explainers, four content types stood out across interviews as consistently performing well among social video audiences.

1. Breaking news & user-generated content

As on television, breaking news continues to drive attention on social platforms – but the form matters. Content that moves quickly, prioritises visual impact, and delivers updates in real time is more likely to land. This includes platform-native updates from verified journalists as well as user-generated content (UGC) – footage shared by citizens on the scene – especially when newsrooms can help verify and contextualise it.

In 2025, UGC is often the first footage to be seen by both TV journalists and social media users. News teams with dedicated social media monitoring tools can benefit from this. “Al Jazeera uses UGC by verifying videos from platforms like X and TikTok through an internal unit. Before using any content, the videos must be approved to ensure they are real and not fake. Once verified, they gather multiple videos from different users to create a video story, combining various pieces of authentic content to provide a more comprehensive and accurate report.”

Several interviewees mentioned how coverage of the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza drew exceptional engagement on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. Users were already seeing chaotic footage in their feeds. What they craved was verification, timeline clarity, and commentary from trusted sources.

¹⁰ García-Perdomo, V. (2021). How Social Media Influence TV Newsrooms Online Engagement and Video Distribution. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 101(4), 911-932.

2. Bulletins (that feel native)

Classic short-form bulletins – 30 to 90 second roundups – still have a place on social media, but they must be built for the platform. Vertical orientation, conversational tone, and engaging visuals make the difference between a scroll-past and a save or share. Material can, for example, be enhanced with transition graphics and subtitles, depending on the platform.

ITV News and ABC News both have teams that produce short bulletins specifically for YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, or TikTok. ITN’s Emmett explained: “Every hour we produce a two-minute, two-and-a-half minute news bulletin, which is constantly updated on our ITVX platform.” Their success lies not in simplification, but in adaptation – journalism that retains its rigour while speaking the language of the platform.

At Globo, the team does not produce any new content: “We actually use the central evening news show,” said Barreira. “We select the most important stories and then create a five-minute edition every day.”

3. Explainers

Explainers consistently perform well across platforms. On YouTube and Instagram, well-designed explainers often outperform traditional segments, especially when they’re voice-led, visual, and easy to watch with or without sound. Social media users respond to content that helps them understand complexity: how something unfolded, why it matters, and what might happen next.

Teams at BBC have had success repackaging TV reporting into explainers with tighter pacing, stronger visuals, and upfront clarity.

In his book, [The Art of Explanation](#), the BBC’s “explainer-in-chief” Ros Atkins said:¹¹

“If I’m reporting or presenting a news story for the BBC, I may have all or some of the information on that subject. But what value does that information have if I can’t give it to people in a way that makes them want to watch and which makes sense to them? Indeed, if I passed on every piece of reliable information available to me, I may well undermine my chances of explaining

¹¹ Atkins, R. (2023). The art of explanation. London: Wildfire.

the most important aspects of it. For me, one of the revelations of recent years was when I started to understand just how many things I was doing that actively got in the way of me explaining myself.”

Explainers must be timely, offer perspectives on the story, and place the event within a wider context. In other words, the audience doesn't just want to know what happened, they want to understand why it happened and what consequences may arise because of it. A successful explainer strategy will require time and resources to respond both swiftly and with nuance.

4. Emotional storytelling

Finally, stories that centre real people – whether victims, eye witnesses, first responders, or frontline reporters – cut through the noise more effectively than packaged segments. TV producers have long understood the value of emotionally engaging content, especially stories that evoke strong reactions from audiences. This is not about clickbait; it's about connection. Vertical platforms reward faces, feelings, and immediacy.

According to José Antonio Sánchez, chief of digital products at *El Tiempo* (as cited in a 2021 study by García-Perdomo), “Stoking people's emotions is one of the best methods news producers have to use to increase distribution and engagement on the web.” Stories that evoke strong sentiments – such as sadness, happiness, rage, or anger – are more likely to trigger reactions and improve distribution metrics.¹²

Globo's Barreira told me: “A personal achievement story about a boy from a poor family who becomes a doctor resonates deeply with viewers, as does content about unusual or bizarre events that happen in everyday life.”

The most compelling emotional storytelling is also journalistically robust: verified, transparent, and reported with care. But it is built around human stakes, not just institutional power.

¹² García-Perdomo, V. (2021). How social media influence TV newsrooms: Online engagement and video distribution. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 101(4), pp.911–932. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990211027864>

This is where traditional TV often struggles. The impulse to keep distance or defer to voiceover can dilute emotional impact. On social, it's the human voice that builds trust and drives reach.

What performs well isn't necessarily lighter or less serious – it's often the same journalism, reimagined. The best-performing content meets audiences where they are, without compromising on truth, depth, or rigour.

Navigating the newsworthy vs viral dilemma

Real-time feedback is one of the great advantages of social media publishing. But it can also be a trap. The tension is: should you post a newsworthy story even if you know it won't perform well?

In a perfect world, newsworthiness and engagement would align, but they don't always. And digital teams must often decide whether to invest time in stories that may matter deeply but aren't likely to perform well in the algorithm.

Most of the people I interviewed agreed that public service comes first. Mark Hanrahan at ABC News put it clearly: "For ABC, it's vital for us to be seen as having covered important stories, even if they are unlikely to perform strongly. [...] It's important for the brand, even if some important stories don't get huge engagement. I can see this, for example, if we post something light-hearted, we often see user criticism saying, 'Why aren't you covering [this or that] instead?'"

The tension is managed well at ITV, where they've set up a dedicated [Tik Tok account](#) for political content, @itvpolitics. The account features a mix of short clips from parliamentary pool and wire footage – such as speeches from cabinet meetings or international summits – alongside explainers and interviews fronted by political correspondent Lewis Denison, whose distinctive accent and mullet have made him a recognisable presence on the platform.

In a blog post for [Press Gazette](#), Denison said young people are more interested in politics than he initially expected.¹⁵ Since launching in January 2024, the account has gained 334,000 followers and 11.4 million likes. And Denison has established the same credibility among UK politicians as his peers who report solely for TV: on the day the government unveiled its budget in the Spring Statement, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves sat down with Denison for a TikTok interview to explain how changes would impact young people.

ITV's Matt Williams explained why Denison has become such an important bridge: "[Politicians] recognise that reaching a specific audience requires a tailored approach. For example, unemployment is a topic that can resonate with hundreds of

¹⁵ Denison, L. (2024) 'ITN election diary: Report from the frontline of the first TikTok election', Press Gazette, 11 June. Available at: <https://pressgazette.co.uk/comment-analysis/itv-news-tiktok-politics-election/> (Accessed: 31 March 2025).

thousands. When she talks about young people, she knows that doing so through our platform is an effective way to reach them.”

At the same time, Denison is a relatable and approachable voice and face for TikTok audiences. He understands the community and is not afraid to ask questions that matter to them – like which Sabrina Carpenter song (she’s a Gen Z pop icon and TikTok favourite) prompted Reeves to accept concert tickets.

Colleagues across Sky, ITV and Al Jazeera confirmed all confirmed that young audiences on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram have shown interest in serious news content – particularly content about the war in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. In the case of both conflicts, users were already navigating a lot of first-hand stories from the ground. News accounts had an important role to play in verification, accessing those in power to ask for comment, and providing explainer content that helped users understand what was happening.

Legacy media can’t always match the speed or style of independent content creators; they are freer to indulge in emotional opinion and reaction to trending topics. But there is still room for legacy media to be competitive and useful, while remaining true to our primary role of serving the public interest.

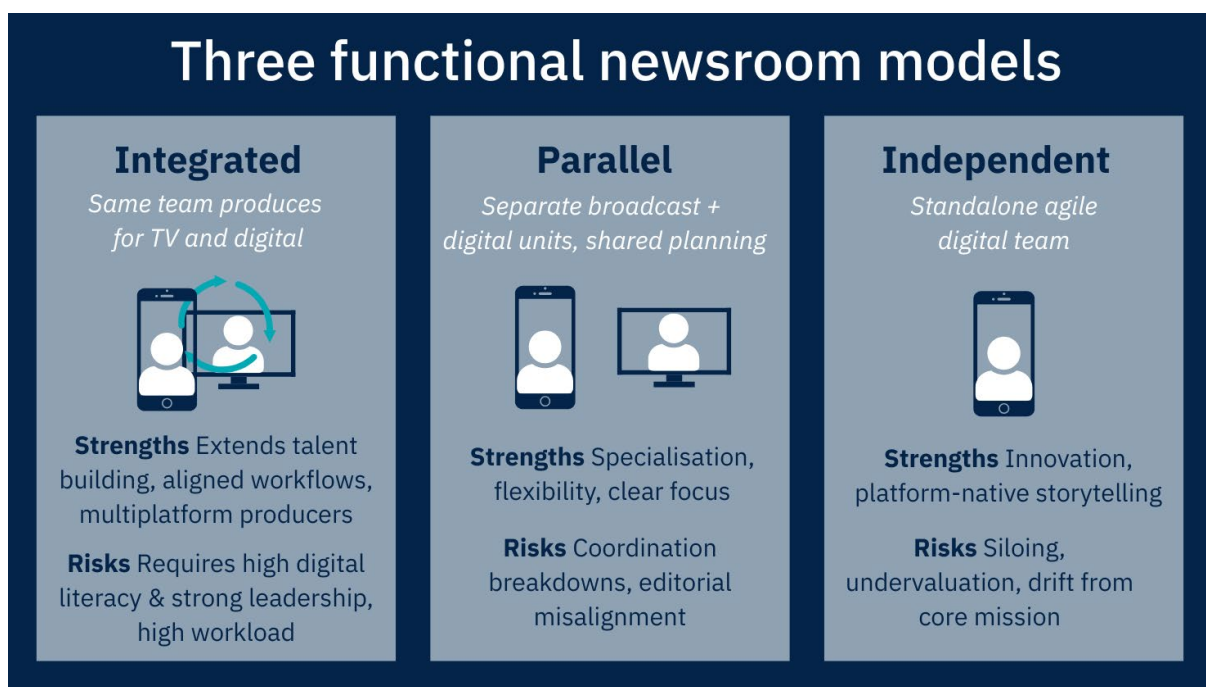
In his blog post, Denison stressed the importance of maintaining journalistic integrity while adapting content for social media: “We love getting lots of views, but we don’t forget who we are. At ITV News, we hold our social media content to the same Ofcom standards that are required for our TV output, so there’s a balance to strike on tone and style.”

How to structure the editorial team?

More than any single platform strategy or workflow tool, the successful adaptation of TV news to social video platforms is rooted in personnel. Who gets to lead digital, how teams are structured, and whether digital content is treated as journalism or marketing all shape how well an organisation adapts.

The worst scenario is a media organisation that is so siloed that no communication takes place between those posting social video content and those gathering the news. As one interviewee told me: “Sometimes we only find out that we have our own journalist in the field by seeing them on TV, and by then it’s too late.”

Three functional newsroom models emerged in my interviews, each with its own strengths and tensions.



Integrated teams

In this model, the same team produces content for both TV and social platforms. It is well suited to smaller organisations, and where digital skills are broadly distributed across the newsroom.

At ITV News, Managing Editor Matt Brindley said their goal was to foster a culture where all producers – whether for broadcast or digital – feel responsible for

delivering content that works across platforms. That means upskilling TV producers in social-friendly formats, and supporting digital producers to lead on editorial decisions.

“ITV recognised the need for a multiplatform work environment,” he said. “Previously, journalists were confined to specific roles: TV, digital, or field reporting, which limited skill development and job variety. This led to inefficiencies and staff turnover, as employees were denied opportunities due to a lack of experience they were never given. To address this, ITV restructured its approach, eliminating rigid role distinctions. Now, instead of separate TV, news, or digital producers, they train all producers to work across multiple platforms.”

Even in this model, it’s vital to understand the differing logic of each medium – and the strengths and skills required for each. At ITV, digital output is organised into three core groups:

- Digital: Manages how stories will appear on the website, X and BlueSky
- Social: Manages how stories will appear on TikTok, YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels
- Platform: Manages how stories will appear on ITVX (the channel’s streaming platform), Podcasts and YouTube (long form).

Importantly, all three groups share the same newsroom space. In my own experience, proximity makes it easier to align tone and priorities, especially in fast-moving news moments.

Parallel teams with shared planning

While ITV is living the integrated dream, some newsrooms do successfully maintain separate broadcast and digital teams with coordination at key moments. The BBC, for example, successfully maintains this model. Crawford’s team covered the U.S. elections for *BBC Breakfast*, but not on digital – because the BBC had a dedicated digital team in place.

“BBC is massive, and its digital department is equally vast. They produce an enormous amount of digital and social content, two distinct areas but they manage to generate content across all social platforms,” she said.

In teams like these, misunderstandings can be overcome with a strong central organisation that sets daily, weekly, and monthly plans, ensuring everyone stays informed.

This approach also grants the digital department greater independence in decision-making. Unlike TV producers, they are not tied to a specific segment, and their decisions can be purely informed by whether the content is important and engaging enough for a new media audience.

Independent digital teams

Other organisations have set up standalone digital units that operate separately from traditional broadcast teams. These units are often younger, more agile, and freer to experiment with tone, formats, and workflows.

At Al Jazeera English, Nabila Bana described a digital team that produces content specifically for social platforms, with a tone and pace distinct from TV. “It’s not just a matter of cutting clips differently,” she said. “It’s a different kind of storytelling.”

The upside is innovation. The risk is fragmentation. Without shared planning and mutual respect, these teams can become siloed or undervalued.

Digital is not marketing. It’s journalism.

A fourth model for digital teams exists, but I do not consider it functional. This model emerged in the early days of social media in newsrooms when platforms were treated as promotional tools to remind the audience that the “real content” was on TV. To this end, teams were placed inside the marketing department.

As Bennett and Strange noted eight years ago: “Where to place social television production lies at a tension point between marketing and editorial as well as between integrated or outsourced teams. Solutions that adopt hybrid approaches might be the most successful in addressing the opportunity gaps of social television.”¹⁴

This may have been true in 2018, but one of the most consistent themes across interviews was the frustration of digital teams being treated as promotion, not

¹⁴ Bennett, J. and Strange, N. (2018) Adapting to social media: Commerce, creativity and competition in the UK Television production.

journalism. Changing that perception requires more than restructuring; it requires a cultural shift.

To succeed with digital video, newsrooms need to give social the same editorial weight, rigour, and trust as television. That doesn't mean replicating TV online. It means building something new, and letting digital teams lead the way.

What really matters: leadership, mindset, and workflow

The model chosen matters, but even more important are the underlying attitudes towards digital video.

First, leadership. When senior editors understand digital platforms and prioritise hearing from them in editorial meetings, things shift. When they don't, digital remains marginalised. "The chief leader must fully embrace the vision; otherwise, they will slow the process down," said Globo's Barreira.

As Al Jazeera's Nabila Bana explained: "[Journalists] are under heavy stress and often lack the time to prioritize digital formats. Many are unfamiliar with mobile shooting techniques, vertical video, and explainer content. They need training for content creation and equipment usage." This requires support from the highest positions in the newsroom.

Second, mindset. Challenge ageist thinking in your newsroom: this is not a trivial job for young people hoping to become "real" producers. It's a vital skillset that requires openness, curiosity, and the willingness to test new approaches. The best digital journalists are adaptable, audience-focused, and collaborative.

Third, workflows. Brazil's Barreira described defining your workflow as a "key aspect" of transition. "For example, during a live show, someone agile enough could be assigned to edit and post clips on social media in real time," he said. "After the show, the focus could shift to crafting new narratives, including visual design and storytelling adjustments." Whatever workflow fits your team, if digital isn't involved from the outset, your content will end up being reactive, rushed, or redundant.

Conclusion

When I started my morning show in 2020, it aired from 6am to 8am on a cable network. I knew right away that I needed to make it visible to social media users, so I launched on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

Reporters from the newsroom helped with that. After each episode, they would select and post key segments: interviews, field reports, and notable moments. This approach not only allowed people without access to our cable network to watch the show online, but also helped spread the word about us as a new TV program. It didn't take long to see that our community was growing and our popularity was rising. We used the same strategy on YouTube with similar success.

From day one, we were also on Instagram, but we quickly realised that the younger audience there was looking for something different. In hindsight, my mistake was treating Instagram mainly as a promotional tool, rather than a media platform in its own right. Although we occasionally posted clips from the show, they didn't perform well. The best engagement came from behind-the-scenes content, which we shared occasionally, whenever we had time to produce it – which was not very often.

This is not the first time in media history that we've undergone a major transition, nor is it the first time that those in traditional media have responded with fear, doubt, and scepticism toward new platforms. The longer we ignore the fact that the most significant shift in journalism has already taken place, the less chance we have to play a key role in its future.

However, in the process of adaptation, we must be aware of the following conclusions. First, we need to understand that these platforms are not just secondary channels or promotional tools for TV content. They are independent media in their own right.

Second, we must recognise which aspects of television content can be adapted successfully for a digital audience, while also fostering new native video content – created specifically for social media platforms.

Thirdly, integrating social platforms into our media brands should not be seen as a competition between old and new, but rather as the adoption of a new language in which to communicate our values and information to new audiences.

And finally: we must remember that the goal of journalism is to provide accurate information to a wide audience in an accessible way. Today, that means being present where the audience is: on social media. We have to respect that reality.

Who needs to recognise these pillars of a successful adaptation strategy? The management of legacy media outlets. Their task is to empower their journalists and producers to lead this transition. How willing we are to become bilingual broadcasters will determine how successful we'll be.

The key characteristic of new media platforms is their constant evolution, and so we can be entirely certain of only one thing: to succeed will require that we continuously adapt.