

Video Goes Vertical: Local News Videographers Discuss the Problems and Potential of Vertical Video

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Abstract

By utilizing 15 in-depth interviews with current and former local television (TV) news videographers and editors, this article examines vertical video and what impact it is having on the production of local TV news. Three key themes are analyzed to investigate this trend: (1) the discourse video professionals use to distinguish their work as professional while labeling 9×16 vertical video “amateur,” creating what Pierre Bourdieu called a *habitus*; (2) the role vertical video has in influencing video professionals’ daily newsroom responsibilities; and (3) where vertical video fits within the business of local TV news. Mobile applications collect and display vertical content natively, and this article argues that local news professionals should recognize the creative opportunity in producing original content to engage new audiences on various platforms.

Keywords

mobile, vertical video, Snapchat, new technologies, broadcast, television, news

Neal and Ross (2014, 2015) published two online books about vertical video—*Vertical Film 2014* and *Vertical 2015*. In them, the authors describe the potential of vertical video by highlighting film festivals and experimental art exhibitions that

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screened vertical films. Using special projection equipment, films were shown on movie theater-sized screens hung vertically. Advertising executives and branding experts have also latched on to the vertical trend because of financial and creative incentives, which include reaching younger demographics on mobile applications and rethinking how physical spaces like supermarket coolers, high rises, and endcap displays are branded (Johnson, 2015). As the popularity of Snapchat and other mobile apps that allow users to shoot and display content vertically continues to grow, so will the use of vertical video. Nick Bell, the head of content at Snapchat, told the *USA Today* that the platform's 9×16 native display appeals to a mobile-oriented audience because "you don't have to turn the phone, you don't have to zoom in, you don't have to expand the window . . . It's just right there and the story is right in front of you" (Graham, 2015, para. 4).

It is not simply Snapchat, experimental filmmakers, and advertisers that are jumping into the vertical space, however. In October 2015, Twitter debuted its "Moments" tab that displays photos and videos in a vertical format. YouTube recently updated its mobile app so users can upload 9×16 video natively. And in August 2016, Instagram introduced "InstagramStories," which mirrors the vertical and temporal nature of Snapchat. Along with these changes, major media outlets like ESPN, CNN, and professional sports leagues are reformatting wide-screen videos and, in some cases, creating new original content specifically for vertical screens. While vertical video has become a credible and marketable format for filmmakers, brands, media companies, and creative advertisers, it is still struggling for acceptance from video professionals working in local television (TV) news.

When vertical video first caught the attention of professional videographers and online commenters, it was quickly vilified by puppet public service announcements (PSAs) and "expert" vloggers as amateur and "wrong." Perhaps the most well-known example of this early hostility is a 2012 PSA, "Vertical Video Syndrome," by Glove and Boots (2012) that has received over 7 million views on YouTube. To further understand vertical video, the hostility surrounding it, and its impact on journalistic practice in local TV newsrooms, this article utilizes 15 in-depth interviews with current and former local TV news professionals to explore what implications this fight over formats has for daily newsroom practices and the creative and business interests of local TV news.

Scholars have for decades studied the ways in which new technologies have altered and continue to influence the production and consumption of news (Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Reagan, 1989). Recent studies have examined the relationship between one-person crews using lightweight cameras and narrative styles and story selection (Bock, 2012) and how journalists manage the immediacy and interactivity of online platforms when publishing multimedia content (Brannon, 2008). What this research largely agrees upon is that many local TV news videographers and editors have proven adept at evolving with the latest advancements in camera equipment technologies and editing platforms. From $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. decks to digital cameras and tape-to-tape to nonlinear digital editing software, one constant that broadcast TV professionals have come to

expect is change. Recent changes to the production and distribution of visual news have largely been brought about by the prevalence of mobile devices and applications, which allow users to capture and share photos and videos with friends, family, and social networks. The near ubiquity of these devices coupled with mobile apps that allow aspect ratio flexibility when displaying photos and videos has led to the rise of vertical video.

Background and Literature Review

In order to understand how digital technologies and new formats have affected journalistic practices and the distribution of visual news, this article examines vertical video through three interconnected themes: (1) the discourse video professionals use to discuss vertical video, (2) how new technologies affect video professionals' daily newsroom responsibilities, and (3) how the political economy of local TV news influences the adoption of new video formats. Little has been written about vertical video in the scholarly literature, and this article fills this gap by providing empirical evidence that represents a first step for scholars and practitioners wishing to understand vertical video and its place within local TV news.

Bourdieu and Distinguishing Through Discourse

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu (1984) writes about the educational requirements necessary to read the “codes” embedded within art:

In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*) A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. (p. 2)

Bourdieu argues that social capital is achieved through “seeing” and “knowledge,” and, as it applies to this case study, video professionals showcase their knowledge through specialized talk about photographic principles which guide their work. Knowing the codes of composition, lighting, and aesthetic quality provides video professionals' practices with authority and status and frames 9×16 vertical video oppositionally as unlearned and amateur. Bock (2011) applied Bourdieu's field theory to a study of how print journalists discussed multimedia and video. Through discourse, the print journalists in Bock's study created a hierarchy of tasks and naturalized their workplace practices, which forms what Bourdieu called *habitus*. The habitus, according to Bourdieu (1990), “produces individual and collective practices . . . [that] tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms” (p. 54). The habitus is established and maintained through discourse within a group, and Bock concluded that photojournalists and reporters discussed their work in order to “define their workplace identity

and maintain their professional distinction” (p. 602). This hierarchical distinction is not new for journalism studies and art history as the advent of photography challenged the authority of the written word over 100 years ago (Bock, 2012). New technologies like smartphones and mobile applications, however, appear to replicate the distinctions journalists draw between their work and the work of an untrained public.

Marchetti (2005) also examined the journalistic field using a Bourdieuan analysis by examining the increasing specialization within journalism. Importantly, he noted how the specialization of fields occurs not only because of what is happening within newsrooms but also because of the social and economic contexts in which journalists work. External forces like user-generated content, citizen journalism, and blogs place pressure on journalists to maintain their professional authority. As journalists struggle to defend their field, Macek (2013) argues that audiences are concurrently establishing their own social and cultural capital by participating in and interacting with new forms of online media and video production. “Through participation we establish our common interest in shared contents and so we ensure that our cultural capital (and thus our values, preferences, tastes, opinions) and that of those included in our social circles are compatible” (Macek, 2013, p. 5). As video professionals defend wide-screen display as the broadcast industry standard, camera-enabled smartphones and mobile applications like Snapchat and Periscope can be thought of as producing a consumer habitus that eschews aesthetic principles, journalistic ethics, and distribution guidelines. Macek describes two processes in the contemporary media environment that contribute to the struggle over distinction: *expert curation* and *social curation*. “Expert curation is based on broadcasters’ push strategies—it keeps audience decision-making within the boundaries of the pre-structured textual terrain,” while social curation refers to the “participative selection of the content agenda, a process based on audiences’ grassroots tactics” (p. 8). As platforms and devices shift “from television sets to computers and other wired screens, *expert curation* is becoming partly useless” (p. 8).

Authenticity and the Visual Medium

Often filmed by consumers, vertical videos emphasize, according to Ross (2014), “the potential for new media technologies to be used for capturing the ‘moment’” and highlight “the object of observation rather than traditional aesthetic concerns” (p. 2). A media environment in which consumers and professionals view and produce content with smartphones, tablets, and other digital media devices creates a context in which vertical video and its “seemingly ‘amateur’ mode of framing raises issues around concepts of authenticity and aesthetic norms” (p. 2). The authenticity of vertical video, particularly with regard to breaking news, is something video professionals working in the visual medium of TV must accommodate. While converting vertical video for a 16 × 9 editing timeline requires extra time from video professionals in TV news, “the moment” speaks to the police shootings, natural disasters,

and terrorist attacks that are increasingly captured by bystanders on smartphones in a vertical format and distributed by TV news outlets. Because TV relies upon the exclusivity and salience of images, professional knowledge and aesthetic preferences are sacrificed for the content.

Roth (2012) connected this concept of authenticity to TV as a visual medium by describing how technical visual images have influenced written culture. “People who rely primarily on technical images to communicate with one another no longer think in terms of cause and effect, of events moving in one direction towards a goal or conclusion . . .” (p. 328). Roth, relying on Vilem Flusser’s *Towards a Philosophy of a Photograph*, argued that mediated images have influenced the trajectory of art, writing, and history. Roth described Flusser’s hopeful view that people “find ways of ‘writing’ innovative code, of resisting a persistent tendency towards sameness and predictability, and of turning the vast potential of technical images into meaningful dialogue” (p. 328). While video professionals possess the learned artistic codes discussed by Bourdieu, consumers are writing new code with smartphones and mobile apps, exerting outside pressures, and threatening the professional field.

The Economics of Mobile and Online News

According to investment firm KPCB, viewers are not only watching content on mobile devices but “29 percent of mobile video viewing is vertical” (Corbett, 2015). Incorporating the economics of TV news provides broader context for analyzing the discourse video professionals use to discuss vertical video and how new formats and technologies influence newsgathering practices. Klinenberg (2005) approached media convergence through a political economic lens and examined how technological advancements affect the production and quality of content produced by “media workers.” Despite social theorists like Manuel Castells and Jürgen Habermas emphasizing the media’s role in daily life, Klinenberg argues that scholars have largely abandoned investigating “how organizations responsible for producing the news and information work” (p. 49). In his ethnographic study of a “major news organization,” he explored how convergence and digital technologies have been adopted while newsroom staffs have shrank, forcing journalists to multitask. Exploring how social and mobile media are incorporated into journalists’ daily practices highlights the tensions these technologies create for the adoption and acceptance of new devices and platforms. The prevalence of smartphones has played a major role in the popularity of vertical video, so it is crucial to describe not only how video professionals discuss this trend but also how mobile-friendly formats affect journalists’ daily workplace responsibilities. “In the new media newsroom, journalists have become *flexible* laborers, reskilled to meet demands from several media at once” (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 54, emphasis in original).

To understand how or whether local TV news might be a venue where vertical video is adopted, Schudson’s (1989) work on newsroom practice is instructive. He studied news through (1) the political economy of news institutions, (2) a sociological study of organizations that views how journalists are trained and constrained by

occupational routines, and (3) a “culturological” approach that “emphasizes the constraining force of broad cultural symbol systems regardless of the details of organizational and occupational routines” (p. 266). Schudson argued that, while each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, news sociologists should use a combination of these approaches to understand how “the news is made.” This study seeks to understand how news is made in a contemporary digital media environment by reviewing how new technologies influence newsroom practices and how local TV news stations incorporate (or don’t) new formats like vertical video. The adoption of or resistance to new formats reveals changing patterns of journalistic practice in relation to technological, economic, and social conditions as well as how these changes are talked about.

Research Questions

To address this article’s three main themes, the following research questions are posed:

Research Question 1: How does the discourse video professionals in local TV news use when discussing vertical video establish a professional versus amateur *distinction*?

Bourdieu’s (1990) *field theory* is applied in order to understand how, through the creation of a habitus, workplace practices are naturalized and video professionals exhibit authority over their professional field. Bourdieu (1984) described the “cultural competence” viewers must possess in order to read art. This competence is often developed, Bourdieu argued, through education and specialized knowledge within a field.

Research Question 2: How does the “authenticity” of vertical video affect how video professionals incorporate this format into their visual storytelling?

Vertical video can be analyzed using what scholars have called photography’s “aesthetic of authenticity” (Bock, 2016, p. 5; Murray, 2008; Schroeder, 2008). Images captured by bystanders at a breaking news event are often poorly lit, shaky, and badly framed (Ross, 2014). The aesthetics of a “low-grade image,” however, can be a “privileged form of TV ‘truth telling’, signifying authenticity and an indexical reproduction of the real world” (Dovey, 2000, p. 55).

According to a 2015 report by the Pew Research Center, two thirds of Americans own a smartphone with 67% of these owners using it to “share pictures, videos, or commentary about events happening in their community” (Smith, 2015, para. 21). The report also found that 75% of younger smartphone owners (ages 18–29 years) used their smartphone to watch video. This raises important issues concerning newsgathering (filming video) and the distribution of news (displaying video). Despite newsroom staffs shrinking due to financial constraints brought on by the 2008 recession (Papper,

2014), local TV news stations are producing more content than ever. This has led to an increased reliance on viewer video. While scholars have examined how news outlets have utilized social media and how Web 2.0 platforms have influenced journalistic practices (Hermida, 2012; Newman, 2009), this article examines how TV, as a visual medium, cannot ignore vertical video's authenticity.

Research Question 3: How does the political economy of local TV news influence how and whether vertical video is adopted?

While business models for mobile and online news distribution remain fluid and somewhat uncertain, the institutional influence media organizations have on journalists and the work they do is important. The business decisions and financial interests of management often determine which platforms TV newsrooms adopt and where they invest staffing resources. Viewing TV as a "legacy" medium with its primary distribution outlet being the evening newscast suggests management will struggle to adopt mobile and online delivery platforms (Ursell, 2001). In November 2015, the *Financial Times* reported that Snapchat receives over 6 billion daily video views, closing the gap with Facebook's 8 billion daily video views (Bradshaw, 2015). According to Bell, Snapchat has seen "a 9 times higher engagement rate with vertical rather than horizontal video," which has financial implications for the advertising potential of vertically oriented mobile video content (Graham, 2015, para. 3). As ratings for local TV news continue to decline—down 22% since 2007 (Matsa, 2016)—and it regrets to recognize vertical video as a viable option for producing and delivering content for a mobile audience, it could be a creative and economic missed opportunity.

Method

Fifteen semistructured, in-depth interviews were conducted with current and former video professionals in local TV news between October 2015 and February 2016. Job titles within and between local TV newsrooms vary from photojournalist, video journalist, videographer, multimedia journalist (MMJ), one-man band, and so on. Therefore, the term "video professional" is used to refer to *anyone who works with video on a daily basis and whose primary responsibilities include shooting, editing, and producing video stories for broadcast or the web*. One interviewee no longer works in local TV news, but he currently works as a video instructor at a technical college as well as a freelance video producer.

I worked in TV news as a videographer, producer, and editor for 8 years in three different U.S. TV markets and began soliciting interviews from former colleagues. To expand the pool of interviewees, a snowball sampling technique was used along with a search of station bio pages and the National Press Photographer Association's public Facebook group. Because men have traditionally dominated video production positions, 10 of the 15 interviewees are men. Interviewees ranged in age from 24 to 53 with an average age of 35.4 years; professional TV news experience ranged from 1 to

31 years with a mean of 19.2 years. Eight interviewees work at large market stations (top 25: Nielsen, 2015), with the remaining seven working at medium- and small-market stations (see Appendix Table A1). Interviews lasted between 25 and 42 minutes. All subjects were assigned a participant number to protect their identities. Three interviews were conducted in person and the remaining 12 were conducted via Skype or Google Hangout. All audio were recorded with permission and the researcher transcribed all interviews. The transcripts were analyzed “by hand” and, using grounded theory, three major themes emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The discourse video professionals used to establish and maintain their professional distinction is intricately connected to their journalistic practices and the industry constraints on these practices. These themes, as well as the data collection procedures and analysis, are relational and mutually constitutive (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

While this study does not make universal claims about how vertical video is talked about and adopted by video professionals in local TV news, subjects working in a range of TV markets with varying levels of experience were included. Generalized claims cannot be made through qualitative research; rather, researchers can gather insights about the discourse video professionals use to discuss vertical video and how it affects their journalistic practices. Qualitative researchers must also consider data saturation when applying the method of in-depth interviews (Bowen, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saturation is reached when “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Many of the interviewees’ responses became repetitive after the 12th interview, and I concluded that saturation was achieved. Barnes (2016), in her ethnographic study of middle-class suburban Black women in Atlanta, argued that small, nonprobability samples of in-depth interviews provide opportunities to “identify theoretically significant ideas that warrant further study” and understand “what ‘goes on’ in a particular population” (p. 21; see also Bernard, 2006; Marshall, 1996; Small, 2009).

Results

The nuance of participants’ answers is explored in the following sections, and the three research questions are addressed as follows: (RQ 1) In order to distinguish their work as professional and label vertical video as “amateur,” video professionals relied upon their learned knowledge of aesthetic principles, workplace experience, and training. A professional habitus is naturalized and maintained in the workplace but, interestingly, may first be established in journalism schools and colleges. (RQ 2) Due to staffing constraints and the visual nature of TV, video professionals compromise their negative feelings toward vertical video for the exclusivity of the content. (RQ 3) Because local TV stations do not have the resources necessary to create and publish web- and mobile-only content and continue to rely upon broadcast as the primary distribution method, local TV news is unlikely to recognize the creative and economic potential of vertical video.

The Professional Versus Amateur Divide

At the beginning of each interview, subjects were asked to describe vertical video, so that a working definition of the concept could be established. Many immediately defined it as amateur. P10, a videographer with 14 years of experience in TV news, explained that vertical video has its place on mobile devices and smartphones, but wide-screen TV screens and 16 × 9 desktop computers offer the “standard professional version.” When asked if he ever shoots video vertically, P10 said he never does:

It’s just the years of experience and my professionalism . . . because me as a professional, even when I’m just shooting video of my son playing around and my dog in the backyard and playing with some toys whatever it may be . . . (personal communication, February 2, 2016)

A number of video professionals referenced the comfort and ease-of-use vertical video offers consumers. Video professionals noted that holding smartphones vertically is natural and has become a habit for many. Capturing breaking news or spontaneous personal events vertically, for example, was described by P6 as a reflex, with the user placing little thought into the composition of the image or eventual distribution platform. P6 explained:

Vertical video is a consumer-driven style; professionals don’t shoot video that way unless they’re just forgetful or lazy. You never see a professional video shot vertically unless it’s intentionally for Snapchat . . . Other times it’s birthday parties and breaking news when we’re not thinking and the accident happens, but there’s nothing shot professionally that I know of that’s vertical unless it’s for Snapchat. (personal communication, October 5, 2015)

Some video professionals described how they corrected bystanders who were filming breaking news vertically. “I kinda want to tell them that you’re shooting it the wrong way, but to the average person they may not see it that way,” P1 said. “To someone that works in video and edits video we know that if you put it in vertical you’re going to have the black stripes on the side, it’s going to look awkward . . .” (personal communication, November 9, 2015). This distinction between the “average person” and “we” highlights the distinction video pros use to situate their craft. P3, a videographer in a large-market station, described how her coworker corrected someone shooting vertical video at a breaking news scene and how she perceives journalists working for online outlets at press events.

[Y]ou can always tell . . . we’ll see the blog reporters, the web reporters and the web people and . . . they’re shooting [vertically] and it’s just like, ‘Umm, they’re not real photographers.’ You can tell they’re amateurs. (personal communication, November 2, 2015)

She went on to explain how consumers and fellow journalists will come to appreciate these shooting “tips” because it will enhance the standards of their video. “[T]he level of professionalism, just, it’ll look so much better. If only they knew that they’d be like, ‘Ohh, I should’ve done that the whole time’” (personal communication, November 2, 2015). By describing their professional training and highlighting an understanding of photographic principles like the “Rule of Thirds,” lighting, and composition, video professionals emphasized a videographic competence, which, according to them, is crucial for creating aesthetically pleasing images.

P12, a 29-year-old videographer with 6 years of industry experience working for a small-market station, told me he has corrected friends who shoot video vertically. He also explained that he draws conclusions about the level of one’s video production experience and photographic knowledge based on how they hold a smartphone.

If I see a vertical video, I immediately know they’re not a photographer or do video or anything like that, immediately . . . [I]f you know pretty much anything about shooting video I feel like you almost always turn it sideways, turn it horizontal. (personal communication, February 6, 2016)

These comments reinforce how video professionals view training, education, and knowledge of broadcast standards as necessary for producing visual stories. P8, a 15-year veteran in TV news, added:

I think vertical video is just the easy factor now, it’s the lazy man’s factor of shooting video. You know, you got your phone, you can hold it [vertically] and it’s a lot easier than trying to hold it with two hands . . . so people are just more comfortable holding it with one hand. (personal communication, December 15, 2015)

Perhaps one of the most insightful comments about the discourse video professionals use to establish and maintain a habitus came from P14, a 24-year-old MMJ with 1 year of experience working at a small-market station. Although broadcast standards and production aesthetics are reinforced on the job, they are introduced, she said, in journalism school. P14 described shooting a breaking news event on campus with her smartphone and returning to the studio

so proud of myself [but] everyone said, ‘No you have to shoot it horizontally!’ . . . I don’t think age necessarily makes a difference because in school they’re instilling into you to shoot it horizontally. It’s a profession thing. (personal communication, February 5, 2016)

P13, a reporter and anchor with 3 years of local TV news experience working at a small-market station, “doesn’t see the problem” with vertical video and regularly relies on vertical framing to shoot and promote her stories on social media.

When I'm shooting a selfie video that's teasing a story, it's weird for me to do it horizontally I'm going to continue to do it because I think it looks better at least with my selfie videos. (personal communication, February 3, 2016)

P13 said she shoots video wide-screen if she is at a breaking news event to get "more of the scene." Due to her relative inexperience with video production, P13 does not consider herself an expert but does apply this label to her colleague P12. She said her lack of technical training could, in fact, be an advantage. Because she does not feel the need to adhere to professional "guidelines," she is able to find creative applications for vertical video in her work. "I guess experts would say that because [they've] been doing it for all these years and, for whatever reason, they think that [widescreen] looks better," she said. "But I always try to look at things differently" (personal communication, February 3, 2016).

The evolution from 4×3 to 16×9 was a gradual shift and one that did not radically alter the rules of composition. Since wide-screen high-definition TVs have been available at the consumer level for over 10 years, P12 explained that, "It's what we're used to, it started off with movies with the widescreen . . . We're creatures of habit" (personal communication, February 6, 2016). Bourdieu (1990) explained how members of a group or class have their own personal style that deviates slightly from the habitus but "it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity . . . but also by the difference that makes the 'manner'" (p. 60). While some video professionals may understand why consumers shoot vertical video and might even occasionally shoot their own videos vertically, these instances are slight deviations from their professionally accepted practice that has been developed and reinforced through training and years of experience working in broadcast news. These instances occur only outside of their professional practice.

TV Is a Visual Medium

Despite the negative feelings toward vertical video and the insistence by video professionals that it is an amateur way of shooting, broadcast news is often forced to use content, regardless of its aesthetic quality, because of its timeliness and exclusivity. P9, a videographer with 16 years of professional industry experience, described how he must review viewer video, regardless of aspect ratio, to make sure it complies with journalistic ethics. "I'm always skeptical because they're the amateurs, I'm the professional. I know what I'm doing, I know what to shoot and what not to shoot" (personal communication, February 10, 2016). P9 says he screens video for offensive language and graphic images and has seen a shift in the mentality of video professionals. There is less a feeling of "relying on other people because that's what we're here for," he said, and more of an embrace of viewer video. This is not due to the aesthetics of the images, however, but is often a matter of resources. P9 said, "We only have so many trucks and we only have so many crews to send to our assignments"

We need people to help us out when we can't be there" (personal communication, February 10, 2016).

P5, a 31-year veteran in TV news, reiterated this sentiment by balancing a frustration with vertical video's aesthetics with an acknowledgment of its utility for local TV newsgathering. He said that while we don't "see the world" vertically, there is "more vertical video on our air . . . because we rely on viewers to send us images to help us with . . . some of the content that we use on our air." Like blogs and social media, P5 sees viewer video as another "disruption" for the local TV news industry, but said "[viewers are] also generating a lot of content and a lot of images for us, so who are we to complain? We'll take whatever we can get and yet it could be so much better" (personal communication, October 12, 2015).

While the tension over aesthetic quality and workflow processes may bother video professionals in local TV news, they "are forced to deal with it," according to P13, because like other new technologies introduced in the last 20 years, "it's a trend that's not going away" (personal communication, February 2, 2016). P13 added that young people growing up with vertical video and smartphones will continue driving the trend and "these two worlds are going to have to learn how to dissolve together [and] they're going to have to find a way to coincide with each other" (personal communication, February 2, 2016). The "two worlds"—local broadcast news and consumer production and consumption of news—have coexisted before, but vertical video presents an interesting new tension concerning the discourse about style, quality, and professional practice.

Although video workflow has gotten easier with broadband-connected cameras capable of live-streaming breaking news and nonlinear computer editing platforms, several video pros described a frustration with the "extra step" required to convert vertical video to a wide-screen display. P3 described this as an annoyance in her daily workflow. When she receives viewer video in the field, she spends additional time ensuring "the video on-air look[s] good with these bars, whether we crop it and we're trying to blur the background . . .," she said. "And it's like, man, if only these people knew to just rotate it, it would look so much better, it would look absolutely better" (personal communication, November 2, 2015).

These comments reinforce Ross's (2014) comment about the moment because, she argued, "vertical video gestures powerfully to a subjective human observer behind the camera" (p. 2) and reinforces the image's truth-telling authority. Photo-journalists have always relied on images to document and present historical events "as they happened." As mentioned by P9 and P5, staffing and logistical constraints limit video professionals' ability to be everywhere and vertical video collected by bystanders fills a newsgathering gap and supports the notion that the exclusivity and nature of the content takes precedence over aesthetic concerns. Regardless of whether the footage is unstable, poorly lit, or shaky, vertical video extends journalism's reliance on truthful accounts of reality through an authority that is independent of aspect ratio.

The Business of Apps, Social Media, and Online News

In addition to the discourse video professionals use to distinguish their work and the implications vertical video is having on newsgathering responsibilities, the economics of news for mobile and social media is still being understood. If viewers, especially younger demographics, are increasingly receiving news through social media via a mobile device, local TV news would be wise to adjust its distribution model to meet consumers where and how they watch content. Local TV news stations should not only want to reach viewers on various platforms but also maintain viewer engagement throughout each story.

Adopting vertical video poses challenges for video professionals and management because it requires a rethinking of the primary distribution platform. P15, an eight-year veteran videographer working for a small-market station, explained how “people are still stuck in what TV is, which is a legacy medium of turn on the 5 o’clock news . . .,” she said (personal communication, February 7, 2016). P15 also cited her station’s weak online presence due to limited staff in the web department as a potential reason her station continues to rely upon the evening newscasts as its primary distribution platform. With regard to shooting vertical video for a mobile audience, she said:

I think it would be really interesting the day that I start shooting video vertically in order to provide that for that particular audience. I don’t know what that day would look like; I don’t know, I would probably feel really icky about it, honestly ((laughs)). But really, ultimately, I should get over it because if that’s where our consumers are and what they’re looking for then that’s what I should be providing them. (personal communication, February 7, 2016)

Reformatting the footage captured by staff videographers in the field to fit a 9×16 mobile screen is one way local stations could reach and engage new audiences. This, as several video professionals acknowledged, would place additional stress and responsibility on an already-thin staff. While many were open to the idea of repurposing their footage for a mobile audience, they recognized the additional time and labor this requires. P13 has been in the industry for 14 years and is aware of the motto “do more with less.” Resizing 16×9 wide-screen video for a vertical screen would exacerbate this mentality, he said, because it means “somebody [has] to maneuver all that video to the vertical side, which, I wouldn’t say it’s difficult, it would just be very time consuming” (personal communication, February 2, 2016). P12, also citing his small-market station’s poor web presence due to staffing limitations, said the production and distribution constraints are largely financial decisions that are “bigger than the newsroom; it’s more on the corporate side for why we don’t have a big mobile presence” (personal communication, February 6, 2016).

The resistance toward mobile is tied to the platforms broadcasters are heavily invested in. The inflexibility of large organizations is at issue. Major-market TV

stations employing 30 staff videographers have millions invested in monitors, cameras, and editing suites, which is why P6 believes broadcasters will be slow to adopt mobile technologies and continue dictating the terms of distribution:

Broadcasters have spent millions of dollars on HDTV, millions of dollars, and they're like, 'Ohhh, we screwed up! We need to buy TVs that are 9×16 and sell TVs that are 9×16 .' They're not gonna do it, and those who have those millions of dollars invested in the product... are going to control how we see it... (personal communication, October 5, 2015)

P11, a videographer working for a station in a medium market, said that while stations wish to pursue a digital strategy, they are hesitant because the broadcast newscast still provides a reliable source of revenue. "The money keeps on coming in through the age range of 35–45," he said. "That's where the demographic number is, and that's where they're spending their money, so they invest in advertising on primetime TV rather than social media" (personal communication, December 20, 2015). P11 sees this "old-school mentality" slowly changing, as they start "to see that the money is coming in from the clicks and the 'Likes' and the shares... but it's going to take a while" (personal communication, December 20, 2015). These comments are supported by data from the Pew Research Center's "State of the News Media 2015." Revenues for local TV stations were strong in 2014 and forecasted to remain strong, which the report attributed to the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling that nearly guarantees heavy spending on political advertising during election cycles (Matsa, 2015). While strong revenue projections are good news for local TV stations, online revenue only accounts for 4% (US\$800 million) of the total revenue for local TV broadcasters and "is not projected to grow much over the next 5 years." These numbers support the argument that creative implementations with video formats on mobile and online platforms are unlikely to come from video professionals in local TV news.

P15, the video professional who explained how her station could do a better job of reaching younger viewers, found the potential of vertical video intriguing. When I asked whether she sees an opportunity to produce a web-only or special Snapchat version of her story for a separate segment of the viewing audience, she said she hadn't thought about it, but agreed it could provide value for her station and viewers as well as a creative challenge for herself.

I think the way that we should be looking at it is, What's the platform that best serves the story that best serves the viewers? And so you're really getting me to think differently, which is good, about the 'eek factor' of vertical video... [I]t's in our best interests to be—for our own longevity in the business and being relevant and meeting the needs of the consumer, we should definitely be going in that direction and providing that. (personal communication, February 7, 2016)

This desire to evolve and adapt was a theme that came up in nearly every interview. New technologies like GoPros, drones, and smartphones have been integrated into the tool kits of local TV news videographers just as laptop computers, digital cameras, and satellite trucks were in the past. P2, a 20-year veteran videographer working in a large market, said he

used to worry [about] our jobs being replaced by portable devices, vertical video, any outside sources, but there's always a need for content, there's always a need for live, and I do believe that that's the role that as local photographers, local photojournalists fill. (personal communication, November 2, 2015)

Conclusion

This article has examined the discourse video professionals use to distinguish their work as professional while labeling vertical video as amateur, how vertical video's authenticity coupled with TV as a visual medium demands video pros use vertical content despite its aesthetic appearance, and how the business of local TV news does not support integrating mobile and online applications of vertical video. These inter-related themes suggest that as social and economic forces like viewer video and staffing continue to exert pressure on journalistic practices, video professionals will continue to distinguish a habitus through specialized talk about their craft. The limitations of this study must also be acknowledged. Participants were video professionals from local TV news. Freelance and network TV camera operators who may have a more normative conception of video production and video aesthetics were not included. Their inclusion may have yielded different results. While broad geographic and age ranges were achieved, the average age of participants was 35.4 with a majority of participants ($n = 8$) working in large markets (Nielsen Designated Market Area (DMA) #20 and above). Potential for future studies on vertical video include interviewing only journalists newly entering the field of broadcast news and interviewing filmmakers and activist media makers in order to understand whether capturing content vertically is motivated with a consideration for production or distribution.

This article has several implications for video professionals working in local TV news. First, videographers and editors maintain a professional habitus by relying on their knowledge of codes that are introduced in journalism school and reinforced in the workplace. Second, video professionals are under logistical and staffing constraints that make the use of vertical video unavoidable. Finally, video professionals will continue to adapt to new technologies, but the economic model that supports local TV news suggests that management, especially at large market stations, will continue to rely upon broadcast as the primary distribution platform. Some video professionals working in local TV news will likely find creative uses for vertical video on their station websites and mobile apps, while others will continue to bemoan its amateur aesthetics and unfit display. Regardless of how video professionals feel about vertical video, it is clear that consumers will continue shooting and sharing vertical video via

mobile apps and devices designed to support the format. Video professionals should embrace the creative possibilities vertical video presents and take creative risks that have the potential of introducing their visual storytelling to new audiences.

Appendix

Table A1. Sample.

Initials	Age ^a	Years of Experience ^b	Market
P1	44	20	Philadelphia #5
P2	43	20	Philadelphia #5
P3	32	13	DC #7
P4	28	5	Denver #17
P5	53	31	Denver #17
P6	45	15	Denver #17
P7	31	8	Orlando #19
P8	37	15	Orlando #19
P9	33	16	Baltimore #26
P10	40	14	Columbus #31
P11	32	14	Austin #39
P12	29	6	Rochester #76
P13	26	3	Rochester #76
P14	24	1	Lafayette #121
P15	34	8	Anchorage #148

^aAge range between 24 and 53 years, average of 35.4 years. ^bProfessional experience range between 1 and 31 years, average of 19.2 years.

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