

TikTok is not the enemy of journalism. It's just a new way of reaching people.

Adapted from Chris Stokel-Walker, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2022

Twenty-three million people in the UK use TikTok every month. Enhanced by the pandemic and its impact on remote work, apps like TikTok and Instagram have become the digital equivalent of the watercooler. It's where we talk about Love Island, the latest soaps, the dysfunction in our government and what's going on in the world.

So why are we so surprised that it's a place people turn to for news?

Ofcom's latest report on news consumption in the UK, showing that TikTok is the fastest-growing source of news for adults, has been met with incredulity and worries about the death of "traditional journalism".

But rather than seeing it as a threat, old media bods should see it as a natural evolution. News finds us in the best possible way, and always has. Whether it's the switch from newspapers to TV bulletins that summed up a day in an evening, to the constant updates of 24-hour TV channels and social media updates, the way journalism has been presented has always been in flux.

When radio, then television, first began to dabble in reporting on the world, newspaper folk worried that the speed and immediacy of broadcast media would put paid to print. Decades on, print is still with us. Nightly news broadcasts were also due to go the way of the dodo when CNN first started transmitting 24 hours a day, yet appointment viewing remains relatively strong for well-packaged summaries of the day's news. And all of them were due to be overtaken by the internet. At each inflection point in the evolution of journalism, the arguments were the same: the medium was so different, and the speed at which information was gathered and imparted, that journalism was going to the dogs. The old ways of presenting news were always the best – until the new thing came along, the world didn't end and, actually, people preferred the alternative.

Now, TikTok does things differently – in style, format and how it presents videos to users – than even other tech platforms, and so was always going to be a more significant break from what's gone before. It also has a different cadence, language

and style of presentation to even other social media platforms, which is why it is less possible for news outlets to simply recut their existing TV or Facebook video for the platform.

But all that doesn't necessarily mean dumbing down, nor is it the end of journalistic values. Journalism's old guard has latched on to one key stat to make its case: less than a third of youngsters trust what they see on TikTok – less than half the proportion that trust TV news.

While news outlets such as the *Washington Post* have successfully migrated to the platform, producing idiosyncratic videos that take a wry stance on the day's news, most media platforms have steered clear of TikTok to date.

That leaves a vacuum that individuals, who are often not trained journalists, have filled. Nearly twice as many users (44%) say they get information from other people they follow on the app as opposed to news organisations (24%). When confronted with stories such as the Amber Heard-Johnny Depp defamation trial, TikTok's "news" output can often come up short, becoming a talking shop for scurrilous gossip and painfully off-piste over-analysis.

I/ The TikTok Phenomenon ...

- Increasing number of people in the UK use the platform
- Place where people have grown used to gathering and chatting virtually since lockdown
- Fastest-growing source of news (cf Ofcom report and figures at the end)
- Works differently from other social networks (type of message / rhythm ...)

II/ ... has once more aroused fears in mainstream media...

See synonyms: to put paid sth / to go the way of the dodo / go to the dogs

- Radio then television
- Cable TV
- The Internet
- Each time same phenomenon:
Just as every time a new source of news appeared, they scared journalism and papers are bound to disappear / that it would lead to the demise of traditional source of news

III/ ... but it should be embraced

- **It is True that** TikTok is different and it is more difficult for traditional media to adapt to this new medium
- Apart from the WP, most of them have stayed away // hardly any of them has joined the platform, only the WP
- They use the argument that Tiktok is unreliable = see lack of trust in the media
- **HOWEVER** because that's where more and more people are going for news, they **NEED** to accept and embrace it Unless they do turn to this social network, others – not professional journalists - will do so and act as news providers on the platform, to the detriment of the quality of journalism and truth.

The Washington Post on TikTok:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@washingtonpost?lang=fr>

The dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*) is an extinct flightless bird that was endemic to the island of Mauritius, which is east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean

