

Mobile Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of mobile technology and high-speed wireless networks in the twenty-first century has fundamentally restructured the production, dissemination, and consumption of news. At the forefront of this digital paradigm shift is mobile journalism, also known as MoJo. MoJo is a form of multimedia newsgathering and storytelling where the primary device used to capture, edit, and transmit news is a smartphone or tablet. By leveraging highly capable, network-connected smartphones and portable accessories, MoJo has shifted news production from capital-intensive, team-reliant endeavors to agile, solo-reporter workflows. Today, a single journalist equipped with a smartphone, a directional microphone, and a portable stabilizer can execute the entire journalistic workflow directly from the field. This technological empowerment has democratized the media landscape, allowing diverse voices to bypass traditional gatekeepers. This paper examines the transformative impact of mobile journalism on the contemporary media landscape.

KEYWORDS: data, journalism, mobile journalism, Mojo, journalists, news, news media.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital communication technologies has fundamentally restructured the production, dissemination, and consumption of news. As digital technology and smartphone capabilities continue to advance, traditional newsgathering methodologies are increasingly being augmented or replaced by mobile workflows. At the forefront of this transformation is mobile journalism, widely known as MoJo, which is the practice of gathering, editing, and distributing news using network-connected portable devices, primarily smartphones and tablets [1].

Mobile Journalism represents a paradigm shift in the contemporary media landscape. By leveraging highly portable, network-connected devices -primarily smartphones-MoJo consolidates the traditional multi-person broadcast workflow into a single, agile operator. Mobile journalism has revolutionized modern news workflows by offering unprecedented immediacy, physical flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. Armed with only a smartphone, journalists are empowered to cover almost any story in a timely and safer manner.

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WHAT IS MOBILE JOURNALISM?

The raw and immediate footage that captivates global audiences is increasingly captured, edited, and distributed using nothing more than a mobile device. This practice, formally known as mobile journalism (MoJo), is a form of multimedia newsgathering and storytelling that enables journalists to operate as fully autonomous, one-person production units. Historically, broadcast journalism required capital-intensive infrastructure, including heavy electronic news gathering (ENG) cameras, dedicated audio technicians, satellite uplink vans, and multi-person editorial teams. MoJo dismantles these structural barriers, condensing the entire journalistic pipeline-from initial capture to final publication-into a single handheld device. For a mobile journalist, the smartphone is not merely a camera; it is a repository of sensitive professional and personal data. It contains the contact details of confidential sources, unpublished investigative footage, location history, and communication logs. Figure 1 shows a team of mobile journalists [2], while Figure 2 shows some tools used by mobile journalism [3]. One important

accessory is the shotgun microphone, shown in Figure 3 [4].

In the realm of journalism, news serves to entertain, enlighten, educate, inform, and draw attention to critical societal matters, a function equally relevant in the context of mobile journalism. Journalism is undergoing a transformation with the emergence of new paradigms distinct from traditional approaches, driven by technological advancements and a shift towards digital journalism. The burgeoning dominance of mobile phones and social media platforms as primary conduits for news and information underscores the mounting significance of mobile journalism in contemporary society [5]. Today, all that is needed to capture breaking news is a smartphone and an Internet connection. Figure 4 shows a representation of mobile journalism [6].

The roots of mobile journalism trace back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, aligning with the commercial expansion of the public Internet and early mobile data protocols. Early experiments in mobile news delivery focused primarily on text-based dissemination. The term “mojo” was coined in 2005 at the Fort Myers News-Press in Florida and gained widespread traction following the release of the first iPhone in 2007. A mobile journalist, or “mojo,” handles the entire production workflow solo: shooting video, recording audio, writing scripts, editing packages, and even broadcasting live, all from a single handheld device. Mobile journalism has allowed journalists to carry an entire newsroom in their pockets. A typical mobile journalist is shown in Figure 5 [7].

The rise of MoJo is driven by three intersecting technological trends: the exponential increase in smartphone processing power and camera quality, the global expansion of high-speed wireless networks, and the dominance of social media platforms as primary news vectors. Together, these forces have enabled a single journalist to perform tasks that historically required an entire production crew and hundreds of thousands of dollars in specialized equipment. Mobile journalism is not merely a technical adjustment but a paradigm shift that democratizes media access, accelerates the news cycle, expands geographical representation, and enhances journalistic safety, thereby fundamentally altering the relationship between the press and the public [1].

APPLICATIONS OF MOBILE JOURNALISM

Mobile journalism is digital storytelling where the main device used for newsgathering and content creation is a smartphone or a tablet. It is a form of multimedia newsgathering and storytelling that enables journalists to document, edit, and share news

using small, network connected devices like smartphones. Photos, videos, audio, and graphics can be created and edited on the smartphone and uploaded to newsroom servers, and to online and social platforms, direct from the device. Common applications of mobile journalism include the following [1,3,7,8]:

- *Mobile Reporting*: Mobile technology has revolutionized the way news is gathered and distributed, and MoJo has emerged as a powerful tool in the hands of journalists. Today, mobile media allow for connectivity at any time and from any location. Mobiles could be used to capture a moment anytime and anywhere, even during crowded events. Mojoes around the world see their mobile devices as powerful tools to produce quality journalism. For journalistic work, the term “mobile reporting” has become established in English-speaking countries. In addition to tablet journalism, this also refers to mobile phone journalism, meaning creating a contribution for or with a mobile phone. Occasionally, this type of journalism is also called Journalism 2.0, although this more commonly refers to the mobile use of social media. Figure 6 shows a class on mobile journalism [9].
- *Crisis Reporting*: The most immediate and intuitive application of mobile journalism is in breaking news and crisis reporting. In high-pressure scenarios such as natural disasters, industrial accidents, or sudden civil unrest, traditional news crews are frequently slowed down by logistical bottlenecks, transport delays, and equipment setup times. A mobile journalist, conversely, can arrive on the scene almost instantly and begin live-streaming or recording immediately.
- *Undercover Reporting*: Reporting from hostile environments and authoritarian regimes presents severe physical and political risks to journalists. Large camera crews and conspicuous broadcasting equipment make traditional media teams easy targets for hostile actors, state censors, or military forces. The discreet nature of a smartphone allows mobile journalists to blend into crowds and operate virtually unnoticed, significantly enhancing their physical safety.
- *Real-Time Reporting*: The most significant impact of MoJo is speed. In traditional TV journalism, a crew would need to shoot a story, return to the station, hand over footage for editing, and wait for a scheduled broadcast slot. Social media and mobile-first news facilitate faster news dissemination, allow real-time

reporting, and make news production more cost-effective. In a 24/7 digital news environment, speed is a critical determinant of editorial influence and audience engagement. The traditional broadcast workflow is inherently time-consuming, requiring footage to be captured, physically transported or transmitted via satellite back to a central studio. Mobile journalism compresses this multi-stage workflow into a synchronized, real-time process. Because a smartphone is an all-in-one capture, editing, and transmission device, a mobile journalist can broadcast live or upload edited packages directly from the scene of an event within minutes of its occurrence.

- *Citizen Journalism:* With mobile journalism, anyone can record significant incidents and act as a citizen journalist. The democratization of media technology has blurred the traditional boundary between professional journalists and ordinary citizens. Because billions of individuals now carry high-resolution cameras in their pockets, eyewitnesses are frequently the first to document historic events. This grassroots form of mobile journalism has played a pivotal role in mobilizing social movements worldwide. Mobile technology has thus transformed the passive audience into active chroniclers of history, shifting the power dynamic of information control away from centralized authorities.
- *Sports Reporting:* MoJo has found robust applications in sports reporting and documentary filmmaking. Sports journalism requires immense agility to follow fast-paced, unpredictable athletic events. Mobile devices allow sports reporters to navigate crowded stadiums freely, capturing candid behind-the-scenes moments, locker-room celebrations, and immediate post-game reactions that traditional, stationary camera setups miss.
- *Photojournalism:* Mobile journalists report in video, audio, photography, and graphics using apps on their portable devices. 15 Associated Press photographers who shoot with phones explain when and why they prefer a smartphone to a traditional DSLR.
- *Podcasts:* Popular podcast production apps mean you can make an entire show with your phone. You can record and edit a podcast on a smartphone, and upload the audio to an audio host site, as BBC journalist Nick Garnett did with the series about the legendary footballer, Mo Salah, using the mobile app Ferrite to edit and record the shows, before uploading them to the BBC Sounds website.

- *Mobile-first Websites:* According to a Reuters report, around 68% of respondents use smartphones to get online news. To cater to one of the major mobile-first news markets in the world, news channels are making their websites and apps compatible with different devices, with adjustable fonts and contrast, and smart structuring.

BENEFITS

One of the most notable advantages of mobile journalism is that it enables the journalist to overcome frequent challenges and barriers, often strengthening freedom of speech and access to information. The primary strategic advantages of mobile journalism include economic democratization, operational immediacy, physical agility, cost-effectiveness, agility, reporter safety, and the ability to access hard-to-reach areas. MoJo has successfully broken down the financial barriers of traditional broadcasting, compressed news production workflows, and granted journalists unprecedented physical agility and safety. Other benefits of mobile journalism include the following [1,7,10]:

- *Affordability:* Compared to traditional reporting, mobile journalism requires a lot less appliances. A single mobile device is used to record, edit, and publish news – making the medium much more affordable. Traditional broadcast journalism requires expensive equipment—cameras, tripods, satellite vans, and multi-person crews. Mobile journalism drastically cuts these costs. A reporter with a smartphone and a few affordable accessories (an external microphone, a mini tripod, and a portable light) can produce content.
- *Cost-effectiveness:* While traditional news reporting can require a bunch of equipment – good quality cameras, lenses, and so on – mobile journalism does not require expensive gear. Journalists report live from the ground armed with only a smartphone, a microphone, and a tripod. This makes it not just convenient but also highly cost-efficient. Reporters can operate with fewer personnel and reduced equipment, making field reporting more economically sustainable.
- *Portability:* One of the biggest advantages of smartphones is their portability. A mojo reporter can go where a traditional camera crew simply cannot. They can navigate tight spaces, run alongside events, and travel to remote locations carrying nothing more than a backpack. This agility is critical in crisis reporting. A large broadcast camera can be intimidating. It changes the behavior of people being filmed. A

smartphone, on the other hand, is small and almost invisible.

- *Transparency:* Real-time reporting using mobile devices enhances transparency. It builds public trust and the familiarity of smartphones makes it easier for journalists to approach respondents and people on the ground while covering news.
- *Democratization of Narratives:* Mobile journalism represents far more than a mere shift in equipment; it is a fundamental democratization of the journalistic craft. The impact of mobile journalism is particularly profound in the Global South, where traditional media infrastructure is often underfunded, politically compromised, or dominated by Western news agencies. In Africa and parts of Asia, MoJo has emerged as a powerful mechanism for decolonizing narratives and allowing local communities to tell their own stories through their own lenses. Organizations are actively training the next generation of journalists, proving that high-quality, impactful reporting does not require a Western-funded newsroom.
- *Democratization of Media Landscape:* Mobile journalism has empowered marginalized communities to tell their own stories, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and amplifying voices that have historically been underrepresented in the media. The democratization of technology has placed a fully functional multimedia newsroom into the pockets of billions of individuals worldwide. Historically, television broadcasting and field reporting were capital-intensive endeavors restricted to well-funded media conglomerates. Traditional electronic news gathering requires professional broadcast cameras, external lighting rigs, specialized audio recording equipment, and heavy-duty satellite uplink vehicles, creating an immense financial barrier to entry. Mobile journalism disrupts this economic model by consolidating the entire production suite into a consumer device that most journalists already own: the smartphone. By equipping a mobile journalist with a high-end smartphone and a few affordable accessories—such as a directional microphone, a compact tripod, and a portable LED light—newsrooms can deploy fully functional field reporters at a fraction of the cost of traditional setups.
- *Global Outreach:* MoJo addresses the economic realities of developing nations. The geopolitical significance of MoJo was globally demonstrated during the Arab Spring uprisings (2010–2012). In countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, where

authoritarian regimes heavily censored state media and barred international press corps, citizen journalists and local activists used smartphones to document human rights abuses and protests in real-time. This user-generated content bypassed state censors, routing directly to international satellite networks like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, which broadcast the mobile footage back to global audiences. The global expansion of 5G networks provides ultra-low latency and massive bandwidth, enabling mobile journalists to stream multi-camera.

- *Audience Engagement:* Collaboration and community engagement are crucial aspects of mobile journalism. By involving audiences in the news-gathering process, journalists can foster a sense of trust and transparency, building stronger relationships with their readership. Mobile journalism often uses social media to reach people. From Instagram and YouTube live streams to stories with polls and Q&As, social media is an interactive and engaging medium. Audiences will not merely watch a video of a remote event; they will navigate a 3D, phone-captured reconstruction of a news scene in their physical space, fostering unprecedented levels of empathy and cognitive engagement. Audiences can comment on news articles, vote in polls, ask questions, and present their opinions on social media. This makes news more engaging and provides the public an opportunity to directly interact with journalists and news channels.
- *Personalization:* As mobile journalism is becoming popular, the news is more diverse than ever. It is also increasingly becoming difficult to keep up with all the information. Personalized news enables the viewers to pick and choose what they want. News apps and websites analyze the browsing data and suggest news based on the topics and themes viewers are interested in. This helps the public stay updated and avoid being overwhelmed at the same time.

CHALLENGES

While mobile journalism offers unprecedented agility and democratization, it introduces severe operational challenges and deep ethical vulnerabilities that threaten the core tenets of journalistic integrity. The democratization of newsgathering tools has blurred the line between professional journalists and amateur content creators, contributing to the rapid spread of unverified information and “fake news.” Because anyone with a smartphone can publish content globally, the risk of sensationalism, disinformation, and ethical violations has increased exponentially.

Other challenges of mobile journalism include the following [1,7]:

- *Ethical Concerns:* Ethical dilemmas unique to mobile journalism include the tension between speed and accuracy, privacy concerns, misinformation, and digital security threats. Ethical journalists must show compassion for those who may be adversely affected by news coverage.
- *Privacy Concerns:* Because smartphones are ubiquitous and discreet, they present unique threats to individual privacy. The physical form factor of the smartphone introduces distinct ethical challenges regarding privacy. A mobile journalist can record interviews or capture footage of individuals without their explicit knowledge or consent. Unlike a traditional television crew with a bulky camera, shoulder mount, and large microphone boom-which clearly signals to the public that recording is underway-a smartphone is small, ubiquitous, and highly discreet. This non-intrusive quality allows MoJos to capture highly authentic, candid moments, but it also enables the recording of individuals without their explicit knowledge or consent.
- *Technical Challenge:* From a technical standpoint, smartphones still suffer from inherent hardware limitations. MoJo is bound by the physical and logistical limitations of consumer electronics and telecommunications infrastructure. The lack of true optical zoom, poor performance in low-light environments, rapid battery depletion, and thermal throttling under extreme heat can compromise the quality of field reporting. In conflict zones or remote regions, mobile journalists are entirely dependent on cellular network coverage or public Wi-Fi; a complete Internet blackout or government-imposed network shutdown can completely paralyze a MoJo's ability to transmit stories. Moreover, the reliance on mobile devices introduces technical vulnerabilities, such as battery limitations, dependence on cellular network. Battery life can be a limitation during extended fieldwork, especially in areas with no access to electricity.
- *Accuracy:* In traditional newsrooms, stories undergo multi-layered verification processes involving copy editors, fact-checkers, and legal counsel. A solo mobile journalist, acting as reporter, camera operator, editor, and publisher, lacks this institutional buffer. The pressure to report live or upload footage immediately increases the probability of disseminating unverified, inaccurate, or highly sensationalized information. Research indicates that approximately 38% of citizen-generated news reports contain factual inaccuracies or lack proper source verification, contributing to public skepticism regarding digital media. Filming in public spaces without showing compassion or evaluating the public interest violates core ethical codes.
- *Misinformation:* The ease of capturing and editing digital media has democratized the creation of misinformation. The rapid reporting by mobile journalists has fueled a dangerous trend of misinformation, sometimes exploited for disinformation. Mobile journalists must navigate an information ecosystem flooded with user-generated content that may be staged, digitally altered, or entirely fabricated. Without robust verification protocols, re-sharing or broadcasting viral citizen footage compromises the credibility of professional news organizations.
- *Security Risks:* In hostile or politically sensitive environments, the high visibility of traditional news crews can pose severe security risks. Large cameras and satellite dishes immediately identify reporters to hostile crowds, military forces, or authoritarian state actors, making them targets for harassment, arrest, or physical violence. Mobile devices, conversely, are ubiquitous; because almost every citizen carries a smartphone, a MoJo reporter can blend seamlessly into a crowd. Smartphones offer a vital layer of personal safety.
- *Connectivity Bottlenecks:* MoJo's core value proposition is real-time delivery. However, this delivery is entirely contingent on the availability of robust cellular or Wi-Fi networks. In remote geographical areas, developing nations, or congested urban environments during major public events, cellular networks frequently fail or suffer from severe congestion. When networks collapse, mobile journalists are forced to record content locally and delay transmission, which directly compromises the real-time promise of MoJo. Difficult geographical locations and conflicted zones often have Internet disruptions. In scenarios like this, it is difficult to access social media and other tools required to disseminate information.
- *Multitasking Burden:* Perhaps the most drastic shift introduced by MoJo is the collapse of the traditional newsroom division of labor. Historically, a broadcast news crew consisted of a reporter, a camera operator, a sound engineer, and sometimes a producer or driver. MoJo reduces

this entire team to a single individual with multitasking burden. The psychological toll of working in isolation is severe. The lack of a physical team means there is no colleague to share the emotional weight of covering traumatic events, leading to accelerated burnout, stress, and professional exhaustion.

- *Trust:* The true power of MoJo does not reside in the sophistication of the smartphone's camera or the speed of the 5G network. Rather, it lies in the professional integrity of the individual holding the device. As the industry marches toward an increasingly automated, creator-led future, the survival of journalism as a trusted public utility depends on the cultivation of a “MoJo mindset”- one that embraces technological agility while fiercely defending the timeless principles of verification, accuracy, and ethical responsibility.

FUTURE OF MOBILE JOURNALISM

Mobile journalism is the future of news reporting and media. The future trajectory of mobile journalism is inextricably linked to emerging technological frontiers, most notably 5G telecommunications, artificial intelligence, spatial computing, and augmented reality. These emerging technologies will shape the future of mobile storytelling and allow journalists to capture and present news in highly immersive formats. As these technologies continue to evolve, mobile journalism is poised to integrate advanced computational tools that will redefine immersive storytelling. The future of MoJo depends not merely on technological mastery, but on cultivating a “MoJo mindset” that balances rapid, immersive storytelling with rigorous ethical verification. Mobile journalists will be able to broadcast high-definition video from any coordinate on earth without relying on local network infrastructure or bulky satellite terminals [1].

CONCLUSION

The contemporary media landscape is undergoing a structural realignment, at the center of which is the smartphone. Mobile journalism, colloquially known as MoJo, is the practice of gathering, recording, editing, and distributing news primarily using network-connected mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. It has successfully transitioned from a cost-saving newsroom experiment to a revolutionary force that democratizes global storytelling. It has transitioned from a novel, cost-saving experiment into a powerful, defining force in global media.

By condensing the traditional television crew into a single, pocket-sized device, MoJo has empowered professional journalists and ordinary citizens alike to

bypass institutional gatekeepers, expose human rights abuses, and cover hyper-local narratives with unprecedented speed and agility. The smartphone is indeed a powerful newsroom in the palm of one’s hand, but its ultimate value lies not in the speed of its transmission, but in the truth and integrity of the stories it tells. The success of mobile journalism depends ultimately not on the sophistication of the smartphone, but on the resilience, ethical grounding, and safety of the journalist holding it.

However, the power of instant, independent publishing must be balanced with a rigorous commitment to journalistic integrity. To sustain the growth of MoJo without compromising the integrity of journalism, a concerted effort is required from both news organizations and academic institutions. Only by actively addressing the technical, psychological, ethical, and security challenges can the media industry fully realize the democratic potential of the handheld newsroom. More information about mobile journalism can be found in books [11-19] and the following related journals:

- Journalism
- Journalism and Media

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Figure 1 A team of mobile journalists [2].



Figure 5 A typical mobile journalist [7].



Figure 6 A class on mobile journalism [9].