

BBC News – creating audience in the digital era

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**Abstract**

This article will examine how a public service broadcaster, specifically the BBC, delivers news content to its audience across multiple media platforms. Rather than looking at how the audience responds to media texts, this article will take the opposite standpoint by addressing the following question: How does the BBC build its audience on a platform-by-platform basis? To answer this key question we compared news outputs on the three platforms offered by the BBC: web, television and radio. A sample was compiled based on the top stories that appeared at a specific time of day over a month in early 2015. The results suggest that there is no significant difference in establishing news agendas through a digitally converged media landscape. In fact the three platforms analysed do not take media convergence into account when delivering news content.

**Keywords:** public service television, BBC, news, audience, media convergence, multi-platform broadcasting

## **Introduction**

Any discussion on public service broadcasting today needs to take into account the digitalization process, which enables media convergence and flow of content across multiple media platforms. Writing in 2002, Papathanassopoulos correctly identified that the digitalization of television was inevitable and unstoppable. As expected, the challenges brought by the ubiquitous digital technology have led to a great body of scholarship on a variety of related topics. For instance, Bennett (Bennett and Strange 2011) mentions the work of William Uricchio and William Boddy, who analyse the status of television as new media at different historical epochs, focusing on the social forces that have shaped its technological form. Scholars such as John Caldwell (cited in Spigel and Olsson 2004), Laurie Ouellette (2014) and Mark Andrejevic (2008) have been concerned with analysing the relationship among reality television, digital media, citizenship and surveillance. Other scholars like Pippa Norris (2001) and Colin Sparks (2014) have been concerned with analysing people's access to various new communication technologies, suggesting that there exists some form of digital divide. Clerwall (2014) moves the debates towards digital technologies, analysing the provision of machine or robot-written news, while Westlund (2013) raises the problem of worldwide network access via a mobile device. Moreover, Bob Franklin (2014) focuses on the future of journalism in the digital media age, paying special attention to the changing nature of journalistic practice due to the use of mobile devices and the rise of both data and citizen journalism.

Enquiries into what happens to public service broadcasters in the digital era have attracted the interest of many scholars in the last three decades. There is remarkable difference in the discourses of the scholars, their opinions about the future of public service broadcasting often being divided. On one hand, some anticipate the demise of public service broadcasting (Tracey 1998) or argue that the introduction of digital television will diminish public service broadcasters' marketing power and further bring a threat to its justification for existence (Papathanassopoulos 2002). On the other hand,

others argue that new media brought not only challenges and obstacles for the public service broadcasters but also new opportunities. Therefore, public service broadcasters will continue to register considerable public support (Debrett 2009: 807, 2010: 15). Endorsing this, Bardoel and d'Haenens (2008: 353) ascertain that 'new media technologies supplement rather than replace the old ones, and that public content production will remain important in a context of abundant technology and relation scarcity of professionally produced content'.

There is a solid body of research that explores how the audience is influenced by television and radio programmes (see e.g. Brooker and Jermyn [2003], Ang [1996] and Bird [2003] as an indicative sample). However, with the development of cross-platform methods of content delivery a debate has been shaped as to how the audience can contribute in a more active manner. The work of Jenkins (2006) and Ross (2008) examines how fandom has been affected by the audience employing new methods of providing an experience that moves beyond just watching, listening or reading. Jensen (2010) contextualizes media convergence, whereby there is no such thing as a dominant medium because it is now possible to view and listen to content through a variety of devices. Further to this, and with the digitalization of media forms, for some the question is whether the political importance of the audience has diminished as the general public has so much choice (Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen 2005).

Recent transformations of the global cultural and economic landscape have determined many television companies to turn their attention to multi-platform practices so as to increase their compatibility with the changing media environment and gain audience share (Klein-Shagrir and Keinonen 2014). Based on the ongoing debates this article analyses how the BBC delivers content to its audience through digital tri-broadcasting methods. We intend to explore whether or not digital broadcasting platforms hold true to traditional content delivery norms or whether a sea change has taken place in the way that news output is presented to the audience. The structure of the article first establishes the methodological techniques employed before introducing three research questions.

Following this the results and findings of the data are presented. Following this there will be a discussion, based on the results and findings, before the article sums up and concludes.

For some, media convergence has substantially affected how the audience consumes media content (see e.g. Baldwin et al. 1996; Jenkins 2006; Jensen 2010). The conclusions drawn from this article will establish public service broadcasting attitudes to multi-platform news outputs and how the stories are presented to the audience. Therefore, the key theoretical underpinning for this article is to explore contemporary attitudes by the BBC towards news production and to suggest whether the expectation from the audience has fundamentally altered.

## **Methodology**

The methodological approach we chose was content analysis. A sample was chosen from the BBC's digitally broadcast output. The BBC news website and news channel were obvious choices for the web and television content. For the radio content we analysed the news output of the BBC's digital music station, 6Music. The reason for this choice was that 6Music is an exclusively digital station; to have used any other station with significant audience share would have meant that we would be measuring content accessed by the AM and FM audience as well as the digital-only listenership.

We chose to focus the research on the BBC because of the unique position it holds as a publicly funded broadcaster. Each household in the United Kingdom owning a television set has to pay a licence fee in order to receive content. The income generated from the licence fee provides the BBC with the vast majority of its funding, and its right to broadcast is the subject of periodic reviews, which determines the renewal of the BBC Charter, allowing broadcasting to continue. Therefore, the relationship the BBC has with the audience has been one of providing material that is designed to inform and educate, as well as entertain. A certain amount of audience share has to be achieved

before the charter will be renewed but the BBC has to still provide a wide range of content rather than programming that is purely designed to be populist.

Until the late 1950s the BBC was the only legitimate broadcaster in the United Kingdom. This changed with the creation of the regional Independent Television (ITV) and network of local radio stations. The ITV network was funded by advertising revenue, but the various franchises were only awarded on the guarantee that certain public service characteristics, particularly regarding factual and news content, were observed. In 1982 Channel 4 was launched as a hybridization of the BBC and ITV as it is a public service broadcaster with a board of trustees, like the BBC, but is funded largely by advertising revenue, like ITV. In the late 1980s Sky television became the first satellite broadcaster in the United Kingdom, and is funded by subscription fees. Since then the broadcasting market in the United Kingdom has been more open and competitive.

Coding methods varied for each platform. For the website only the first ten stories were counted, enabling the data to be more manageable upon analysis as the stories appeared on the main page and were not divided into geographic or generic sub-sections. Additionally, the opportunity for stories to move around the agenda was more easily visible through the website, meaning that there was the potential to observe an ebb and flow within the running order. For the BBC News channel the main headlines at the top of the hour were measured, as these traditionally provide the majority of the content for the half hour that follows. The 6Music bulletins were measured in their entirety. This was because the bulletins are concise, being only approximately two minutes in length.

Data collection took place twice a day, typically between 12 and 12.30 and 4 and 4.30 in the afternoon, between the 1 and the 28 February 2015, with another two weeks (15 January–1 February) when the method was pre-tested. A half-hour window allowed for each of the platforms to be measured over as close a period of time as possible. The news channel could be measured at the top of the half hour, the website directly afterwards, which was completed in time for the 6Music bulletin on the half hour (the only time that 6Music broadcasts news). Once the data

collection period was complete a spreadsheet was compiled using SPSS data management software. As there were two coders a reliability analysis was run using the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  formula based on the numerical values measuring the amount of content. The outcome of this was a reliability score of 0.299 across a total of 898 units of analysis.

### ***Research questions***

1. How does digital media content differ across platforms?

The aim of this research question is to establish whether or not there is consistency in the content across the three platforms. If, as scholars like Jenkins (2006) and Jensen (2010) believe, there is currently a state of media convergence, we can anticipate content being consistent, and possibly shared, across platforms. This would particularly be true of the BBC News website as it can run audio and video clips alongside text. However, we are concerned with the story headlines in addition to specific content, and thus this research question will additionally establish whether there is a correlation between headlines across the three platforms.

2. Is there a significant difference in how the content is presented?

This research question is concerned with how the content appears in the order of headlines. Examined will be the amount of correlation between stories appearing in the same place in the bulletins or page. This will enable an analysis of whether bulletins and web content are presented towards a certain demographic and whether pictures, audio and textual material are still as important to an audience used to digital content delivery.

3. Is there a noticeable shift in agenda across the day?

This final research question establishes the news agenda setting across the platforms. What we will examine is whether evidence exists that suggests that there are a significant number of stories appearing in the same place in the running orders across the three platforms. The research question allows us to answer whether the technology employed is in the spirit of media convergence and the impact on editorial decisions.

## Results and findings

Stories equating to a total  $n=898$  provided a substantial amount of data. This section begins by looking at the breakdown of individual stories across the data collection period, before analysing how the stories appeared on each platform proportionally. The section will then move on to repeat the structure of the tables but will present the quantity of where the stories appeared on the web pages, television headlines and radio bulletins. Analysed will be the top three stories to balance out the amount of data presented, as there are considerably more results for the website than for BBC News and 6Music. Data are presented as both raw numbers and proportional percentages.

**Table 1:** Stories appearing across all three platforms in numerical order.

	<b>Story</b>	<b>Number of appearances (numeric)</b>	<b>Number of appearances (%)</b>
1	Politics (National)	120	13.4
2	Crime (National)	107	11.9
3	Terrorism (International)	92	10.2
4	General Interest	79	8.8
5	Crime (International)	78	8.7
6	Health	78	8.7
7	Business (National)	56	6.2
8	Politics (International)	53	5.9
9	Civil Unrest (International)	38	4.2



10	Sport	34	3.8
11	Finance	34	3.8
12	Entertainment	29	3.2
13	Media	18	2.0
14	Conflict	17	1.9
15	Disaster (International)	16	1.8
16	Business (International)	15	1.7
17	Disaster (National)	9	1.0
18	Science	8	0.9
19	Military	7	0.8
20	Terrorism (National)	6	0.7
21	Environmental	2	0.2
22	Religion	2	0.2
	Total	898	100.00%

Table 1 establishes the news agenda across all three platforms for the data collection period (February 2015). The two largest measurements are for politics and crime stories in the United Kingdom and represent a quarter of the total with a combined total of 25.3%. The largest measurements for international stories were in terrorism and crime, with a combined 18.9% of the

total. General interest was the broadest category, as stories that could not be measured under any other value were counted. As the broadest category, and with stories like the Church of England under-paying staff (story seven at 12 o'clock on the website, 23 February 2015), which was not specifically religious, business or finance, general interest registered a total of 79 measurements, or 8.8%.

**Table 1a:** Story appearances on the web platform in numerical order; as Table 1a measures only stories on [bbc.co.uk/news](http://bbc.co.uk/news),  $n=459$ . The first ten stories on the site were measured for each data collection.

	<b>Story</b>	<b>Number of appearances (numeric)</b>	<b>Number of appearances (%)</b>
1	Politics (National)	51	11.1
2	Crime (International)	51	11.1
3	Crime (National)	44	9.6
4	Terrorism (International)	42	9.2
5	Health	41	8.9
6	General Interest	39	8.5
7	Politics (International)	32	7.0
8	Business (National)	31	6.8
9	Civil Unrest (International)	18	3.9
10	Finance	18	3.9

11	Sport	16	3.5
12	Business (International)	13	2.8
13	Media	13	2.8
14	Conflict	12	2.6
15	Entertainment	11	2.4
16	Disaster (International)	11	2.4
17	Disaster (National)	5	1.1
18	Military	4	0.9
19	Science	4	0.9
20	Religion	2	0.4
21	Environmental	1	0.2
	Total	459	100.00%

As the first ten stories that appeared on the website were measured, this platform accounted for over half, 51.1 per cent, of the data. It was found that there were no national terrorism stories on the BBC website in February 2015. This could have been because elements of stories that did relate to the national terrorism category were reported as being more international in terms of content. The national angle was not as pronounced as it was through the television channel and radio station, where the national terrorism category registered a small number of appearances.



**Table 1b:** Story appearances through the BBC News television channel; as only the headlines at the beginning of the hour were measured,  $n=201$ .

	<b>Story</b>	<b>Number of appearances (numeric)</b>	<b>Number of appearances (%)</b>
1	Politics (National)	30	14.9
2	Terrorism (International)	25	12.4
3	General Interest	22	10.9
4	Crime (National)	20	10.0
5	Health	16	8.0
6	Business (National)	15	7.5
7	Civil Unrest (International)	15	7.5
8	Crime (International)	12	6.0
9	Finance	9	4.5
10	Politics (International)	8	4.0
11	Entertainment	6	3.0
12	Sport	6	3.0
13	Conflict	3	1.5
14	Disaster (International)	3	1.5

15	Media	3	1.5
16	Business (International)	2	1.0
17	Terrorism (National)	2	1.0
18	Disaster (National)	2	1.0
19	Military	2	1.0
	Total	201	100.20%

With the headlines being the only measurement for the television channel the variety of stories that are covered by the BBC is highlighted in Table 1b. Only three categories were not covered: religion, environment and science. The proportions for the two main stories on the television channel are slightly higher than for the website: 27% as compared to 22%, respectively. While national politics is the story with most appearances, the television channel places more emphasis on international terrorism, 12.4%, than does the website, 9.2%, and this is reflected in international terrorism being the second most covered story on television as opposed to fourth on the website.

**Table 1c:** Story appearances on BBC 6music's news bulletins. As each bulletin is a concise two to three minutes, each story was counted, resulting in  $n=238$ .

	<b>Story</b>	<b>Number of appearances (numerical)</b>	<b>Number of appearances (%)</b>
1	Crime (National)	43	18.1
2	Politics (National)	39	16.4
3	Terrorism (International)	25	10.5
4	Health	21	8.8
5	General Interest	18	7.6
6	Crime (International)	15	6.3
7	Politics (International)	13	5.5
8	Entertainment	12	5.0
9	Sport	12	5.0
10	Business (National)	10	4.2
11	Finance	7	2.9
12	Civil Unrest (International)	5	2.1
13	Terrorism (National)	4	1.7
14	Science	4	1.7

15	Conflict	2	0.8
16	Disaster (International)	2	0.8
17	Disaster (National)	2	0.8
18	Media	2	0.8
19	Environmental	1	0.4
20	Military	1	0.4
	Total	238	99.80%

The significant finding from Table 1c is that the radio station places more importance on national crime stories than either the website or television channel. National crime accounts proportionally for 18.1 per cent of the stories on 6music, twice as much as on BBC News and 8 per cent more than on the website. The radio bulletins covered a wide range of stories, with only religion and international business not being represented.



**Table 2:** Place of story on the page, in headlines and bulletins across all three platforms for the top three stories. Three variables appear because that was the minimum number of stories that appeared on the BBC News channel and BBC 6music headlines,  $n=425$ .

<b>Story</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Politics (National)	26 (6.1%)	22 (5.2%)	29 (6.9%)	76.818 (18.1%)
2. Terrorism (International)	39 (9.2%)	18 (4.2%)	11 (2.6%)	67.84 (16.0%)
3. Crime (National)	13 (3.0%)	24 (5.6%)	23 (5.4%)	59.86 (14.1%)
4. Civil Unrest (International)	14 (3.3%)	8 (1.9%)	6 (1.4%)	27.934 (6.6%)
5. Crime (International)	10 (2.3%)	12 (2.8%)	5 (1.2%)	26.937 (6.3%)
6. Health	6 (1.4%)	11 (2.6%)	10 (2.3%)	26.937 (6.3%)
7. Politics (International)	8 (1.9%)	11 (2.6%)	8 (1.9%)	26.936 (6.3%)
8. Business (National)	3 (0.7%)	8 (1.9%)	13 (3.0%)	23.944 (5.6%)
9. Finance	9 (2.1%)	8 (1.9%)	6 (1.4%)	22.946

				(5.4%)
10. General interest	3 (0.7%)	5 (1.2%)	6 (1.4%)	13.967 (3.3%)
11. Disaster (International)	3 (0.7%)	3 (0.7%)	2 (0.5%)	7.981 (1.9%)
12. Business (International)	0	3 (0.7%)	4 (0.9%)	6.984 (1.6%)
13. Conflict	0	3 (0.7%)	4 (0.9%)	6.984 (1.6%)
14. Disaster (National)	1 (0.2%)	0	5 (1.2%)	4.988 (1.4%)
15. Terrorism (National)	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.2%)	3 (0.7%)	5.986 (1.4%)
16. Entertainment	0	1 (0.2%)	4 (0.9%)	4.989 (1.2%)
17. Military	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	0	0 (0.9%)
18. Sport	0	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	3.99 (0.9%)
19. Media	2 (0.5%)	0	0	0 (0.5%)
20. Science	1 (0.2%)	0	0	1 (0.2%)
21. Environmental	0	0	0	0
22. Religion	0	0	0	0
				0 (100%)

The category with the most stories in the top three headlines is national politics, a total of 77 appearances or 18.1% proportionally of the total. However, the category with the most appearances

as the first story is international terrorism, with 9.2% of the total proportionally. Combined, the three story categories with the highest appearances – national politics, international terrorism and national crime – equated to nearly half, 48.2%, of the total.

**Table 2a:** Place of story in BBC News television channel headlines.  $N=143$ ; three variables appear because this was the minimum number of headlines during the data collection period.

<b>Story</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Politics (National)	7 (4.9%)	10 (7.0%)	10 (7.0%)	26.811 (18.9%)
2. Terrorism (International)	16 (11.2%)	6 (4.2%)	2 (1.4%)	23.832 (16.8%)
3. Crime (National)	2 (1.4%)	6 (4.2%)	9 (6.3%)	16.881 (11.9%)
4. Civil Unrest (International)	6 (4.2%)	6 (4.2%)	3 (2.1%)	14.895 (10.5%)
5. Health	2 (1.4%)	4 (2.8%)	4 (2.8%)	10 (7.0%)
6. Business (National)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.2%)	8.937 (6.3%)
7. Finance	3 (2.1%)	3 (2.1%)	3 (2.1%)	9 (6.3%)
8. Crime (International)	3 (2.1%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.2%)
9. Politics (International)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.1%)	5.958 (4.2%)
10. General interest	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.8%)	0	5 (3.5%)
11. Conflict	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.1%)
12. Disaster (International)	2 (1.4%)	0	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)
13. Disaster (National)	0	0	2 (1.4%)	2 (1.4%)

14. Military	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	0	2 (1.4%)
15. Terrorism (National)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	0	2 (1.4%)
16. Business (International)	0	0	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)
17. Media	1 (0.7%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
18. Sport	0	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
Total				140.32 (100%)

With a combined total proportion of 47.6 per cent, national politics, international terrorism and national crime account for nearly a half of the top three headlines. The results of Table 2a are very similar to those of Table 2 in terms of where stories appear in the running order. If there is any deviation it is by one or two places – for example, health stories being the fifth and finance being the seventh most prominent on television, as opposed to sixth and ninth, respectively, when all three platforms are combined.

**Table 2b:** Position of story categories in BBC 6music radio bulletins. The top three stories are presented as that was the minimum number of headlines in a bulletin.  $N=144$ .

<b>Story</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Politics (National)	9 (6.2%)	8 (5.6%)	14 (9.7%)	30.785 (21.5%)
2. Crime (National)	10 (6.9%)	12 (8.3%)	7 (4.9%)	28.799 (20.1%)
3. Terrorism (International)	11 (7.6%)	6 (4.2%)	5 (3.5%)	21.847 (17.4%)
4. Crime (International)	3 (2.1%)	6 (4.2%)	2 (1.4%)	10.923 (7.6%)
5. Health	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.1%)	4 (2.8%)	8.937 (6.2%)
6. Politics (International)	2 (1.4%)	4 (2.8%)	3 (2.1%)	8.937 (6.2%)
7. Finance	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.1%)	2 (1.4%)	6.951 (4.9%)
8. Business (National)	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)	2 (1.4%)	5.958 (4.2%)
9. Civil Unrest (International)	2 (1.4%)	0	3 (2.1%)	5 (3.5%)
10. Terrorism (National)	1 (0.7%)	0	3 (2.1%)	4 (2.8%)
11. General Interest	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	0	3 (2.1%)
12. Disaster (National)	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)
13. Entertainment	0	0	2 (1.4%)	2 (1.4%)

14. Conflict	0	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
15. Disaster (International)	0	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
16. Media	1 (0.7%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
17. Military	1 (0.7%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
				142.116
				(100%)

The three most measured story categories on 6music remained the same as those on BBC News. However, national crime supplanted international terrorism as the second most prominent headline. The three most prominent story categories also accounted for a higher proportion of the total, with 59%, as opposed to 47.6% on BBC News. International civil unrest stories were also less prominent than on BBC News, with 3.5% of the total as compared to 10.5% of the proportion on the 24-hour rolling television news channel.

**Table 2c:** Three most prominent stories on the BBC News website. The top three stories were selected as this was the minimum number of stories on the radio and television platforms. Presenting the data in this way allows for greater consistency.  $N=138$ .

<b>Story</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Terrorism (International)	12 (8.7%)	6 (4.3%)	4 (2.9%)	21.841 (15.9%)
2. Politics (National)	10 (7.2%)	4 (2.9%)	5 (3.6%)	18.863 (13.8%)
3. Crime (National)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.3%)	7 (5.07%)	13.8993 (10.1%)
4. Politics (International)	5 (3.6%)	5 (3.6%)	2 (1.4%)	11.914 (8.7%)
5. Crime (International)	4 (2.9%)	4 (2.9%)	2 (1.4%)	9.928 (7.2%)
6. Business (National)	0	4 (2.9%)	5 (3.6%)	9 (6.5%)
7. Civil unrest (International)	6 (4.3%)	2 (1.4%)	0	0 (5.8%)
8. Health	2 (1.4%)	4 (2.9%)	2 (1.4%)	7.943 (5.8%)
9. Finance	4 (2.9%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	6.95 (5.1%)
10. Business (International)	0	3 (2.2%)	3 (2.2%)	6 (4.3%)
11. General Interest	0	0	6 (4.3%)	6 (4.3%)
12. Disaster (International)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	2.979 (2.9%)



13. Conflict	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.2%)
14. Entertainment	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.2%)
15. Sport	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.2%)
16. Disaster (National)	0	0	2 (2.2%)	2 (2.2%)
17. Military	0	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
18. Science	1 (0.7%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
Total				126.3183 (100%)

The three story types with the most measurements – international terrorism, national politics and national crime – account for 40% proportionally of the total. However, the third prevalent category, national crime, has a significantly higher proportion for being the second or third story on the website, 9.37% combined, than it does for being the lead story, 0.7%. Eight story types register no measurements for being the lead story but have appearances for the second and third stories. Significantly, national business registers no lead story appearances but is still the sixth most prominent category, with 6.5% proportionally of the total, all for second or third stories.

Across the three platforms it was obvious that the style of presentation for the TV channel would be exclusively audio-visual and that for the radio station would be audio only. However, the website had the capacity to provide text, audio, video and pictorial content, in addition to providing a platform for user-generated content (UGC) through the use of social media. Table 3 uses the list of

categories from Table 2c as the basis for analysing what cross-platform content appeared and where.

**Table 3:** Cross-platform content on the BBC website. Results are based on the three most prominent stories for each data collection and are presented by the number of appearances as shown in Table 2c.  $N=525$ .

<b>Story</b>	<b>Photograph</b>	<b>Video</b>	<b>Graphic</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Terrorism (International)	68 (12.9%)	23 (4.4%)	11 (2.1%)	101.806 (19.4%)
2. Politics (National)	30 (5.7%)	22 (4.2%)	6 (1.1%)	57.89 (11.0%)
3. Crime (National)	49 (9.3%)	8 (1.5%)	7 (1.3%)	63.879 (12.2%)
4. Politics (International)	18 (3.4%)	3 (0.6%)	6 (1.1%)	26.949 (5.1%)
5. Crime (International)	34 (6.5%)	14 (2.7%)	7 (1.3%)	54.895 (10.5%)
6. Business (National)	16 (3.0%)	4 (0.8%)	1 (0.2%)	20.96 (4.0%)
7. Civil unrest (International)	26 (4.9%)	12 (2.3%)	7 (1.3%)	44.915 (8.6%)
8. Health	15 (2.8%)	3 (0.6%)	0	0 (3.4%)
9. Finance	6 (1.1%)	11 (2.1%)	6 (1.1%)	22.957 (4.4%)
10. Business (International)	7 (1.3%)	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)	9.981 (1.9%)

11. General Interest	15 (2.8%)	3 (0.6%)	7 (1.3%)	24.953 (4.8%)
12. Disaster (International)	10 (1.9%)	5 (0.9%)	1 (0.2%)	15.97 (3.0%)
13. Conflict	11 (2.0%)	5 (0.9%)	3 (0.6%)	18.965 (3.6%)
14. Entertainment	16 (3.0%)	5 (0.9%)	3 (0.6%)	23.955 (4.6%)
15. Sport	3 (0.6%)	1 (0.2%)	0	0 (0.8%)
16. Disaster (National)	10 (1.9%)	0	0	0 (1.9%)
17. Military	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)	3 (0.6%)
18. Science	1 (0.2%)	0	0	1 (0.2%)
Total	335.365 (64.0%)	0 (23.2%)	0 (12.8%)	491.075 (100%)

Overwhelmingly, photographs are used primarily to illustrate the text that is found on the BBC News website. Proportionally, international terrorism and national crime have the two largest counts, combined accounting for nearly a quarter of all the photographic content, 22.2%. International terrorism stories account for the highest measurements across all the supporting audio-visual material, 19.4%. However, proportionally the highest single count is for video material for national politics – the 22 measurements equating to 38% of the 58 total for that story category.

## **Discussion**

The discussion in this article is informed by the results and findings presented above uses the research questions outlined in the methodology to provide the foundation for argument.

RQ1. How does digital media content differ across platforms?

Clearly there is still an audio-based medium, radio, and a visual medium, television, that exist in isolation from the online platform. However, as the data collection was primarily achieved by accessing all three media forms through a web browser, for clarity of argument we will refer to three separate platforms: radio, television and web. There is still a clear differentiation between the three platforms: radio is audio; television is audio-visual; and web is capable of doing both as well as text, photographs and graphics. Therefore, the first part of the answer to this research question confirms only that broadcasters, and by extension the audience, differentiate between the three: radio is for listening, television for watching and the web for looking at.

Our data show the differences in how radio, television and web news content is presented. The top three story categories combined across all three modes of delivery in Table 1 were national politics, national crime and international terrorism, with the broad category of general interest appearing as the fourth most prevalent. However, when looking at the three platforms there are significant differences in story order. National politics is the story category with the most appearances for both the web page and the television channel, but national crime is the most measured for BBC 6Music, with national politics second. Both crime story categories register the second and third most appearances on the web page. For the television channel, international terrorism is the second most registered category, with general interest coming third. For the radio channel, and as noted above, national politics is the second most measured story, with international terrorism third. The headlines for each story are similar, with subtle differences depending on the medium: more words for radio, more pictures for television, and a banner headline in the style of print media for the website. The

web platform uses material that has been produced by correspondents for the BBC News broadcast rather than providing original content.

The expectation would be that the television and radio measurements would be different as one relies on pictures and the other is specifically audio only. That general interest appears as the third most measured story category for the television channel suggests that for BBC News, at least, there is a tendency for at least one headline at the top of the hour to veer away from harder news to tease the audience of a more public interest story that may appear further down the running order. As 6Music provides bulletins on the half hour it would be expected that the three story categories with the most appearances would be of a harder style of news value. The difference with the radio platform is that national crime is the story category that appears the most, which suggests that crime stories are more likely to be amenable to a radio audience. This is borne out by national politics being the most counted on the television channel. Politicians appearing at events are a more attractive televisual experience than shots of reporters outside courtrooms as cameras are not allowed into judicial enquiries in the United Kingdom.

The web page is where there is the biggest difference in results. The story with the most appearances is national politics; the second and third largest measurements are for international crime and national crime, respectively. By comparison, on the television and radio platforms, respectively, international crime is the eighth and sixth story, with national crime being the fourth and the first. However, the story that appears the most on the web page as the main headline is international terrorism, with slightly more appearances than national politics and crime. The suggestion here is that, of the three platforms, the web page is more likely to appear internationally and the running order is adjusted accordingly but with a bias towards stories that are UK led, hence national politics registering the most numbers of stories in total, with national crime third.

Jensen explores the idea of communications theory being rooted in pragmatism: 'what media do to people, cultures, and societies and vice versa' (2010: 164). What we can propose is that there is still

a difference in how the media presents its content, and that news editors do not make cross-platform decisions, but that the method of delivery has changed. Taking the idea that pragmatism links to theory further we can ascertain that, although it is possible to listen, watch and see traditional media delivery systems through one device, radio stations, television channels and websites exist independently of each other, even for a public service broadcaster like the BBC. Therefore, we can establish that convergence, as was originally defined by scholars such as Jenkins (2006) and Jensen (2010), has not entrenched itself into news production and associated editorial fully.

RQ2. Is there a significant difference in how the content is presented?

The 48.2 per cent of the story categories, which constituted the most appearances for stories as the three main headlines across all three platforms, were national politics, international terrorism and national crime. However, the story categories appeared in a slightly different order, with international terrorism and national crime exchanging places dependent on platform. The three categories remain consistently the top stories across all three platforms. There is a slight adjustment in the running order across the platforms, however. The television channel mirrors the combined total exactly, while 6Music has the two national politics and crime categories above international terrorism. For the website the opposite order occurs, with international terrorism appearing more than national politics and crime.

The supposition as suggested above, that the website is more internationally outward facing, is reinforced. This suggestion is further reinforced when it was found that ‘we need to **limit access** to most video and audio content on BBC Online to **people within the UK**’ ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), original emphasis). Therefore, it is not possible for the television channel to be viewed outside the United Kingdom through the official BBC website, although 6Music can be accessed internationally through the BBC iPlayer ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)). Additionally, any video and audio clips attached to

stories on the website are sometimes limited to UK-only viewing; thus, while the headlines for BBC News online suggest a more international feel, there is not always supporting material to access alongside the text.

Our data point towards there being a defined policy by the BBC towards its news output. For the website the news agenda can be seen as a more international facing site, which is more likely to prioritize global and national stories equally in the running order. The television channel is more aimed at a domestic audience, the evidence for which can be reinforced by the existence of the BBC World News channel available outside the United Kingdom. BBC 6Music is not a news-based channel, but has to carry bulletins as part of the BBC's PSB remit, and thus concerns itself with predominantly national stories as the music played is seen as the primary content for the station.

Returning to the issue of convergence, a significant amount of additional material was found that supported the text-based material on the website. However, and as addressed above, the video material is not always available outside the United Kingdom. Supporting material was placed into three categories: photographs, video and graphics (e.g., maps and graphs). Aside from the national politics story category the international stories provided the most amount of supporting material.

This was found to be particularly true of photographs and videos, with international terrorism, crime and civil unrest registering high measurements. For graphics the same was found, with the exception of national crime supplanting the national politics story category as having a slightly greater amount. Therefore, we can suggest that the internationalization of the website is taken more seriously by the editorial team than it is for the television and radio channels. This is to the extent of informing the UK population more thoroughly of international stories through the supporting material. The inference from this finding is that the website is more immediately available internationally than the BBC News channel. 6Music's primary output is music. Hence, anyone accessing the channel from abroad through the iPlayer would be more likely to want to listen to a



variety of musical genres. However, 6Music needs to provide regular news bulletins because of the BBC's public service remit.

RQ3. Is there a noticeable shift in the agenda across the day?

As we have already established, the three main top stories are consistent. To provide further examination of the results Table 2 will be used as the primary source of data in answering this research question. All the top three story measurements were combined in presenting the results through Table 2. The highlight finding from this table is that measurements for national politics remain fairly consistent, with appearances in the 20s. These results suggest that this story category remained consistently within the three top stories during the entire data collection. This is in contrast to the story with the second most measurements, international terrorism, which has a high count for the lead story, 39, higher than national politics, but has low counts for the second and third story, 18 and 11, respectively. We can suggest from these data that, while international terrorism is seen as a high priority story during parts of the day, it can soon fade from the lead story and from the top of the news agenda entirely in a short period of time. A similar pattern emerges when looking at international civil unrest. For international crime and politics, which register higher counts for the second story than the first and third, the suggestion is that these stories remain static within the running order.

Further analysis reveals that the platform that moves international terrorism around the agenda most is BBC News. There are sixteen examples of the category being the top story, but only eight of it being second and/or third, exactly half the amount of stories. There is also a sharp difference in how the national crime story is placed in the running order between 6Music and the other two platforms: ten appearances as the lead story as opposed to two on BBC News and only one through the website. However, the opposite is true for a story category that was not one of the three most measured: international civil unrest. The category registers six appearances each as the lead story on BBC News and the website but only two on 6Music. Low number total for the international civil

unrest category, five for 6Music and eight on the website, suggests a rapid movement down the running order for the non-predominantly visual platforms. This is opposed to the fifteen appearances through BBC News, which suggests that pictures existed allowing the story to remain higher up the agenda for longer.

Our data point to a shift in the news agenda across the days measured, as would be expected, but no evidence of a shared news agenda through the three platforms. We therefore wish to propose a lack of cooperation across the three platforms in the case of setting a running order. However, our data do suggest a consistency in agenda setting for daily news bulletins, as the top three story categories measured are the same across all platforms.

## **Conclusion**

This article aimed to establish whether convergence, as proposed in the first decade of the twenty-first century, had established itself on daily news production, and what that may mean for the audience. More specifically, the research examined the daily news output of a well-established public service broadcaster, the BBC. What our data conclude is that, editorially, news outputs are not shared across the three platforms the BBC employs: radio, television and the World Wide Web.

Thus, there is no differentiation in demographics between the three platforms in our sample. BBC news output is aimed at all demographics, precisely because of the lack of convergence we found. While our data show that the appearances of three major story categories – national politics, national crime and international terrorism – are consistent across all three platforms, we can propose that this would be rational. National politics would be prevalent because the data collection period coincided with the beginning of the run-up to the 2015 General Election. Likewise the ever-present threat of Islamic State in the Middle East, and the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, would account for the large amounts of data for international terrorism. National crime

appears a lot because it is a broad category that accounts for a large amount of stories. Therefore, it is no surprise that news editors across television, radio and the web would draw from these story categories to form the basis of the majority of the news agendas for the days that were measured.

The key finding from our research is that those three story categories that registered the most appearances appeared in different places in the top three per platform. More generally there was a significant amount of differences across all story categories when splitting the results of the three platforms. We can therefore conclude that convergence has not developed so fully that there is one news editor driving the agenda of the day across all three platforms, as radio, television and web news services operate in isolation from each other. We can also conclude that, rather than having one overarching policy to news strategy, the BBC has separate guidelines that govern what constitutes an applicable radio, television and web story, meaning that, for news outputs at least, there is a traditional approach to delivering content. Another conclusion that we can draw from this research is that these policies extend to the audience as there is evidence that the watching, listening and looking method of delivering the news is still a primary concern.

A final conclusion is that this area warrants further research to more properly gauge the attitude of the audience towards convergence. The suggestion from the above article is that the separation of the three platforms means that the BBC does not see convergence as a sum of all parts, a way of delivering content exclusively across one platform. However, the real question is who is influencing who? Is the tail wagging the dog? Or is the opposite true? Does the BBC provide an all-encompassing service for the audience to justify its existence as a PSB, or does the audience still want that all-encompassing service? If the latter is true then the suggestion is that there has been a partial rejection of convergence by the audience, and that existing broadcasting technologies have still a place in the current media landscape. Further research, focusing more on the audience, would help to satisfy that part of the larger question: that of the future for public service broadcasting.

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