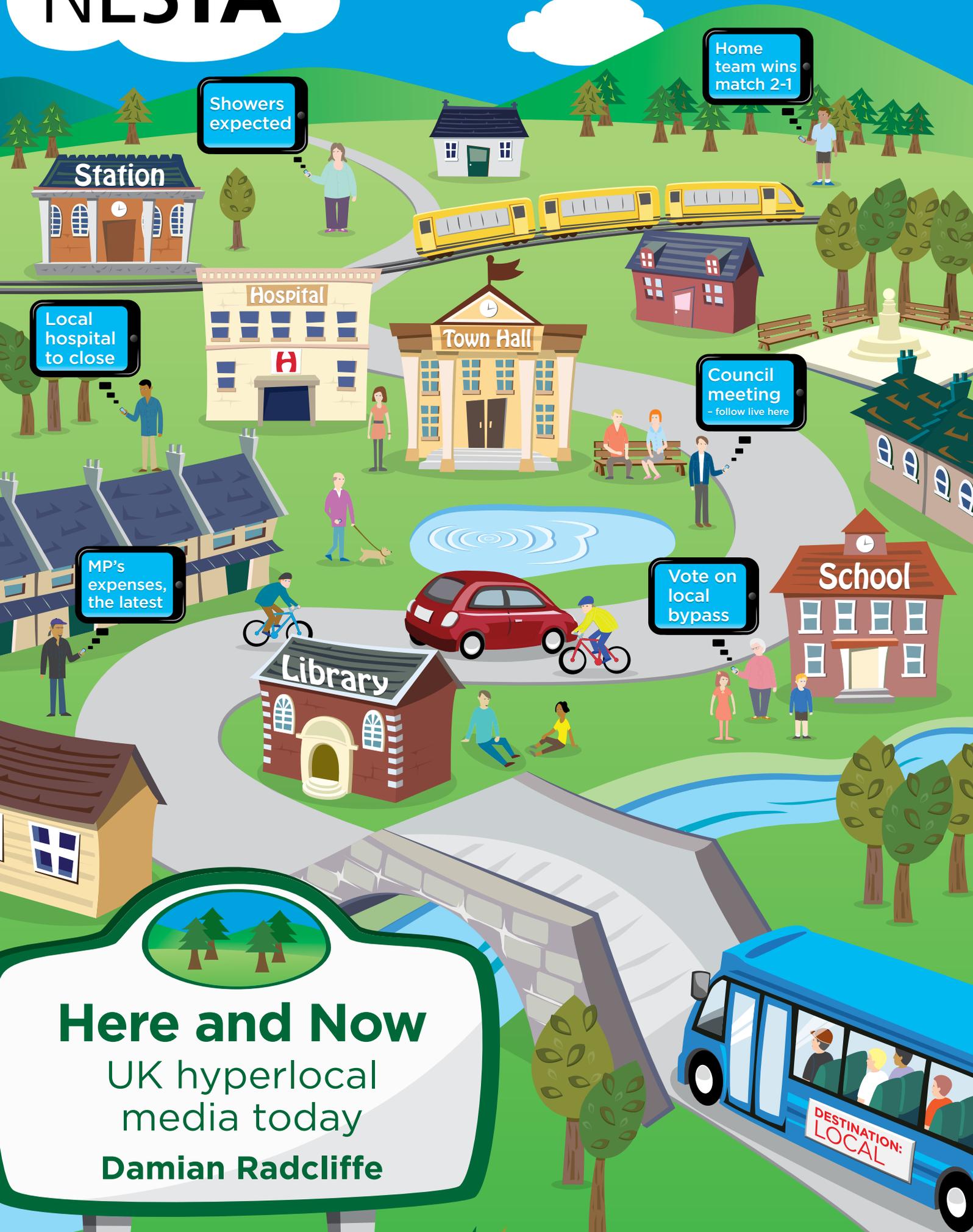NESTA

Showers expected

Home team wins match 2-1

Station

Local hospital to close

Hospital

Town Hall

Council meeting – follow live here

MP's expenses, the latest

Vote on local bypass

School

Library

DESTINATION: LOCAL

Here and Now
UK hyperlocal media today
Damian Radcliffe

Foreword

Local media plays two important roles in people's lives. It is both functional, telling them what is going on, where and when, and also emotional, helping them to feel like they belong to their local community. People feel attached not just to their city, town or village, but also to their neighbourhood and street.

Location-based technologies, especially mobile devices, offer a potential revolution for very local ('hyperlocal') media that can deliver at this level of scale.

Over the last few years, the UK has seen many launches of online local media services that attempt to deliver hyperlocal content. But traditional media providers have found it hard to adjust their high-cost models to a sufficiently local area. Meanwhile, hyperlocal bloggers find it difficult to develop a critical mass of audience and to define the right business models to grow their offers into more sustainable services. Little evidence is publicly available on the success or failure of these services.

NESTA believes that a diverse and sustainable hyperlocal media can build both public and economic value. Together with our partners, NESTA is seeking to help support this nascent sector and to better understand its potential. This review is the start of meeting this ambition. It maps the current landscape of hyperlocal activity in the UK, bringing in international examples where relevant.

The stakes are high. Successful hyperlocal services could deliver a plurality of relevant news, information, entertainment and authentic local voices. They offer the opportunity of bringing our communities together for good purpose. They might hold public authority to account or express democracy in innovative ways. Some of these services are already present across the UK in very local areas. But the very specific and fragmented nature of hyperlocal media often means that activity happens under the radar of traditional media analysis.

This review is important because it offers an insight into a diverse, creative and emerging sector. To our knowledge, this is the first time that such a comprehensive review has been undertaken. We hope that this review will encourage an appetite for a greater understanding of hyperlocal media from both industry and policymakers.

I'd like to thank Damian Radcliffe for taking the time out to compile and write this review, and to Andy Gibson for his editorial input.

Jon Kingsbury
Director Creative Economy Programme

Contents

Here and Now

This review examines the emerging hyperlocal media landscape in the UK. It defines the scope of the sector, using examples from the UK and around the world to highlight key characteristics, ingredients for success, challenges and emerging trends. It also explores areas where further research is required. As the first major UK review of this increasingly important part of our media ecosystem, it is intended to give investors, innovators and enthusiasts a snapshot of hyperlocal media in the UK.

Defining the term 'hyperlocal media' is not straightforward,[1] not least because audience perceptions of what constitutes 'local' vary considerably.[2] However, a sense of place is at the core of all hyperlocal services. For the purposes of this review, we have defined hyperlocal as:

> "Online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community."

Hyperlocal media normally provides news and content at a more grassroots level than most traditional media can achieve. It can help to define local identity, fill gaps in existing content provision, hold authority to account and broaden the range of media available to audiences. There is really no such thing as a typical hyperlocal service. So often it is defined by the voice, audience and the purpose of the community being served, with all the variety that implies.

Although data is sparse, the volume and usage of hyperlocal media appears to be increasing. Technology has made it easier to both create and consume hyperlocal content. As a result, hyperlocal media can be found on a variety of media platforms, with growth being driven by new web and mobile technologies that are making micro-publishing and consumption possible. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter are hubs for hyperlocal content and discussions. Consuming media on the move is already a mainstream behaviour for many groups, and we can expect media to be increasingly related to our location too.

Yet this nascent sector faces a number of structural challenges, including funding, discoverability, sustainability and visibility. Reaching wider audiences, sharing resources and developing skills are all areas where a closer alignment and collaboration might help take the sector to the next level.

To fully understand the economic and community value that hyperlocal media might bring, we must first begin with a review of what we know about hyperlocal media today, the here and now.

Why here, why now?

Although the core principles of hyperlocal media are hardly new, it is still an emerging sector. Hyperlocal media is seldom reported in the same depth as traditional media, which is unsurprising when you consider that, in many cases, its audiences are still quite small.

Traditional media outlets – newspapers, television, radio – continue to play a key role in the local media ecosystem, and their role in content creation, distribution and consumption still dominates discussions about media and journalism.[3,4,5] Yet the emerging hyperlocal sector is reaching new audiences, creating new business models, and filling gaps at a time when traditional media, in particular the press, are often struggling for revenues and audience.[6]

There are many reasons why hyperlocal media is gaining popularity right now including:

Ten reasons for hyperlocal's emergence

1. The Internet has created many new routes to connect with geographic communities.

2. The historic role that traditional media has played in supporting local communities is under increasing threat from reduced services, staff and revenues.

3. Gaps in geographic coverage and content, particularly local reporting, has created a vacuum for new entrants, and concerned citizens, who are now responding to this challenge.

4. New online services such as Wordpress, Audioboo and YouTube have enabled anyone to create and distribute local content.

5. There has been an explosion in digital devices capable of accessing this local content, particularly mobile phones and tablets.

6. Social media is changing audience behaviours and expectations in terms of the information we consume, and how we define the world around us.

7. Opportunities for audiences to share and distribute relevant content to their own networks and communities makes local distribution easier too.

8. The web is creating new funding models and new revenue streams for niche, specialist businesses, including hyperlocal services.

9. Big business recognises the value of local content and is moving into the hyperlocal space alongside smaller citizen-led efforts.

10. Local issues, and locally-relevant content, continue to matter to audiences, perhaps more than ever in these turbulent times.

These drivers of increased activity are, in some cases, still developing. It is up to hyperlocal media to take advantage of these trends and to unlock the possibilities they provide. Hyperlocal offers a space for new entrants to contribute to local reporting and discourse, and the sector is likely to become more prominent as social networks, smartphones and other new technologies continue to grow.

In short, hyperlocal media's time has come.

1. The hyperlocal landscape

The hyperlocal sector is diverse and constantly evolving, so mapping it can be challenging. The huge variety of hyperlocal outlets also makes it difficult to talk about hyperlocal media as a single homogeneous sector. Hyperlocal content can be found across all kinds of platforms, and caters for a wide range of different audiences, but common characteristics can still be identified.

What we mean by hyperlocal

There is no standard definition of hyperlocal media. In the introduction to this review we loosely defined hyperlocal media as:

> "Online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community."

Hyperlocal services typically cover much smaller areas than a standard newspaper or broadcast region, and often do not even attempt to cover everything happening in an area, specialising instead in a particular type of activity or news.

Nobody knows for sure how many hyperlocal websites there are, but there are resources which capture some of the scale and diversity of the sector, including Openly Local's directory of UK hyperlocal sites.[7] This directory suggests that in the UK, there are at least 500 online sites which provide hyperlocal content.

Here are a few examples, which highlight that hyperlocal services can operate at different levels of geographical scale.

- **Hyperlocal can mean a whole town or city:**
  Visit Horsham: www.visithorsham.co.uk
  Blog Preston: blogpreston.co.uk

- **Or it could mean just a single village:**
  Parwich.org: parwich.org
  Bournville: bournvillevillage.com[8]

- **Some sites cover specific postcodes or wards:**
  SE1: www.london-se1.co.uk
  HU17: www.hu17.net

- **Whilst others serve a defined community, such as an estate, area, or niche geographic community of interest:**
  Weir Estate, Lambeth: www.wera.org.uk
  Clapham: www.loveclapham.com
  Leith: www.greenerleith.org

Classifying hyperlocal media

Classifying hyperlocal services can be tricky, since hyperlocal content can be found across all kinds of platforms, and caters for a wide range of different audiences. Categorisations

vary according to advertising and content models, revenue, staff size and subject matter.[9] London's Digital Neighbourhoods, a 2010 study of 160 different sites in London by Hugh Flouch and Kevin Harris, identified eight different types of hyperlocal site, but noted that: *"The diversity of neighbourhood networks often makes it difficult to slot each example neatly into a single category."* [10]

Categories included 'civil social networks' like Harringay Online, which are designed to encourage discussion and interaction between local people with both a civic and social purpose, 'placeblogs' such as Brockley Central,[11] which were set up by a single person or small group of people to report on local stories at a very local level, and local action groups like the Stroud Green Residents' Association, who are using the web to replace traditional newsletters or *"to act as a static digital noticeboard"*.[12]

Ofcom's 2009 report on Local and Regional Media in the UK identified several common threads found across most hyperlocal media, including a desire to fill gaps in existing media provision (whether geographic, cultural, linguistic or issue-based). They also noted that hyperlocal services typically cover issues either too geographically small or too niche for regional TV, commercial radio or traditional print media.[13] Building on this, Sarah Hartley, a community strategist for the Guardian Media Group and former Editor of the Guardian Local pilot, identified ten key characteristics[14] which are often found across the sector. Her list included participation from the author and the community, passion, independence and a generous linking policy.

> "Not all sites display all these characteristics and, before the print lobby gets over excited, yes of course a lot of these characteristics are present in local newspapers as well."
>
> **Sarah Hartley[15]**

Many hyperlocal sites possess some of the characteristics and content we expect from journalists and traditional media. They hold authority to account, conduct investigations, report on Council activity, cover local news, events and sports, offer classifieds and 'What's On' listings, promote local campaigns and report emergencies. Yet treating hyperlocal media as simply a new form of journalism could be missing the point. Whilst some sites such as Lichfield Live and Saddleworth News[16] stem from people with journalistic backgrounds, many others do not.

> "I'm not trying to help people be like journalists and I think it's a mistake to look at hyperlocal sites and see citizen journalism. With the active citizens we help at Podnosh it's much more fruitful if you look at them and simply see citizens doing what citizens do. It might happen to look a bit like what journalists do – but they have a completely different motivation."
>
> **Nick Booth, Podnosh[17]**

Service owners very often cannot, and indeed do not like, to be pigeon-holed as either a 'campaigner' or a 'citizen journalist'. The content, characteristics and purposes of hyperlocal sites vary depending on the need of the local community being served. While there are some common threads and characteristics, consistent classification of hyperlocal services remains elusive.

The hyperlocal audience

More research work is needed to measure the size of the hyperlocal audience. Whilst there are industry standard measuring techniques for television, radio and newspapers, audience data for hyperlocal media is hard to ascertain, and unlike traditional media, aggregated data is hard to come by.

This presents a challenge for the sector to become sustainable. Unless we have answers to questions of reach, scale and audience, it is hard to predict how the sector will grow, or to map the scale of the opportunity. Establishing consistent measurement metrics is vital for advertisers, policymakers and traditional media, and further work in this area may help to change attitudes towards hyperlocal media and open doors to new partnerships and other opportunities.

Whatever the exact scale and composition of the hyperlocal audience, qualitative research does show that local content continues to be valued and regularly consumed.[18] This remains a significant sector, with potential value to both civil society and commercial interests. In 2009 Ofcom reported that:

> "Nine out of ten UK adults regularly [weekly] consume some form of local news, information or other content through television, radio, newspapers or the internet… [and that]…one in five consumers claim to use community websites at least monthly and a third of these say they have increased their use of such websites over the past two years.

Moreover, Ofcom also noted that:

> "Use of websites for local content was, unsurprisingly, linked to home broadband ownership, with regular use of community websites rising to 16 per cent and use of commercial websites rising to 33 per cent among those with broadband at home."
> **Ofcom, Local and Regional Media in the UK, 2009[19]**

Given the growth of domestic broadband, social networking and the smartphone boom these figures may look very different in 2012. But, even in 2009 it was clear that hyperlocal media was an increasingly important part of the media consumption mix. These trends merit deeper investigation as the sector evolves and the technologies available to consume it continue to mature and become mainstream.

Some established hyperlocal websites are showing substantial traffic and activity. The homepage of the Sheffield Forum boasts 350,695 topics and 140,097 registered users, and reports that it has 260,000 unique visitors per month[20] whilst the more commercially orientated Wimbledon Visitor notes that in June 2008 they had 79,000 visitors.[21] However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from isolated examples about the size of the sector as a whole.

Some commentators have suggested that the hyperlocal audience is hyper-small, or certainly smaller than often claimed.[22] For many hyperlocal outlets, however, success does

not always equate to page views. Engagement, civic impact and plurality of voice can be as important as reach, if not more so.

Up-to-date research from across the UK is hard to find,[23,24] but recent analysis in the US may have something to teach us about the current make-up of the hyperlocal audience. Borrell Associates, a consulting firm that tracks local advertising in the US, surveyed 16 local websites and found that 30 per cent of a local website's visitors do not live in the local area, 20 per cent of page views are delivered to 'fly-by' users who won't come back for a year, if ever, and most sites overstate their average unique local visitor count by a factor of five.[25] But the study also notes the impact 'core loyalists' – those who visit 18-20 times a month – can have. At a newspaper website cited by the study, core loyalists accounted for 82 per cent of page views, despite the fact that they only represented 27 per cent of total visitors.

In hyperlocal media, more so perhaps than in any other media sector, quality of audience engagement is often more important than sheer audience size.

Audience demographics

Audiences of all ages often use different media platforms and different media outlets, depending on their need. The reliance on new technologies and platforms suggests that hyperlocal is likely to skew towards a younger demographic, whilst traditional local and regional media (television, newspapers and radio) remain popular, particularly with older audiences. In 2010, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee commented that:

> "In evidence to our inquiry, Ofcom noted that while regional television news viewers and local newspaper readership were skewed towards older age groups, the young were leading the take-up of local media online."[26]

Younger audiences tend to consume content (not just news or hyperlocal media) across a wider variety of platforms and from a richer range of sources, with TV, radio and print all taking a hit as a result of this shift. Ofcom data (see Figure 1.) presented recently by Claire Enders to the Leveson Inquiry showed the difference quite clearly.[27]

> "I can see the day, maybe 20 years away, where you don't actually have paper and ink and printing presses. I think it will take a long time and I think it's a generational thing that is happening. But there's no doubt that younger people are not picking up the traditional newspapers."
> **Rupert Murdoch[28]**

## Figure 1. Young people are less engaged with print media than all UK adults

- UK adults have many choices to allocate their leisure time, and print media must compete with other media.
- Among UK adults, TV is the number one medium (45 per cent of time spent), and the internet is the number two medium (22 per cent of time spent).
- Young adults spend more time on the internet (30 per cent) and less time on TV (32 per cent) than adults as a whole, and multitask as well.
- Buyers and readers of print media are ageing, whilst the digitally engaged lose interest in print products.

All UK adults (percentage of time)

Voice/SMS 7%
Internet 22%
Print media 7%
Radio 14%
TV 45%
Other audio 5%
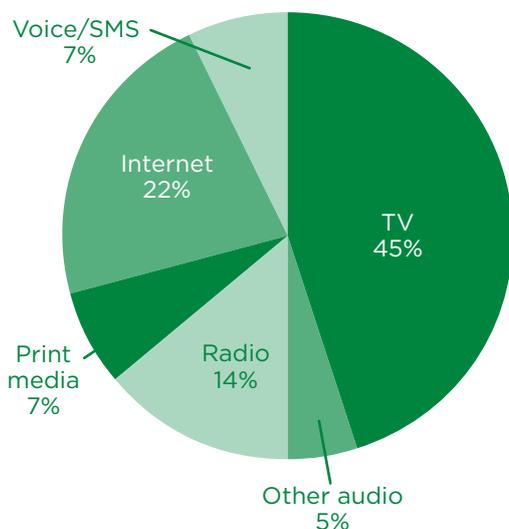
Note: Survey conducted in April-May 2010
Source: Ofcom Communications Market Report 2010

Young people 16 to 24 (percentage of time)

Voice/SMS 15%
TV 32%
Internet 30%
Other video 4%
Radio 5%
Print media 4%
Other audio 10%
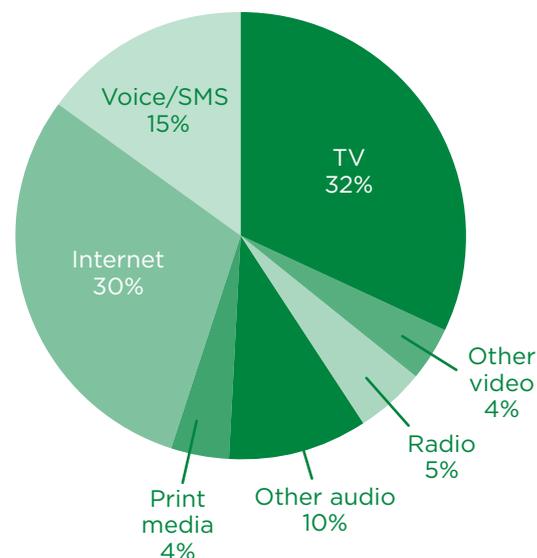
Note: Survey conducted in April-May 2010
Source: Ofcom Communications Market Report 2010

This trend has been clearly shown amongst American audiences in data from the Pew Research Center (see Figure 2.) which outlines how for those aged 18-39 the Internet leads the way as the primary source for all local news and information. We can speculate that UK audiences are likely to behave in a similar way.[29]

Figure 2. The top sources for local news and information vary by age
Percentage of adults in each age group who rely on source for each topic

	Weather	Restaurants/ Clubs	Politics	Community Events	Schools
Age 18-39	Television 44% Internet 41%	Internet 41%	Internet 26% Television 19% Newspaper 16%	Internet 19% Word of mouth 17%	Internet 24% Newspaper 12%
Age 40+	Television 67% Internet 26%	Newspaper 22% Internet 21%	Newspaper 34% Television 34% Internet 12%	Newspaper 32%	Newspaper 27% Internet 15% Television 12%

Source: Pew Research Center's project for excellence in Journalism and Internet & American Life Project in partnership with the Knight Foundation, January 12-25, 2011 Local Information Survey. N=2,251 adults age 18 and older. Conducted in English and Spanish and included 750 cell phone interviews.

Hyperlocal media outlets, with their digital bias, are certainly well-placed to meet the local informational needs of younger and more web-savvy audiences, and this market looks set to continue to grow. Nevertheless, more information is needed to understand the existing audience for this sector, as well as its potential for the future.

"It is the Internet have-nots (the elderly, the low income or the unskilled) that will be most affected by the retreat of commercial local media…. One-third of the readership base [of regional and local press] is over 55 and half is mid to low income, both being demographics that face significant challenges in connecting to the internet, whether in terms of skills, or the income to buy a PC and train to use it…"[30]

Written evidence submitted by Enders Analysis, to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, investigation into the Future for local and regional media, May 2009

KEY POINTS

- What we mean by 'hyperlocal' varies from person to person, depending on where you live and your relationship with the world around you.

- Although it is clear audiences value local content, the size of the hyperlocal audience is hard to determine.

- Hyperlocal content can be found across all media platforms and supports a number of different civic and journalistic purposes, including local news, campaigns, scrutiny of public bodies, and supporting local identity.

- There are many different production models, ranging from large-scale commercial operations through to individuals working on their own, and each has its place in the landscape.

2. Ingredients for success

This section looks at some of the factors which can help to determine the success of hyperlocal initiatives. With so many channels, models and opportunities available to them, hyperlocal practitioners must often blend a wide range of skills and mindsets together to make their services work and grow.

Core skills

Broadly speaking, these fall into a number of areas including technological, cultural, commercial and interpersonal skills. The balance of these will vary, depending on the aims and ambitions of each hyperlocal outlet.

Technical skills are of course important, and remain so as online technologies evolve and new opportunities emerge. Hyperlocal producers need to understand social networks and blogging platforms, and there are emerging training services in this field. Of course it is difficult to maintain consistent skills when the tools themselves are evolving so quickly. Nevertheless a basic grasp of digital technologies for self-publishing remains a prerequisite for any hyperlocal media practitioner.

Yet success in the hyperlocal sector is only partly a question of getting the right platforms and content. You also need to invest time in developing relationships, promoting your site, and in some cases working to turn your operation into a viable business. As the platforms become easier to use and more commonplace, human skills are becoming as important as technical ones. Community management, sales ability and other skills in communication and content promotion are all becoming increasingly important if you want your voice to be heard.

Growing and sustaining a hyperlocal service often comes down to basic skills in marketing and PR. Reporting from events and festivals, telling stories or providing content not available elsewhere (such as local planning meetings) provide a means to boost profile and credibility, but there are many other ways to build a brand online, and getting the word out to local people is an essential skill for any hyperlocal practitioner to master.

Opportunities also exist for hyperlocal practitioners to develop their skills in sales and advertising. There is a growing market for hyperlocal advertising, but media sales often require a different skill set from community reporting, or managing online communities. This may not be a skill set hyperlocal practitioners have, or indeed want to possess,[31] but it can be fundamental in making hyperlocal pay. There are also opportunities to partner with others, including academic institutions and local sales houses. Learning how to develop these skills, and having the time to do so, can be a real challenge for smaller operators, particularly as they begin to compete with larger operations with established sales staff and networks.

The US may be ahead of the curve here. American journalism schools are increasingly recognising that journalism is not just about being able to produce content for different platforms, but that increasingly multi-skilled communications professionals need to be able to sell, as well as write.

Serving local needs

Irrespective of your skills mix, successful hyperlocal services need to meet specific local needs, and the best sites are excellent at identifying and meeting the requirements of a

local community.[32] This is another reason why no two hyperlocal offerings are the same. Cookie cutter models do not work because communities are not uniform. They are diverse and unique, and hyperlocal media need to reflect this in both design and implementation.

> *"Hyperlocal media is quickly becoming part of the fabric of community life – a brilliant way for people to connect, produce and consume information about their neighbourhood. In our experience, the success of hyperlocal media should not be judged according to a grand aim – such as reviving journalism or democracy. Each community will get something different from it and value can be created in so many different ways. Success, can only really be judged within the local context."*
>
> **Mandeep Hothi, Programme Leader, Communities and Housing, Young Foundation[33]**

Perhaps the most common reason for creating hyperlocal services is to address specific gaps in local news or information provision. Some of these gaps are the results of cuts in newspapers or other forms of traditional media, but in other cases, hyperlocal outlets are covering areas that have always been too small for commercial media provision.

The result is that some consumers are able to enjoy a richer, more local, media experience than was previously available to them. The challenge for these audiences is often knowing where to find this information, as consumers must now rely on multiple outlets, some of which will be small and hard to find, rather than a single source like a newspaper as may have been the case in the past.

Other gaps may not be geographic, but linguistic, with hyperlocal media serving a specific cultural group within a local area. A number of community radio stations do this, supported by websites which offer content in other languages, links to websites of interest to their target audience (which again may include non-English language material) as well as opportunities to listen live or download podcasts. Examples include: Radio FAZA in Nottingham which targets the South East Asian community and which broadcasts in nine different languages[34] or Raidió Fáilte in Northern Ireland which is aimed at the Irish language community.[35] Whilst in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, the Rosmini Centre – a local community venue – features material in Polish as well as English on its website.

Finally, civic needs should not be overlooked, and this too is often the driver behind successful hyperlocal websites. William Perrin launched Kings Cross Environment in 2006 *"to help co-ordinate civic action on the ground"* in order *"to keep the streets of Kings Cross in London clean and liveable."*[36] New posts get 300-500 readers and there are over 1,200 posts in the archive. Other sites also take issues of public accountability seriously, helping to make Local Government more accessible. The SE1 website carries AudioBoos of Southwark Council meetings,[37] whilst the Ventnor Blog has been live-blogging Isle of Wight Council Meetings since 2007.[38] Stoke-on-Trent's PitsnPots has a similar aim:

> *"All we did with PitsnPots was try and make local democracy more accessible with a human voice, council minutes and agendas are not the easiest to get to grips with, nor is the council website. We tried to simplify the process by writing about forthcoming meetings and linking to the documents, we would then write up a report of the meeting in a very down to earth way, without writing to an agenda or putting any spin on it. We were/are passionate but try to remain objective."*
>
> **Mike Rawlins, PitsnPots[39]**

The importance of trust

Audience trust is at the heart of serving local needs, and securing loyal hyperlocal audiences. Building and maintaining this, not just with audiences but with contributors, advertisers and funders too, is crucial. Trust takes time to build, and there is no magic solution other than to produce great content, develop and nurture relationships, and build a brand, but this is a subtle and important art that all successful hyperlocal outlets must master.

Unlike many legacy operators, hyperlocal services cannot take any of these things for granted, and judgements can be made based on the name of the service as much as the individuals concerned.[40] In June 2011, Philip John explained that the hyperlocal news and community website the Lichfield Blog has been renamed Lichfield Live, because it became *"hard to escape the fact that having 'blog' in our name was causing problems with how we were perceived"*.[41]

Sometimes building trust and reputation is about serving local needs at key moments. Local media always does well in a crisis, and whilst nobody would wish to see a repeat of the recent English riots, in some instances they drove new traffic to hyperlocal sites, to record levels in some cases. Hopefully some of the new visitors went on to become repeat visitors. Brixton Blog covered events before and after in Brixton.[42] Harringay Online had 25 posts, including what happened and how to help affected families.[43] Musician Casey Rain created a new Tumblr site, Birmingham Riots 2011,[44] and there were also good examples of how bloggers and police countered riot rumours in Wolverhampton.[45]

On other occasions the key to building trust is simply being open and honest with your audience. Hyperlocal sites are often deeply embedded in their communities, and their ongoing service to those communities can create strong bonds of trust and loyalty from their audiences in return.

> "Local papers – and mainstream journalism – ... tends to focus on conflict, crisis, celebrity. If you are bothered about the health of your community and what you can do, local trad media hasn't been much help for some time... Local sites like W14 and SW6 are trying to provide some news, but doing a lot more... They are going for conversation, collaboration and celebration."
>
> **David Wilcox, Social Reporter[46]**

Local knowledge matters

A key driver for building trust is local knowledge, and the most successful hyperlocal services are firmly rooted in the communities which they serve. Conversely, 'lack of knowledge about an area' has been cited as a key cause for a number of 'big media'

failures.[47] This is not to say that top-down models cannot work, but local context clearly matters, both in terms of people and content.

Mark Potts, who had worked on the early American hyperlocal initiative, Backfence,[48] has observed how the value of hyperlocal content can often only be appreciated by locals. Without local context, these sites can seem frivolous, even meaningless.

> "Hyperlocal content is really mundane. We heard this criticism all the time. You bet it is – if you're an outsider looking in. To members of the community who actually live with these local issues, it's vitally important."[49]

Context is especially important in the emerging area of public, open data. As more local data sources generated by public authorities become available, their meaning can only truly be realised through local interpretation and interrogation.

> "For the hyperlocal publishers, bloggers, one key element of quality is transparency. If you report on a council meeting, then you link to the full minutes, you put all of that in its full form. It is interesting because I have been looking at a lot of council coverage in local newspapers and it is very much second and third-hand, you are getting very small quotes and it is not clear if that is from a press release, directly from a phone call or the meeting. A blogger would link to as much as possible and would link to the full transcript."
>
> **Paul Bradshaw, Media Consultant and Academic[50]**

Publishing and explaining local data is becoming a growth area for hyperlocal initiatives. Residents in Bramcote set up a local website, which included detailed discussions about traffic data following repeated accidents on Hillside Road. In July, the site reported that a traffic calming scheme had started on the road[51] and in September that the police *"would [now] be targeting offenders on Hillside Road."*[52] There are similar stories in the US. For example, The Bay Citizen developed a Bike Accident Tracker which analysed data from 14,113 bike accidents between January 2005 and December 2009 to draw conclusions about which areas were statistically most dangerous for cyclists.[53]

Harnessing the power of communities

Most successful hyperlocal sites don't simply broadcast information, they engage in two-way dialogue with their readers. This means good community management is crucial for building a thriving hyperlocal service.

Communities specialist Richard Millington has recently identified the four key principles which community members seek from a sustained involvement:

1. Power to effect change.

2. Recognition and appreciation.

3. Affiliation with friends.

4. A sense of achievement.[54]

These principles are not unique to the online world, and hyperlocal players have as much to learn from the community development sector as they do from other media outlets.

> "Sites should engage, not just inform, their users; ramp up quickly with social media tools; tease out contributors rather than train a corps of citizen journalists in advance; and invest a lot of sweat equity…"[55]
> **Summary of J-Lab report, 'New Voices: What Works' (2010)**

With such a close connection and overlap between the creators and consumers of hyperlocal content, engaging and involving the local community is critical to building a loyal audience. If handled correctly, this community engagement can play a key role in determining the success and longevity of a hyperlocal service. An engaged network of participants can help solicit new content and funding, reduce volunteer churn, and lead to more and better content as loyal contributors stay involved and hone their skills.

MONTV in Monmouthshire has found that many of the graduates from their City & Guilds training stayed on after completing their Level 3 course, with some volunteers giving up 15 hours a week to help with filming, editing and scheduling. Between 40 and 50 of these graduates now essentially run the service.[56] One of the best international examples, DICHTBIJ in the Netherlands, is now securing 4,000 audience contributions a month across their 100 sites, up from 900 three months ago.[57]

Elsewhere around the world, 'City Wikis' like those for Warsaw (Poland), Manche, France or Kiev, Ukraine, are classic examples of the 'participatory internet'. They feature questions, articles and photos posted by the community about a given locale. The highest ranked city wiki is for the Region of Karlsruhe in Germany, which boasts around 23,000 articles, 420,000 edits and almost 5,000 users, and also offers English and French versions. The opportunity to create content seems to draw in audiences, and sometimes the act of creation itself is a key part of the offer to audiences.

Audiences are often drawn to opportunities to make a difference, and the UK is no exception to this trend. Examples of campaigning websites include 'Save our Skyline', which seeks to stop local council plans for skyscrapers along the River Thames in Hammersmith,[58] and East Dulwich Snub which campaigns for the use of reusable bags to reduce plastic bag consumption in London's East Dulwich.[59] On a smaller scale, contributors might be able to help develop a map of local Wi-Fi sites,[60] or crowd source information about a tube strike.[61]

Choosing the right platform

Every hyperlocal service needs a platform to publish content and reach out to audiences. There are many online publishing services now available, from Facebook to Wordpress, Ning and Flickr, as well as tools and plugins like FixMyStreet and WhatDotheyKnow. These platforms provide a means for citizens and organisations to reach out and engage audiences, and can also be a source of tailored content which hyperlocal outlets can embed, tailor or republish.

Increasingly, hyperlocal services are moving into the mobile space too, embracing Android and iPhone apps for mobile versions of their sites. Although, this is an area where there is great potential for growth and a space which is underutilised at present. Mobile apps for local services have not yet reached the mainstream, but the continued growth of the smartphone market will no doubt change this.[62] Mobile usage is increasing rapidly, and hyperlocal services delivering location-based content to audiences could be well placed to meet local needs and changing consumer habits.

With such an abundance of options, the key is often to get the right choice of platform for the type of hyperlocal site and where they find their audience. Online forums, Facebook Groups, Wordpress blogs, all serve different functions and will be used by publishers for different purposes. Examples of recent innovations include The Edinburgh Reporter, a hyperlocal news website for Edinburgh, which now has a Kindle Edition,[63] and Postcode Gazette a mobile first hyperlocal service currently running a pilot in Sheffield.[64]

Increasingly, choosing the technology is the easy part. Choosing the right platform is perhaps less important than getting the right content for your audience, and getting bogged down in which platform to choose can frequently distract you from some of the more important human considerations which are needed to make your hyperlocal outlet a success.

Traditional channels

Hyperlocal is not just about online either. Print continues to play a role, even at a hyperlocal level. Older, more established forms of communication – such as TV and Radio – still continue to serve audiences, albeit often delivered in newer ways. They play a useful role in the hyperlocal mix, and their value should not be discounted.[65]

For example, online platforms are a new outlet for hyperlocal audio services to flourish. Licensed community radio stations sit alongside online-only offerings such as Stoke's 6 Towns Radio and Manchester Radio Online.[66] There are also emerging hyperlocal podcasts like The Hackney Podcast,[67] which won the Sony Radio Gold 2010 for the best internet radio programme.

Although new digital services abound, community print media such as newspapers, newsletters and pamphlets continue to play an important role in delivering hyperlocal news directly to audiences. *Leys News,* a free monthly newspaper established in 1998, is delivered

to 5,000 homes on the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys estates in south east Oxford.[68] The _ECHO Community Newspaper_ has now been serving residents in the Earlsdon, Chapelfields, Hearsall and Spon End districts of Coventry since April 1979. It is produced 11 times a year by volunteers and financed by advertising and a 30 pence price-tag, with none of the 20 newsagents, churches and shops that stock it taking a commission.[69]

Interestingly, the new digital services are increasingly taking their online content offline too. For example, HU17.net, which covers Beverley in East Yorkshire, began a weekly print run of approximately 100 copies in late 2010, and recently started a property section.[70] This 'reverse publishing' model allows audiences, many of whom may not be online, to consume hyperlocal media via a more familiar and accessible format. Services such as Newspaper Club and Sweeble are now making it even easier for online content to be converted into a more traditional print product.[71] The US blogger Michael Josefowicz has termed this model the 'Printernet'.[72]

The importance of face-to-face engagement

Being visible and engaging in dialogue with local people are great ways to identify local needs, build local knowledge and engender trust. This engagement is not limited to the digital world. Face-to-face engagement can be as important as online. It helps to raise profile, build relationships with audiences, and identify the issues that matter to communities.

There are many examples of hyperlocal outlets organising events[73] to gather and showcase content, and to build recognition and standing in their communities. Southwark.TV recently produced a film about Islam in Southwark which, after being made in partnership with the local community, was then showcased at the Tate Modern[74] and the Peckham Plex cinema.

> "Last year locals used Harringay Online to organise scores of people to help clear away heavy snow. This year neighbours managed to organise over 30 people to clean up a local park in an operation that went from conception to completion in the space of little more than 48 hours."
>
> **Hugh Flouch, Harringay Online[75]**

Other hyperlocal services are visibly reporting from events organised by other bodies, from political events such as Inside the M60's[76] tweets from Manchester City Council meetings,[77] to festivals like SE1's coverage of the Thames Festival,[78] and even local sport news from outlets like MONTV and My Football Writer. Some online hyperlocal outlets have organised meet and greets, training and open editorial sessions.[79]

Face-to-face should not be overlooked by hyperlocal media. Whilst new media tools can be a great means for both story-gathering and storytelling, word of mouth and visibility in your community are still valuable commodities which can play a key role in turning your site into a success.

"The value and role of community media goes beyond the provision of content, with specific value often seen in the social capital generated by the creation of community media."

Ofcom, Local and Regional Media in the UK, 2009[80]

Understanding the law

Whatever your platform, another core skill – and one which may not necessarily be obvious – is an understanding of media law.

Hyperlocal sites blur the boundaries between journalism and activism, and this can be particularly difficult in terms of media law. For sites written by concerned individuals and community activists, there is a risk of undertaking news reporting which readers – and in particular, public bodies – may take issue with.

"Big professional news organisations can afford in-house legal advice, which simply isn't feasible for smaller operations, such as independent local news sites.

In 2010 I conducted a small online survey among 71 bloggers and small online publishers, many of whom were in the 'hyperlocal' space. The results indicated mixed feelings about resources, with 27 per cent respondents encountering legal trouble in last two years. Of these, 19 online writers who were contacted over a legal matter in the last two years, only seven sought legal advice, which was paid for in four instances. The remaining 12 dealt with it alone…. … without legal help available, bloggers may be less inclined to pursue certain kinds of stories or avenues of investigation."

Judith Townend, Founder, Meeja Law[81]

As we can see, the level of legal support for the citizen journalist/reporter is often minimal, if indeed there is any at all. In the US, J-Lab and the Knight Foundation ran a Legal Risk Blog for American citizen journalists, bloggers and social network users, but its usefulness as a tool for UK practitioners is limited.[82,83] As the sector grows it may be only matter of time before we see the emergence of similar services in the UK.

A format for hyperlocal?

Hyperlocal media relies much more on the passion and engagement of the individuals behind it than any formal training or magic formula. Arguably, the relevance and credibility of content is as important to an audience as the training of the person who produced it.

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to tell if a hyperlocal service will work until it goes live. Good ideas don't necessarily translate into successful models, whilst others take time to evolve. The plethora of publishing platforms now makes it possible to reach audiences for low costs and without much technical know-how. The most important thing is to try ideas out quickly.

> "Remember that you are not just a journalist any longer. You're a marketer, publisher and business leader. Above all, stay focused, but be ready to change on a dime. As a local news entrepreneur, you will need to evolve and evolve. Make the surprises work for you."
>
> **Jan Schaffer, J-Lab[84]**

KEY POINTS

- There are an increasing number of free tools and easy to use platforms which enable hyperlocal media to be created, distributed and accessed. This has removed some key barriers to entry.

- It's not all about the web. Television, video, radio and print continue to play a role.

- We don't yet know the true size of the hyperlocal market, and mapping it will be challenging.

- There is no 'silver bullet'. The success of hyperlocal outlets varies depending on platform and location, as well as the communities and individuals involved.

- Hyperlocal works best where it adds value to communities and is rooted in audience needs.

- Your production model – and the type of outlet you are – influences the skills you need.

- Hyperlocal media isn't just about journalism. Other skills, including sales, publishing and community engagement, are also important.

- Networks can be powerful tools to drive content, campaigns and funding.

- This is a nascent sector. Flexibility and experimentation are important attributes to possess.

3. Challenges and opportunities

Hyperlocal practitioners face many challenges in both growing and sustaining their services. Sometimes these challenges prove to be insurmountable and result in ventures folding. On other occasions, issues can be resolved by changing direction, partnerships or evolving business models.

Getting paid

Arguably the biggest challenge facing the sector is making it pay. In an effort to establish sustainable businesses a number of different models have emerged reflecting that the sector has what Ofcom describes as:

> "…a diverse range of funding sources, including advertising, subscriptions (and circulation revenues), grants from public and private funding bodies and in-kind funding from volunteers."
>
> **Ofcom, Local and Regional Media in the UK, 2009**[85]

Here are a few examples of business models that are used to fund online hyperlocal websites in the UK:

- **Local advertising sales**

  Neighbour Net started ChiswickW4.com[86] in 2000 and now runs ten sites in West and South West London, offering a mix of news and information to over 35,000 registered members. The team use demographic information provided at sign-up to determine audience characteristics and sell highly-targeted advertising.

- **Media training**

  MONTV, providing 'Local Television for Monmouthshire' in Wales, secured an initial grant from the local council but then moved into media training, delivering the City & Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Media Techniques to students. This enabled them to secure a full-time trainer who was their only paid member of staff. They are now rolling out this model to other areas through their yourlocal.tv network.[87]

- **'Mixed ecology'**

  The London SE1 Website has multiple income streams, from Google Adsense through to Classifieds, a monthly printed 'What's On' guide and affiliate relationships with large groups linked to smaller businesses in the SE1 area.

The advantage of these business models is that they focus on the web, which can give hyperlocal outlets a considerable advantage. As the House of Commons DCMS Select Committee noted:

> "The relatively small start-up and maintenance costs of web-based projects such as hyperlocal websites and blogs, as opposed to the heavy costs of print and distribution, mean that there is a smaller risk in setting them up, but also a smaller financial return. The use of volunteers and 'crowd-sourcing' (where a question is put to the readership who can then all offer contributions to the answer), also means that content itself can be produced quite cheaply."[88]

Reports from America[89] have underlined the value of a mixed funding model. As a result, US hyperlocal businesses have sought to generate revenue from a huge range of activities, including merchandising, grants, membership and events. Examples to note include:

- **Independent advertising networks**
  The Sacramento Local Online Ad Network (SLOAN) brings together 63 Sacramento blogs and news sites and offers advertisers a single point of contact. The network has 700,000 unique readers per month.[90]

- **Social media consultancy**
  Oakland Local provides services such as training or web development to local businesses, community organisations and other online news publishers.[91]

- **Philanthropy**
  Spot.Us pioneered 'community-funded reporting' by getting freelance journalists to pitch specific news stories, with visitors to the site making a donation — sometimes just $10 or $20 — to pay the journalist to produce the more detailed story.[92]

> "…Community media are experimenting with content and engagement as well as revenue, and the right combination of the three may be at the vanguard of the new economics of news."
>
> **Pew, The State of the News Media, 2011[93]**

As with the US, hyperlocal media in the UK is evolving and developing new business models in a space where there are few tried and tested paths to success. To be successful and sustainable, it is likely that hyperlocal services will need to explore several different revenue streams, and be flexible about how they monetise their services.

Scaling-up

The small-scale nature of most hyperlocal provision also makes it difficult for them to compete in the wider media market. Part of the challenge and the opportunity of scaling hyperlocal media, is the diverse and granular nature of hyperlocal itself. As analyst Greg Sterling observed:

> "When you slice further and further down, you get smaller and smaller audiences… advertisers want that kind of targeting, but they also want to reach more people, so there's a paradox."[94]

Whilst some hyperlocal operations have managed to become financially viable businesses, their models are not always scalable. This may not matter for smaller outlets, especially volunteer-run efforts, but for larger media organisations it is a key consideration.

The UK has yet to see the emergence of a major national network of hyperlocal services, but in the US, services like Patch are arguably more advanced in realising this ambition.

Patch had just over three million unique visitors 24 months ago,[95] and this had grown further to 6.9 million unique visitors in April 2011.[96] When AOL bought Patch.com for

$7 million in 2009, it had just five hyperlocal sites,[97] growing to over 800 just two years later.[98] But achieving this growth is resource-intensive. AOL reported putting $75 million into Patch in 2010 and $40 million in Q1 2011.[99]

The main advantage for sites of such size and reach is that they find it much easier to broker advertising sales than sites with a few hundred loyal followers. For many smaller operations, sales and fundraising require different skills and approaches, which not everyone is equipped, or inclined, to carry out. Big budgets don't necessarily guarantee success though, with the jury still out for many commentators on Patch.

> "Most indie local news publishers don't think Patch will be around for the long term. The big question is whether the indies can survive long enough to outlast Patch. They'd clearly like to."
>
> **Jan Schaffer, J-Lab reporting on the 2011 Block by Block summit[100]**

The US can offer some lessons to the UK on delivering hyperlocal at scale, but it is a very different financial market.[101] The first difference is the high profile presence and contribution of non-profits like the Knight Foundation and The American Independent News Network to the funding of hyperlocal outlets.[102] The second difference is the sheer amount of money in the American hyperlocal space, which can dwarf the figures in the UK and elsewhere.

Even small hyperlocal entities in the US can enjoy a much bigger turnover than their non-US counterparts. MinnPost spent $1.26 million in 2010, and reported a small surplus.[103] Voice of San Diego projected a 2011 budget of $1.2 million,[104] whilst the Texas Tribune has ambitions for a $3 million annual budget, split equally between membership, corporate support and specialty publications, with no foundation support.[105]

The sheer difference in size between UK and US audiences means it is highly unlikely we will ever see figures like these in the UK, or such large investments from venture capitalists and foundations. Commercial offerings in the UK do exist though, and there is no doubt room for more. Neighbour Net[106] and Bankside Press, the creators of SE1,[107] as well as projects from mainstream providers such as STV Local[108] and Northcliffe Media's LocalPeople,[109] offer some indicators of how this might be done.

Northcliffe also recently announced two new developments which may help them to realise their local ambitions. The first is a partnership with Trinity Mirror to create a single regional sales house encompassing more than 260 titles, including nine of the ten biggest regional paid-for titles in the UK.[110] The second is the creation of franchising opportunities to help expand their LocalPeople network of 160 sites. Potential franchisees are promised three days initial training, an operator manual and on-going support. The cost of a franchise is £6,995+VAT, but the scheme's website cites potential returns of *"well over"* £5,000 a month.[111] A further development to note is Sky's announcement of a pilot project in the North East of England.[112]

Whether these and other US-style, commercial schemes will work in the UK market, however, still remains to be seen.

Sustainability

Sustainability for hyperlocal media is often discussed in terms of funding and finances, but not everyone enters into the hyperlocal arena looking to turn this into a business. For the smallest sites – run by volunteers using free hosting and software – sustainability is often more an issue of time, rather than money.

Staff turnover, changes in personal circumstances of key people, a lack of volunteer progression, and technological challenges[113] can all play a role in disrupting business models and practises. Some of these issues can be mitigated, but others are just a fact of life. The challenges of maintaining ongoing audience engagement mean that even highly successful hyperlocal sites have not survived, or are at risk of being mothballed.

Research from City University suggests that many communities will sustain themselves even if the outlets and personnel change.

> "...the investment of effort in creating networks of blogs in an area appears to help provide some insurance against such an event: while blogs frequently close, many inspire others to publish and some are passed on to new owners. The existence of the network itself, meanwhile, appears to act as an incentive for many bloggers to continue their work."
>
> **Thurman, Bradshaw and Pascal, 2011[114]**

Yet this is not always the case, and many hyperlocal sites simply shut down once the key people move on.

The SR2 Blog, run by student journalist Josh Halliday covering the Sunderland postcode SR2, won the *Talk About Local/Guardian Local* award for 'Most Inspirational Site' in 2010.[115] However, founder Josh now works for *The Guardian* as a Media and Technology reporter, and the SR2 Blog has been on standby since May 2010.[116] At the time of writing, the domain has expired.[117]

Similarly, in October 2011, the homepage of the Chistlehurst News noted:

> "…unfortunately, the site has reached the end of the road… for now. While we have loyal readers who log on and contribute to the various debates we host, the site has become increasingly time-consuming for just one person to manage and write, which is all done in his spare time… For now, this will be the last post."[118]

A call for *"a keen or aspiring local blogger, who would like to take on running and writing for the site"* currently remains unmet.

One possible model for the future can be seen in Saddleworth News, which was started in February 2010 by journalist and stay-at-home dad Richard Jones, and who found an interesting solution to this common problem. In August the editor announced that students from the Digital Journalism degree course at University Campus Oldham, part of the University of Huddersfield, would take over the running of the site.[119] The move aims to

allocate more resources to grow the site, whilst allowing Richard to move back into full-time employment.

Relationships with traditional media

A further recurring theme from many hyperlocal practitioners is the difficulty they can face building good relationships with traditional media outlets. The causes of this can sometimes be hard to fathom, but it may stem from a lack of understanding of this new medium, seeing it either as an amateur effort and thus irrelevant, or conversely as a threat to their business.

This is beginning to change, and successful reciprocal relationships do exist, but there is still a long way to go. Traditional media and hyperlocal outlets can be complimentary and examples of partnerships do exist between hyperlocal outlets and more traditional media players. However, we have to acknowledge that hostility can exist.

> "Hyperlocal websites always have challenges working with their local newspaper and traditional media… What we don't see, and this is always a puzzle to me, is why local newspapers don't just reach out and embrace with a warm big hug the people who are creating content on the ground."
> **William Perrin quoted in "The Value of Networked Journalism" by Charlie Beckett[120]**

Hyperlocal outlets aren't always seeking financial recompense, however, although sometimes that would be appreciated. A simple by-line and acknowledgement of the original source would often suffice.

Danny Sullivan, editor-in-chief of Search Engine Land, is just one voice calling for a change in attitude.

> "Many bloggers are journalists, part of the news ecosystem, colleagues that are entitled to respect. At the very least, I'm begging the management of newspapers who view blogs with hostility to get out into your newsrooms and talk with a few of your reporters that interact with bloggers. Many of them know the valuable role we play. You should learn, too."[121]

A key source of complaint from hyperlocal outlets is that some newspapers take content or story leads from them, without acknowledging the original source. Arguably the media industry has always worked like this, but for hyperlocal practitioners, many of whom don't come from a media background, this cannibalistic nature is seldom understood and frequently a source of disquiet. Overcoming this is arguably a challenge for both the hyperlocal and traditional media sectors, and we will explore some of these opportunities in the next section.

Big Media's struggles

The hyperlocal landscape contains the remnants of a number of high profile ventures by large media companies. Developing sustainable, proven, business models has remained a challenge, and many respected news outlets have had their fingers burnt, in some cases leaving the door open for grassroots services to step into the breach.

In April 2011, *The Guardian* announced that, after two years, it was to close its local news websites for Leeds, Cardiff and Edinburgh, noting *"the project is not sustainable in its present form."*[122] A statement from *The Guardian* later said that *"significant further investment would be required for the project to grow and develop … The nature of digital innovation means investing in and trying new things, but also knowing when to call it a day."*[123] Each of the websites was run by a dedicated 'beatblogger' combining traditional journalism with social media and outreach.[124]

At a time when traditional media, and in particular the press, is struggling for revenue, share and resources for story gathering, hyperlocal media can help to plug the gaps[125] and grow an audience.

> "Even in the fattest-and-happiest days of traditional media, they could not regularly provide news on such a granular level. Professional media have been joined by a wide range of local blogs, email lists, websites and the proliferation of local groups on national websites like Facebook or Yahoo!"
>
> 'The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age' (p16) [126]

Hyperlocal media services are very different from traditional media outlets, and consequently there are many ways in which they could add value to the traditional media ecosystem.

> "Citizen journalism is no more a replacement for professional journalism than teabags are a replacement for water. Both can stand comfortably alone, but when combined they produce something quite wonderful."
>
> **Clyde H. Bentley, Associate Professor, University of Missouri School of Journalism**[127]

Hyperlocal often boasts far greater community participation and engagement than traditional media outlets, which typically follow a broadcast service model and rarely ask their readers for help with a story or feedback. This potentially creates an opportunity for hyperlocal providers to offer this service to their larger, less participatory neighbours. Neil Thurman, commenting on his study into Northcliffe Media's hyperlocal efforts, 'Can Big Media do Big Society?'[128] summarised this difference between the two sectors:

"…we found that the established commercial local media provider we studied wasn't enabling community participation or meeting audience interests as well as many independent hyperlocal bloggers have done."[129]

Hyperlocal providers can also help with investigative journalism, so often cited as a casualty of the impact of the Internet on news reporting. Whilst the most high profile examples of crowd-sourced investigations have been on national stories (such as *The Guardian's* work on the expense claims of MPs[130]), there are local examples of investigations which have benefited from the wisdom, expertise, and sheer numbers of the crowd.

Help Me Investigate, a project supported by 4iP and Screen West Midlands, undertook investigations including the uncovering of a £2.2 million overspend on Birmingham City Council's website,[131] and the varying availability of hormonal contraception on the NHS, an investigation which involved a number of Primary Care Trusts.[132]

Similarly, in Seattle, *The Seattle Times* has over 30 hyperlocal 'partners',[133] and a collaborative project on graffiti won a number of awards after these partners told the story and encouraged their readers to contribute to a trouble spots map.

"The Times came to us as peers, recognizing our track record of quality community-powered journalism… That's a big contrast from newspapers that historically treat neighborhood blogs as something to leverage or lab experiments to duplicate."
Cory Bergman, co-founder of Next Door Media, a Seattle network of neighborhood news sites[134]

Partnership opportunities

Perhaps the best way to develop mutually beneficial relationships for hyperlocal providers and traditional media is through partnerships. Whilst these can be challenging, they offer a potential to help both partners to meet their objectives and help to overcome some of the structural challenges they currently face. Hyperlocal providers are usually too small to solve every challenge themselves, and partnerships can play a key role in the future development – and sustainability – of this nascent sector. They can help to tackle issues of financial stability, content creation and more. Archant, for example, have recently partnered with EverythingEppingForest.co.uk,[135] to produce a monthly magazine which will be delivered to 10,000 homes in the CM16 and RM4 postcode areas, providing local community news and information, a 'What's On' section, and local advertising.[136] The *Birmingham Mail Communities project* added 34 hyperlocal sections to the *Birmingham Mail* website, featuring content from local blogs like Digbeth is Good.[137]

"Local newspapers can learn from many of these innovative websites, and in some cases there is an argument that local newspapers should be working alongside them. However, this is not to say that local newspapers are no longer relevant. There is still, and will always be, a need for local professional journalism. Local newspapers will

> retain a role and a relevance, particularly for the segments of society that do not, or cannot, use the internet."[138]
>
> **House of Commons, DCMS Select Committee**

However, at present, many partnerships are often as niche as the products being produced, meaning that the benefits of scale and the opportunities for best practice are often lost.

There are three types of large-scale partnership the hyperlocal sector could benefit from exploiting more:

- **Cross sector links (hyperlocal to hyperlocal)**

- **Links with traditional media (e.g. newspapers, radio and television)**

- **Partnerships with academic institutions and community groups**

Links within the hyperlocal sector are more common in the US than in the more disparate UK landscape. The Chicago Independent Advertising Network is the result of 15 Chicago community news sites coming together to offer a single point of contact for advertisers. Funded by the Chicago Community Trust and the Knight Community Information Challenge, they *"collectively serve more than one million page views each month",*[139] and the network has a full-time salesperson to support its activities. Twenty-two local online news organisations have also recently created a trade association for independent online local news websites, with the aspiration to become a potentially global body. Links with traditional media are more common, but often quite localised.

On the academic side, students at Birmingham City University have been involved with creating hyperlocal sites as part of their coursework, such as Hednesford News, created by final year student Kellie Maddox.[140]

Relationships with civic authorities

The attitudes of local authorities and public bodies towards hyperlocal media also vary greatly. There are examples of good reciprocal working, but also of less fruitful relationships. A number of recent UK Government policies may help to establish a more consistent and mutually-beneficial relationship between these two groups. The commitment to localism, including local television, manifest in the recent Localism Bill and in moves to encourage Local Councils to open their doors to bloggers, will create new opportunities for hyperlocal practitioners. So too will the drive towards open data at a local and national level.[141]

> "Council meetings have long been open to interested members of the public and recognised journalists, and with the growth of online film, social media and hyperlocal online news they should equally be open to 'citizen journalists' and filming by mainstream media. Bloggers, tweeters, residents with their own websites and users of Facebook and YouTube are increasingly a part of the modern world, blurring the lines between professional journalists and the public."
>
> **Local Government Minister Bob Neill in a letter to local authority leaders[142]**

These moves have been broadly welcomed by the hyperlocal sector. However, they may take time to implement, as they do – in part – require an element of culture change.

VentnorBlog is an award-winning Isle of Wight website that has been running since September 2005, publishing over 14,000 articles and gathering over 60,000 reader comments.[143] Yet in 2010, founder and decade long NUJ member Simon Perry was ejected from the Coroner's Court in Newport and refused entry as a member of the press or as a member of the public, being told the Coroner didn't want them in *"his court."*. The Isle of Wight County Press and the BBC, who were also present, were allowed to stay.[144]

The role of public policy

National economic and policy frameworks can affect hyperlocal media, and so too can specific interventions such as calls for public notices to be made available online and through hyperlocal outlets. The hyperlocal sector, however, has far less lobbying power than the larger media institutions, and it will be important that public policy takes account of how it can support and sustain this growing sector.

From open data initiatives through to letting hyperlocal bloggers tweet and film local council proceedings, the Government can help support valuable content creation and drive access to hyperlocal information. Hyperlocal support initiatives could be harnessed to promote digital inclusion, help overcome social exclusion,[145] or increase public scrutiny, creating great benefits to the hyperlocal sector.

> "We are in the digital age and this analogue interpretation of the press access rules is holding back a new wave of local scrutiny, accountability and armchair auditors."
>
> **Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, Feb 2011[146]**

We may also need to investigate the value and benefits to communities created by plurality in local news and information provision, before we can look at public policy interventions and support. In the US, researchers at Princeton studied the impact of the closure of the *Cincinnati Post* (circ. 27,000) in late 2007 on municipal elections and found that: *"fewer candidates ran for municipal office in the suburbs most reliant on the Post, incumbents became more likely to win re-election, and voter turnout fell."*[147] David Simon, creator of *The Wire* and a former crime reporter on the *Baltimore Sun*, has written about similar issues in his piece *'In Baltimore, No One Left to Press the Police'*.[148]

KEY POINTS:

- Making hyperlocal pay is arguably the biggest challenge at present, for businesses big and small.

- A mixed funding model seems to be the best solution for financial sustainability. The US offers many possible funding models, but is also a very different market.

- The sustainability of these services is about more than money.

- Although a lack of money dominates the sector, there are commercial and civic opportunities emerging from the hyperlocal landscape.

- Lack of understanding about hyperlocal – manifest in occasional hostility from traditional media and public bodies – is a further key obstacle to overcome.

- Big media sees the potential of hyperlocal media, but so far they have struggled to make it work.

- There is a benefit for policymakers, advertisers and practitioners alike to be able to understand the size and potential of the hyperlocal sector.

- Without this, it is difficult to see how policy interventions can be encouraged or new funding opportunities unlocked on a large scale (e.g. city-wide advertising).

4. Emerging trends

The hyperlocal landscape and its context are changing rapidly, as new technological and social opportunities emerge which hyperlocal practitioners can benefit from. Many will become more important in the coming years, but these are also areas where opportunities exist today too. Even at this early stage in the sector's development, clear trends are emerging about the possible shape of things to come.

"I think in the long run, we're going to look back at many facets of old media and realize that we were living in a desert disguised as a rain forest."
Steven Johnson, SXSW, 2009[149]

The importance of social media

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, alongside other social sharing tools like Google+ and Digg, are changing the way audiences consume media.

Social search, content sharing and community engagement (both online and offline) are all supporting the growth of hyperlocal media. Social networks are not just where the eyeballs are. In a world of ever proliferating content, they also offer an effective means for users to filter what they consume, and social sharing is becoming an increasingly popular way for audiences to discover new content.

> "Sharing of news content within networks is becoming a mainstream activity… Referrals from Facebook to an average news site have increased by 300 per cent over the past year – partly driven by the introduction of a simple sharing button (Facebook Like)."[150]
>
> **Nic Newman, a Visiting Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism**[151]

Given that social networks are still growing – Ofcom's Communications Market Report found 54 per cent of internet users said they had a social networking profile in 2010 (up from 44 per cent in 2009)[152] – so too is their potential as a tool for hyperlocal content and discussion.

For many audiences, social media simply means Facebook. As an example, WHAT'S ON OFFERTON[153] is a Facebook group for a Greater Manchester suburb, which *"promotes a positive discussion about making Offerton a better place".* Recent hyperlocal discussions included investigating the veracity of a report in the *Stockport Express* suggesting that the Offerton High School site might be offered as a site for gypsies and travellers, as well as live reporting from the Friend's of Offerton meeting, where the Christmas Market was being discussed. In contrast to the vibrancy of these Facebook pages, their Wordpress site has had just seven posts in six months and no updates since October 2011.[154]

New distribution platforms

As the hyperlocal market evolves, there are various new platforms emerging to support hyperlocal publishing. Specialist services such as Nextdoor and n0tice show some of the potential in this space, but there is still a long way to go before we see the emergence of an established market leader in hyperlocal news and community. But the fundamental challenge for new hyperlocal platforms is whether they can supplant Facebook and other mainstream social sites as the destination for local news and discussion.

Facebook, in particular, is the most popular UK website in terms of time spent on it from a PC (169 million hours across the UK in April 2011) and it also accounts for 45 per cent of total time spent using the mobile internet.[155] As a result, organisations like *The Guardian* have introduced their own Facebook app, so users can read their content entirely within

Facebook itself.[156]

The implications of these changes in consumption behaviour are not just being addressed by major corporations. In March 2011 the Maryland based blog Rockville Central decided to become Facebook only, partly in response to their traffic logs showing that Facebook was their most important source of traffic to the site after Google.[157] Facebook looks set to be at the heart of the hyperlocal future, and the real question may be whether there will be demand, and business models, for other specific hyperlocal services alongside it at all.

Personalisation

Social networks also allow us to filter who we want to be in contact with, and therefore whose opinions we see and value. In a world of social media, our friends in effect become our own personalised newswire, making hyperlocal media an increasingly personal experience.

Alongside this, there is a growing range of tools and apps to help users filter their own news, all of which offer potential for hyperlocal players. These include smartphone tools like the free iPhone app for alderleyedge.com (a small village in Cheshire with a population 4,500) and more tablet orientated experiences such as AOL Editions, Pulse, Flipboard and Paper.lil. Trove, which was developed by the *Washington Post*, uses Facebook Connect to pull in a user's interests as outlined by his or her Facebook profile, to help jump-start the personalisation process.

As personalisation and filtering become more mainstream, so this offers opportunities for hyperlocal publishers to bypass traditional distribution methods, getting straight to the end user.

The growth of local advertising

Search, smartphones, tablets and social media are all playing a role in the erosion of traditional 'analogue' advertising models, and creating a new ecosystem for local advertising. Enders have estimated that £1 billion of annual classified advertising revenue has gone from the UK regional press since 2008,[158] and this trend is predicted to continue.

Much of this advertising flow has passed on to large media and technology companies like Google, Microsoft and Facebook. In the US, Google launched hyperlocal search ads a year ago, whilst the Windows Phone 7.5 features a hyperlocal search mode entitled 'Local Scout'.

The potential impact of this in the UK is uncertain, given the very different market conditions and sizes of US and UK audiences, but we are starting to see hyperlocal advertising taking form.

New types of advertising networks, such as <u>Addiply</u> , and advertising agencies like <u>Oxbury Media</u> and <u>EMO</u>, offer opportunities for hyperlocal outlets. Oxbury offers to *"broker advertising, by postcode, region or even village"* across a network of 10,000 sub-local newspaper publications and websites, whilst EMO positions itself as *"probably the only agency that is actually concentrating on using 'Localisation' as the central strategy for everything we do."* Their clients include Toyota, BMW, Holiday Inn and Tesco.

Location-based services

Location-based services are information and entertainment services, typically accessed through mobile networks, which harness the ability to identify the geographical position of a user. These services have been tipped to be the 'next big thing' for some time, yet so far usage and awareness has remained relatively low.[159]

A 2011 study of UK teenagers found 58 per cent of interviewees "do not see the point" of sharing geographic information.[160] Nevertheless, these services do offer potential opportunities for hyperlocal practitioners, including news, directions, offers or recommendations based on location.

In May, Google launched a '<u>News near You</u>' feature for US Android or iPhone users, who once they have registered their location, can use a default menu to tailor their own news feed,[161] offering an interesting potential for hyperlocal news.

For UK audiences, <u>O2 More</u> offers a financial incentive to share your location, as O2 customers receive messages from companies like Starbucks, when they pass through locations pertinent to these advertisers.[162]

Location-based services also offer opportunities for social networking. For example, <u>Localmind</u> is an iPhone app where you can send questions and receive answers from fellow users about activity at a given location,[163] whilst <u>Layar</u>'s Tweeps Around app[164] allows you to see what Twitter users in your neighbourhood are saying.

Location-based Augmented Reality (AR) services like Layar may well transform the hyperlocal space, by helping you to make sense of your location.[165] The <u>Mobile Black History Project</u>[166] allows users to point their phone at a landmark in Washington DC to see material on its relevance in African-American history, whilst <u>Adam Eisenman</u> has written about its potential impact on local search, citing the <u>Yelp iPhone app</u>[167] as an example. At present AR is quite a niche offering, but it is nonetheless one to watch.

Known unknowns

Hyperlocal media is still an emerging sector, and one driven by rapid technological advances and related behaviours. There are so many emerging trends in these fields that

it would take considerable time to map all the many possibilities they offer for hyperlocal media.

LTE and 4G mobile, connected televisions, geo-located mobiles, RFID and even internet-enabled venues and the 'Internet of Things' could still transform the emerging hyperlocal world even further. Looking beyond the UK, services such as India's Local Beat,[168] Mojostreet[169] (a location-based mobile gaming from Hyderbad), Dichtbij[170] in the Netherlands, Oma Kaupunki[171] in Finland and Ostersunds Posten[172] in Northern Sweden, all have much to teach us. With proliferating mobile networks, burgeoning middle classes and outpouring of new business models, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (or the BRICS economies, as they are sometimes known) may well lead the hyperlocal field in five years time. How they might leapfrog the UK, and how we might reverse-engineer models from these emerging markets, is a key area to watch in years to come.

If we are to grow, sustain and support this sector, there are many areas that would benefit from further research, and practical experimentation. The only way we will be able to see the potential of the hyperlocal future, though, will be to try things out and to see what works in the here and now.

KEY POINTS:

- Social media is changing our relationship with content and our local community.

- Facebook is already a major platform in this space. Its importance is likely to grow.

- Personalisation offers a means to by-pass traditional content distribution methods. Hyperlocal players need to view this as an opportunity, but may lack the skills to benefit from it.

- Advertising is going more local. Local-based search, display, classifieds and other geo-location relevant advertising, are on the rise. This is widely anticipated to become a substantial market.

- Location-based services, particularly geosocial services like Foursquare, are not yet mainstream, but may become so.

- New technology has already played a role in the development of the sector, but what role will it play in taking it to the next stage?

In conclusion

> "The future of local media is likely to be messy…. Messy in the sense that different communities will do things differently. There will not be homogeneity. Some communities will have a thriving community of journalists, geeks and bloggers covering local politics, local schools, and weekend fêtes (like Birmingham). And they will do it in whatever way makes sense to them and what works for their community. Other communities will have very limited provision. It is these gaps in provision we should be worrying about…"
>
> **Martin Moore, Media Standards Trust**[173]

The hyperlocal landscape is a rich and varied one, and one which is already offering considerable value to communities around the UK. This nascent sector provides news and information at a more grassroots level than most traditional media. It can help to define local identity, fill gaps in existing content provision, hold authority to account and broaden the range of media available to audiences.

The volume and usage of professional and citizen-produced, hyperlocal media is increasing. Technology has made it easier to both create and consume hyperlocal content, and as mobile technologies and tablets become mainstream, consuming media on the move – and relevant to your location – is becoming more important. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter are becoming hubs for hyperlocal content and discussions. Most significantly, the markets for search, display and behavioural advertising are anticipated to become increasingly locally-targeted, creating opportunities for hyperlocal revenue models that could fund future developments.

However, the sector also faces a number of structural challenges, including funding, sustainability and visibility. Fundamental questions remain about the financial sustainability of the sector, and whether hyperlocal media can benefit from the spread of technology or will get lost in an increasingly noisy digital space.

More research is needed to identify the true impact of hyperlocal media on local communities. Too often this impact goes unmeasured, or unshared, causing a negative effect on public perceptions, public policy outcomes and income streams. Measuring the size of the hyperlocal audience can be tricky, making it difficult to attract large-scale advertising or national agreements with traditional media outlets. There are also barriers to audiences discovering and accessing hyperlocal channels, and challenges in audience perceptions of quality and sustainability of the output.

Hyperlocal practitioners are addressing these questions with varying degrees of success, but this learning is seldom shared in a systematic fashion. The remarkable diversity of the hyperlocal sector has given birth to considerable innovation, but it is yet to be seen if individual examples of creativity will ever reach scale. We may never see a dominant provider or a unified model emerge for hyperlocal media, and it is uncertain how far the lessons from one site can be applied to others. There is no silver bullet for making

hyperlocal work.

Yet the peculiar traits that can make it hard to do, hard to measure, and perhaps frustrating for larger institutions, are the very same traits that enable hyperlocal providers to inspire such loyalty in their audiences. Major corporate efforts aside, the hyperlocal field often resembles a cottage industry. This is not one model of news, but many, offering mass communication without mass production, with all the advantages and limitations this represents.

If we want to support hyperlocal media, we should not seek to create 'cookie cutter' templates, but to give a platform to the creativity and innovation already taking place, so that everyone can benefit. Partnerships between hyperlocal practitioners, and with 'big media', can play a pivotal role in raising visibility and unlocking funding. Measuring and understanding the impact this sector can have will do much to promote investment and commitment from national authorities. Creating a framework for craftsmen to share resources, develop their skills and show their successes can enable the sector to become more than the sum of its parts.

By creating the conditions for growth and innovation, we can help this emerging field serve more citizens, share more stories, strengthen more communities, and give voice and shape to the multiplicity of events happening, all around the UK, right here, right now.

Resources and further reading

Below is a small selection of reports, websites and tools of interest to readers who would like to explore some of the topics cited in this review in more detail. This list is designed to reflect the breadth of discussion and content available. It does not attempt to capture everything. Many other hyperlocal examples can also be found throughout this review.

Policy and research

'Local and Regional Media in the UK' (Ofcom, 2009).
See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/tv-research/lrmuk/

'Future for local and regional media' (House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2010). See: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4302.htm

'Online Neighbourhood Networks Study' (Networked Neighbourhoods, 2010).
See: http://networkedneighbourhoods.com/?page_id=409

Street Fight (US based hyperlocal industry website, launched February 2011).
See: http://streetfightmag.com/

Waldman, S. et al. (2011) 'The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age.' Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission.

Knight Foundation (2011) 'Getting Local: How Nonprofit News Ventures Seek Sustainability.' Miami, Fl.: Knight Foundation. 'Emerging Economics of Community News' (Michele McLellan for Pew Research Center, 2011). See: http://stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/economics-of-community-news/

Information Community Case Studies (New America Foundation, 2010).
See: http://mediapolicy.newamerica.net/publications/policy/an_information_community_case_study_washington_dc_0

Anderson, C.W. et al. (2011) 'Shaping 21st Century Journalism – Leveraging a "Teaching Hospital Model" in Journalism Education.' Washington, DC: New America Foundation.

Bi-Monthly updates on 20 hyperlocal developments from the UK and the US (Damian Radcliffe, 2010-11). See: http://damianradcliffe.com/

Hyperlocal content in the UK

Openly Local's UK Hyperlocal Directory See: http://openlylocal.com/

Hyperlocal Voices (interviews with practitioners).
See: http://onlinejournalismblog.com/tag/hyperlocal-voices/

Talk About Local Blog

Sarah Hartley – former Editor of *Guardian Local* – personal blog.
See: http://sarahhartley.wordpress.com/

Hyperlocal content in the US

List of US Citizen Media Sites (1,211 when accessed on 13 May 2011).

Baristanet (one of the earliest US hyperlocal's launched in May 2004).

MinnPost (covering Minneapolis, St. Paul and Minnesota).

DCist (owned by Gothamist with 1.7 million page views per month).

Lewisville Photos (primarily a legacy site from 2008-09, with a strong photographic emphasis). See: http://lewisvillephotos.com/

RiverheadLocal.com (new site and self-confessed 'work in progress').

Tips and tools

Writing and content ideas, Quick Tips, Step-by-Step guides (Talk About Local)
See: http://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/

Going mobile: Tips for hyperlocal and community news sites (contentious.com)
See: http://www.contentious.com/2011/09/28/going-mobile-tips-for-hyperlocal-and-community-news-sites/

Community Radio Toolkit (UK based, via Radio Regen)
See: http://www.communityradiotoolkit.net/

Social by Social: A practical guide to using new technologies to deliver social impact (Website and eBook) See: http://www.socialbysocial.com/

How-to guides for the most commonly used social media tools by journalists (BBC College of Journalism). See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/skills/citizen-journalism/citizen-journalism-guide/social-media-tools.shtml

J-Learning A 'how to' site looking at planning, building, presenting and promoting your site (J-Lab). See: http://www.j-learning.org/other/examples

The Online Community Guide: How to grow thriving online communities (Blog, Rich Millington, Fever Bee). See: http://www.feverbee.com/

Community Information Toolkit (Knight Foundation, 2011). See: http://www.infotoolkit.org/

Five UK hyperlocal sites to look at

Urban: Kings Cross Environment See: http://kingscrossenvironment.com/

Rural: Parwich See: http://parwich.org/

Storytelling: Spitalfields Life See: http://spitalfieldslife.com/

Accountability: Pits n Pots See: http://pitsnpots.co.uk/

All of the above: Ventnor Blog See: http://ventnorblog.com/

About this review

The purpose of this review is to demonstrate the breadth and variety of the hyperlocal media landscape, and the huge potential it has to serve local communities and create new commercial models.

This review is a mixture of desk research and interviews with hyperlocal practitioners. The bulk of the work was done from 1 November to 5 December 2011, with a few addtional days in February 2012. The focus is on the UK, but the examples come from a wide range of countries. Hyperlocal practitioners around the world operate in very different markets and contexts, but audience needs in terms of news, information and a desire for local 'connectedness' transcend national boundaries. In the interests of accessibility, however, the emphasis has naturally been on English-speaking examples.

It is never possible in a review of this kind to include every good example, and inevitably things will have been missed. The intention is simply to provide a starting point for those keen to learn about hyperlocal media, and to generate interest in this emerging sector to drive debate and innovation in the years to come.

Author's acknowledgements

This review builds on previous desk research and interviews. Thank you to everyone who provided new insights and input which helped to shape this review. Unfortunately I could not include everything, but these conversations and correspondence were hugely influential in shaping my thinking. Thanks therefore go to:

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James Hatts (SE1)

Jessica Durkin (Block by Block)

Judith Townend (MeejaLaw)

About the author

Damian Radcliffe is a recognised expert in hyperlocal and local media, having spent 17 years working in broadcast and digital media, across a range of editorial, strategy and policy roles. His experience encompasses all media platforms and the commercial, public, non-profit and regulatory communications sectors.

Writing credits include Third Sector magazine, the BBC College of Journalism and the Online Journalism Blog. He has also written for The Guardian and was a commissioned contributor for the launch of the JamsBio music memories website. The site was later bought by MTV.

Roles and expertise relevant to this review include:

- Programme Controller for the launch of the UK's first permanent city wide FM radio station where all content was produced by volunteers.

- Head of Broadcasting for the UK charity, CSV, managing a SONY award winning partnership with BBC English Regions. Between 2005-08 their multi-media campaigns generated 33,285 broadcasts and worked with 3,672 partners.

- Led 'Get Connected, Get Online' a pilot project to get older people online. This was shortlisted for the UK IT industry Awards 2010, in the Digital Inclusion category.

Whilst at Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, Damian was part of the core team who produced Ofcom's 2009 report on Regional and Local Media in the UK. He also published regular insight reports on hyperlocal media in the UK and USA. In the last 18 months these research bulletins were viewed over 30,000 times.

At the time of publication he has just relocated to the Middle East. Based in Doha, he will be working for the Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) with responsibility for measuring the impact of communications technology within Qatar, and gathering intelligence on emerging communications technologies, policy and regulation, within the region and globally.

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www.linkedin.com/in/damianradcliffe

Endnotes

1. See: http://wannabehacks.co.uk/maverick/2011/02/02/philip-john-the-problem-with-the-word-hyperlocal

2. See: http://www.slideshare.net/mrdamian/21st-century-news for UK examples of this.

3. Ofcom: Regional and Local Media Review (2009) http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/tv-research/lrmuk/ Disclosure: the author was a member of the Ofcom team which authored this report.

4. House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee: Future for local and regional media (2010). http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4302.htm

5. The same is often true in the US. See: http://stateofthemedia.org/ and http://www.vocus.com/resources/state-of-media/index.asp for two recent examples.

6. See: http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Presentation-by-Claire-Enders1.pdf

7. For US comparisons, try J-Lab's Community Media Directory For the United States and North America: http://www.j-lab.org/tools/citzien-media-database/

8. Although many people think of it as a Birmingham suburb, Bournville is a village. As their website states: "Bournville is a 'model village' set up by George Cadbury... The area is now protected by the Bournville Village Trust". http://bournvillevillage.com/about-2/

9. SuBMoJour – Sustainable Business Models for Journalism. A joint project with the University of Tampere (Finland), USC Annenberg (USA) and Waseda University (Japan), categorises sites according to all these factors and more. See: http://www.submojour.net/

10. See: http://networkedneighbourhoods.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Online-Nhood-Networks-Typology-rev-1.pdf (p.5-6)

11. See: http://brockleycentral.blogspot.com/

12. See: http://networkedneighbourhoods.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Online-Nhood-Networks-Typology-rev-1.pdf (p.5-6)

13. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/lrmuk.pdf (pp. 42-43)

14. See: http://sarahhartley.wordpress.com/2010/08/25/10-characteristics-of-hyperlocal/

15. See: http://sarahhartley.wordpress.com/2010/08/25/10-characteristics-of-hyperlocal/

16. See: http://lichfieldlive.co.uk/, http://www.saddleworthnews.com/

17. Discussion with the author, November 2011.

18. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/Salford_local_media.pdf

19. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/lrmuk.pdf

20. See: http://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/misc.php?do=page&template=Advertise

21. Interestingly, more up to date audience data is not available on the site, even though its content continues to be updated. See: http://www.wimbledonvisitor.com/advertising.html

22. See: http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/news_blog/comments/20110218_research_report_hyperlocal_audience_is_hypersmall_audience/

23. Ofcom's report on Regional and Local Media for example, contains data on the usage, importance and satisfaction placed by audiences on community websites, but this data was collected in April–May 2009. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/lrmuk.pdf

24. In contrast, Chris Thomas' research as part of his MA in ecommerce focused just on hyperlocal in Crystal Palace. See: http://newmodeljournalism.com/2011/06/hard-data-shatters-hyperlocal-dream/

25. See: http://www.borrellassociates.com/component/virtuemart/?page=shop.product_details&flypage=garden_flypage.tpl&product_id=832 http://www.netnewscheck.com/article/2011/02/16/9180/borrell-news-site-readers-not-local-loyal

26. See: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4308.htm#note249

27. See: http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Presentation-by-Claire-Enders1.pdf (slide 10)

28. Quoted via: http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2009/jun/09/rupert-murdoch-digital-media

29. This is an assumption, and perhaps an area for further research, as I am not aware of any recent research looking at local media in the round, and across different demographics.

30. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/43we27.htm

31. One notable exception is Howard Owens, publisher of New York hyperlocal site the Batavian, who is both a journalist and a salesman. See: http://thebatavian.com/1917/about-batavian

32. The Knight Foundation's recent 'Community Information Toolkit' identifies many opportunities for new hyperlocal services, across infrastructure, information supply and skills. See: http://www.infotoolkit.org/

33. Correspondence with the author, November 2011.

34. See: http://www.radiofaza.org.uk/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=39

35. See: http://www.raidiofailte.com/

36. See: http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2010/10/27/hyperlocal-voices-will-perrin-kings-cross-environment/

37. See: http://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/5132

38. See: http://ventnorblog.com/topic/live-coverage/

39. Correspondence with the author, November 2011. PitsnPots can be found at: http://pitsnpots.co.uk/

40. See: Online journalists left out in the cold by local government

41. http://lichfieldcommunitymedia.org/2011/06/09/renaming-the-lichfield-blog/

42. See: http://brixtonblog.wordpress.com/2011/08/08/sunday-7-august/

43. See: http://www.harringayonline.com/forum/topic/listForTag?tag=london+troubles

44. See: http://birminghamriots2011.tumblr.com/

45. See: http://blog.public-i.info/2011/08/how-bloggers-and-police-countered-riot-rumours-in-wolverhampton/

46. Quoted at: http://livingwithrats.blogspot.com/search/label/hyperlocal%20media#!/2009/10/beware-of-geeks-bearing-gifts.html

47. LoudounExtra.com, a hyperlocal pilot run by the Washington Post, was criticised in 2008 by the Wall Street Journal for just this problem, whilst project lead Rob Curley also identified, amongst other issues, a lack of outreach into the local community as a cause of the pilot's failure. http://robcurley.com/2008/06/08/after-the-flop-flap-lessons-learned-from-loudoun/

48. See: http://publishing2.com/2007/07/09/wrong-on-hyperlocal-google-and-web-10-killed-backfence/

49. See: http://recoveringjournalist.typepad.com/recovering_journalist/2007/07/backfence-lesso.html

50. See: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4308.htm#note281

51. See: http://bramcotetoday.org.uk/2011/07/05/hillside-road-traffic-calming-scheme-starts/

52. See: http://bramcotetoday.org.uk/2011/09/06/important-issues-raised-at-bramcote-cat-monday-5-september-2011/

53. See: http://www.baycitizen.org/data/bike-accidents/

54. Sustaining Long-Term Participation In An Online Community

55. See: http://www.knightfoundation.org/press-room/press-release/engage-users-tout-content-tease-out-contributors-j/

56. See: http://www.mon-tv.com/main/ (The City & Guilds students' work can also be seen in the MONTV Academy: http://academy.mon-tv.com/)

57. Data from interview with the author, November 2011.

58. See: http://www.saveourskyline.co.uk/news.php

59. See: http://www.snubdulwich.org.uk/

60. See: http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/free-wifi/

61. See: http://clairewardle.com/2010/09/06/tubestrike-crowdsourcing-experiment/

62. Research from ComScore shows that Europeans reading news on their smartphones has grown by 74 per cent over the past year, with UK users the heaviest mobile users. See: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/03/22/smartphone-news-reading-b_n_1372945.html (accessed March 2012). In the US, Pew notes that already "5 per cent of Americans say they rely on a mobile app for weather information." See: http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Local-news.aspx

63. See: http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Edinburgh-Reporter/dp/B004KZP02E

64. See: http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2011/news/street-level-news-site-seeks-12000-publishers/

65. "Ofcom also reported that the proportion of adults citing television as their main source of local news had remained stable since 2002, at around half of all adults. In contrast, 32 per cent said local newspapers were their main source of local news in 2002, by 2008 this had fallen to 23 per cent." DCMS, Select Committee. See: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4308.htm#note250

66. See: http://www.manchesterradioonline.com/

67. See: http://londonist.com/2010/05/hackney_podcast_wins_sony_gold_awar.php

68. See: http://www.leysnews.co.uk/

69. See: http://www.earlsdon.org.uk/news/news.html

70. Correspondence with the author, November 2011. The Washington Post does this on a larger scale by republishing highlights from local bloggers in their "All Opinions Are Local" service in the Sunday print edition. See: http://voices.washingtonpost.com/local-opinions/

71. See: http://www.newspaperclub.com/ and http://sweeble.com/

72. See: http://toughloveforxerox.blogspot.com/2009/03/new-opportunity-for-print-in-printernet.html

73. For The Texas Tribune, 'Events are Journalism' — and Money Makers, Nieman Journalism Lab, July 2011.

74. See: http://www.communitytvtrust.org/?p=601

75. Correspondence with the author, December 2011.

76. See: http://insidethem60.journallocal.co.uk/

77. See also the UpTake's political coverage in Minneapolis-St. Paul http://www.minnpost.com/stories/2008/12/22/5452/political_junkies_flock_to_live_streaming_of_senate_recount_proceedings

78. See: http://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/5510

79. In one excellent US example, St. Louis Beacon organised first a monthly 'Beacon & Eggs' community meet-and-greet , and then an annual Beacon Festival for the St. Louis region. See: http://www.stlbeacon.org/

80. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/lrmuk.pdf (pp. 42-43)

81. Correspondence with the author, December 2011.

82. See: http://www.kcnn.org/legal_risk/blog/

83. The site, whilst ostensibly still running, (as confirmed in correspondence with Jan Schaffer at J-Lab, December 2011,) has not been substantially updated since 2009.

84. See: http://www.j-lab.org/ideas/category/articles/10-steps-for-any-news-startup/

85. See: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/tv-research/lrmuk.pdf (pp. 42-43.)

86. See: http://chiswickw4.com/

87. See: http://montv.yourlocal.tv/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=111

88. Future for local and regional media see: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcumeds/43/4308.htm

89. Such as Michele McLellan's 'Emerging Economics of Community News' (http://stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/economics-of-community-news/), and the Knight Foundation's 'Getting Local: How Non-profit News Ventures Seek Sustainability' See: (http://www.knightfoundation.org/publications/getting-local-how-nonprofit-news-ventures-seek-sus)

90. See: http://www.sacad.net/wp-content/themes/structure/images/media/SLOAN-media-kit-5.pdf

91. See: http://stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/economics-of-community-news/

92. Since launch it has produced over 225 projects ("some are single stories, some are six months of covering a specific topic, some are six months of a big investigation") working with 110 different publishing partners. Information provided in correspondence between David Cohn and the author, November 2011.

93. http://stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/economics-of-community-news/

94. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/13/technology/start-ups/13hyperlocal.html

95. See: http://nyti.ms/ePpku

96. See: http://testkitchen.colorado.edu/headline/aol-patch-traffic-has-doubled-in-2011/

97. See: http://techcrunch.com/2009/06/11/aol-buys-local-startups-going-and-patch-and-ceo-tim-armstrong-brings-an-investment-in-house/

98. See: http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-01-26/tech/30047463_1_patch-aol-ceo-run-aol

99. See: http://www.niemanlab.org/encyclo/patch/

100. See: http://www.j-lab.org/ideas/category/blogically-thinking/the-rise-of-indie-local-news-sites/

101. Several US reports explore the US market in more detail, including Michele McLellan's "Emerging Economics of Community News" (http://stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/economics-of-community-news/), and the Knight Foundation's "Getting Local: How Non-profit News Ventures Seek Sustainability" (http://www.knightfoundation.org/publications/getting-local-how-nonprofit-news-ventures-seek-sus)

102. The Detail – an investigative journalism portal for Northern Ireland funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and Screen Northern Ireland is one of a few exceptions.

103. See: http://www.minnpost.com/insideminnpost/2011/01/24/25093/a_breakthrough_year_for_minnpost

104. See: http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/

105. See: http://insomniactive.wordpress.com/2010/03/30/attention-non-profit-newsies-alan-mutter-thinks-were-fantastic/

106. See: http://www.neighbournet.com/

107. See: http://www.banksidepress.com/, http://www.london-se1.co.uk/

108. See: http://local.stv.tv/

109. See: http://www.localpeople.co.uk/faqs.html

110. See: http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/1098152/northcliffe-media-partners-trinity-mirror-regional-sales/

111. See: http://franchise.localpeople.co.uk/

112. See: http://corporate.sky.com/skyviews/4bac66f90ff944858746acf95e613f96/sky_tyne_and_wear.htm

113. This includes day-to-day technical support, but also the challenges of relying on free tools, as seen when the popular Ning service became a paid platform in 2010: http://techcrunch.com/2010/04/15/nings-bubble-bursts-no-more-free-networks-cuts-40-of-staff/

114. See: http://www.city.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/103177/foj2011-Thurman-Pascal-Bradshaw.pdf (quoted by Jon Slattery in http://jonslattery.blogspot.com/2011/09/academics-argue-top-down-hyperlocals.html)

115. See: http://www.guardian.co.uk/local/2010/apr/19/talk-about-local-unconference-award-winners

116. See: http://openlylocal.com/hyperlocal_sites/71-SR2-Blog

117. See: http://sr2blog.com/

118. See: http://chislehurstnews.wordpress.com/2011/10/16/thank-you-and-goodbye%e2%80%a6-for-now/

119. See: http://www.saddleworthnews.com/?p=10473

120. See: http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/POLIS/Files/networkedjournalism.pdf

121. See: http://daggle.com/journalist-not-blogger-654

122. See: http://bit.ly/hbtSJy

123. See: http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/guardian-closes-unsustainable-local-sites/s2/a543857/

124. See: http://sarahhartley.wordpress.com/2009/10/16/beatblogging-–-what-is-it/

125. See: 'Beyond Guardian Leeds': http://beyondgdnleeds.wordpress.com/ – which aims "to be a continuation of *The Guardian* Leeds 'Around Leeds Today'.

126. See: http://www.scribd.com/doc/67243880/The-Information-Needs-of-Communities

127. See: http://www.kcnn.org/research/citizen_journalism_back_to_the_future/

128. See: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/135/1/Thurman_Can_big_media.pdf

129. See: http://jonslattery.blogspot.com/2011/09/academics-argue-top-down-hyperlocals.html This is not just a UK consideration. In the US, Pew looked at 3,600 tweets from 13 of USA's major newspapers, radio and television stations, and only 2% asked followers for information of any kind. http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/sharing_and_gathering_information, such as

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132. See: http://helpmeinvestigate.posterous.com/investigation-nuvaring-availability-a-postcod

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139. See: http://www.chicagoindyads.com/

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All URLs correct at the time of writing.

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