



PRODUCING VIDEO FOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS



**ALJAZEERA
MEDIA INSTITUTE**

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a digital era in which, according to findings by the Reuters Institute, social media is being flooded with video, mainly because of advances in technology and because video is being pushed by platforms and publishers.¹ These days, anyone can film with their smartphones and upload the footage to social media. Facebook users watch 100 million hours of video every day², while YouTube users upload more than 400 hours of video every minute³ to the platform. 10 billion videos are watched daily in Snapchat.⁴ According to Cisco, consumer Internet video traffic will be 82 per cent of total consumer Internet traffic by 2020.⁵ User-generated content (UGC) is not only sourced for news pieces, it is news itself.

There's a difference between uploading content to social media and telling a story, however. Journalism is increasingly exploring and adopting new forms of visual digital storytelling. News video for social platforms is one of these. If produced successfully, it can unfold stories in less time, and simultaneously engage and open a dialogue with the audience.

As journalists, how do we tell stories through social video? How do we create compelling pieces that successfully inform and reach our audience?

1 Kalogeropoulos, A., Cherubini, F., and Newman, N. (2016). The Future of Online News Video. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/zYzFmW>

2 Constine, John (2016, January 27). Facebook Hits 100M Hours of Video Watched a Day, 1B Users on Groups, 80M on Fb Lite. TechCrunch. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/vfmFnj>

3 Hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute as of July 2015. Statista. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/ygyLk6>

4 Frier, Sarah (2016, April 28). Snapchat User 'Stories' Fuel 10 Billion Daily Video Views. Bloomberg. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/hX5ESP>

5 VNI Forecast Highlights Tool. Cisco. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/Ks1dH1>

There is an ongoing debate about the relevance of using social video to tell the news. Some see it as a useful product that allows storytelling to be more concise, while others argue that it is only a passing trend. At Al Jazeera, we don't approach the debate from a perspective of right or wrong. We prefer to adopt an experimental mind-set, aiming to understand and test new formats and adapt to modern technologies, while keeping professionalism and journalistic values at the core of what we do.

This handbook aims to provide practical guidelines, tips and best practice for social media news video production, based on the experience the Al Jazeera Media Network has been building over the last few years.

While we'll examine what entails producing for platforms such as YouTube, more detailed content will be provided for producing real-time news videos for Facebook, given that it is the most popular platform worldwide (including in the Arab World), with 1.97 billion monthly active users.⁶ Its video-first strategy, including Facebook Live and 360 video, has increasingly required news organisations to develop or adjust their social video strategies, –and is likely to keep on doing so in the coming years.

⁶ Most famous social network sites worldwide as of April 2017, ranked by number of active users (in millions). Statista. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/kc9TJl>

DEVELOPING A CONTENT STRATEGY

ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A content strategy plans for the creation and delivery of relevant and engaging content for a defined target audience, and is always tied to the team or organisation's strategic goals. Your content strategy for social video should always be built with consideration of the following:

A DEFINITION AND METRIC OF SUCCESS

Your team should agree on this. Always ensure that journalistic sense and values are paramount, and keep the discussion flowing. Your metric may need to be adjusted periodically.

CONTENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A dedicated team should use analytics to measure content performance and inform the content strategy, adjusting it if necessary. Identification of the elements that made a video successful, according to criteria aligned with your strategic goals and defined by your team, should be a standardised activity.

5

A WELL-DEFINED TARGET AUDIENCE

Your content strategy should be informed by personas that represent your target audience. The topics, emotions, tone and angles they relate to should be central when crafting content. This will orient, amongst other things, the 'what' (the type of content) and the 'where' (which platforms you use for distribution).

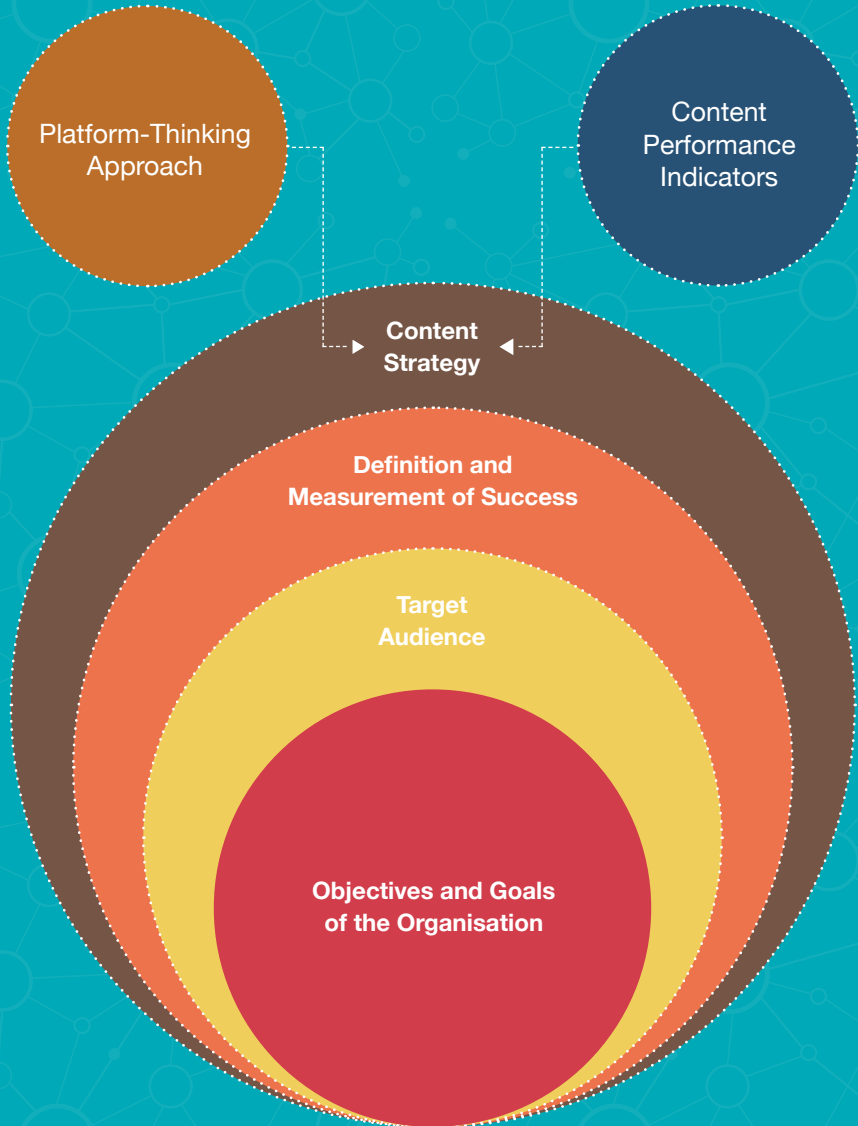
If you are already producing, review these points against your content strategy and discuss where you are with each of them.

PLATFORM-THINKING APPROACH

Producing for any platform should contribute to the achievement of your team or organisation's strategic objectives. Once you choose platforms, based on your target audience, tailor content to each one of them. Always create videos with the platform you intend to publish on in mind. Variables such as length, tone, and type of content will differ from one platform to another.



Always take into account available resources when planning. Enlist what you need to implement your content strategy. Are these resources available to you? If not, can you get them? How? If you can't, your content strategy will need to be adjusted. Resources are always scarce, so allocate them where they will have an impact on achieving your strategic objectives.



DEFINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

TO REFLECT ON

The best way to measure success in social video is through frequent discussion on social desks and in online teams. As journalists, we should constantly ask ourselves whether success has to do exclusively with platform metrics such as likes, shares, views, subscribers, and/or watch time, amongst other variables. Is it all about engagement? What role does storytelling play? What should be considered when measuring success?

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AJ+ @ajplusenglish1

Home

Posts

Videos

Photos

About

Likes

Instagram feed

Get a daily update

Create a Page

Like Follow Share ...

AJ+ with Ahmed Shihab-Eldin. 3 hrs ·

These young people are furious that a far right candidate is one step away from becoming president of France. Police clashed with protesters after the first-round result.



141K Views

Like Comment Share

1.3K

Top Comments

508 shares

Write a comment...

AJ+ Not long ago, Marine Le Pen said colonialism was a good thing: https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/94b520238922817/?hc_ref=SEARCH



Here a few points to reflect on:

1. In the digital news ecosystem, in which technology makes it possible to innovate the ways audiences are informed, always remember that technology alone doesn't make the story.
2. Storytelling is the foundation of successful video. Journalists should tell the stories that matter for them or their organisation, that fit their voice and values, whether they are part of a news organisation, a freelancer or a citizen journalist. This consideration should inform every strategic goal, and therefore also every success indicator.
3. Journalists should learn to tell their stories in a way that allows them to reach and speak to their target audience. Today that typically includes digital audiences who consume content on social platforms.
4. Success metrics should be aligned to strategic goals. Celebrating success should mean celebrating the fulfilment of goals that an organisation, a freelancer or a citizen journalist has set in the first place.

It is possible to tell meaningful stories that have journalistic value and, at the same time, engage your audience and interact successfully with them. In this sense, platform metrics are essential tools for measuring content performance, but you'll need to take ownership of your definition of success and adjust how you measure it to fit your goals and needs.

DETERMINING A TARGET AUDIENCE

BASIC CHECKLIST

Knowing your audience is the cornerstone of creating successful social videos. First determine who you want to speak to, then build your brand and tailor your content based on that.

1. Map your target audience(s) and identify the relevant types of personas. Consider that content will need to be customised around audience goals.

a. Developing personas is a customised process.

b. Each persona should represent a segment of your target audience.

c. Build each persona by including demographics such as age, gender, language, location, income and job position, but also psychographic information such as what they value, their hobbies, the challenges they face and their goals.

d. Add relevant additional information such as what kind of news content they're looking for and how they prefer to access it.

2. Define in a sentence what your digital brand should convey to get emotional and identity buy-in from your audience.

Building personas will help you identify content topics, tone, voice and design guidelines, as well as which platforms to publish on. Keeping your personas in mind will help you to align your daily news decisions with the needs of the audience you're trying to satisfy.



Your personas will change as you gather information over time about who your main audience is and how it is constituted.

A Platform-Thinking Approach

TAILORING VIDEO TO EACH PLATFORM

Today, every social media channel is a news platform. People are not only connecting with and getting updates on family and friends, but also consuming news. According to the 2016 Arab Youth Survey ⁷, more young Arabs get their news online on a daily basis (32 per cent) than from TV (29 per cent) or print media (7 per cent). Online news sources (45 per cent) and social media (32 per cent) are the channels they prefer, with preference for social media having shown a bigger increase since 2015 (7 per cent) than online news sources (5 per cent). Off-site news video consumption is growing at a fast pace.

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People don't consume or expect to consume news in the same way on every platform. They go to different platforms to satisfy different content needs. Know the platforms you aim to publish or are already publishing on, and why you chose them. How does each of them help you to achieve your content strategy goals?

Same audience, different platform, or different audience, different platform?

Both.

Typically, a core audience will want content to feel different on each platform, and capturing the same person at different moments, on their journey through different platforms, should be a long-term audience development goal.

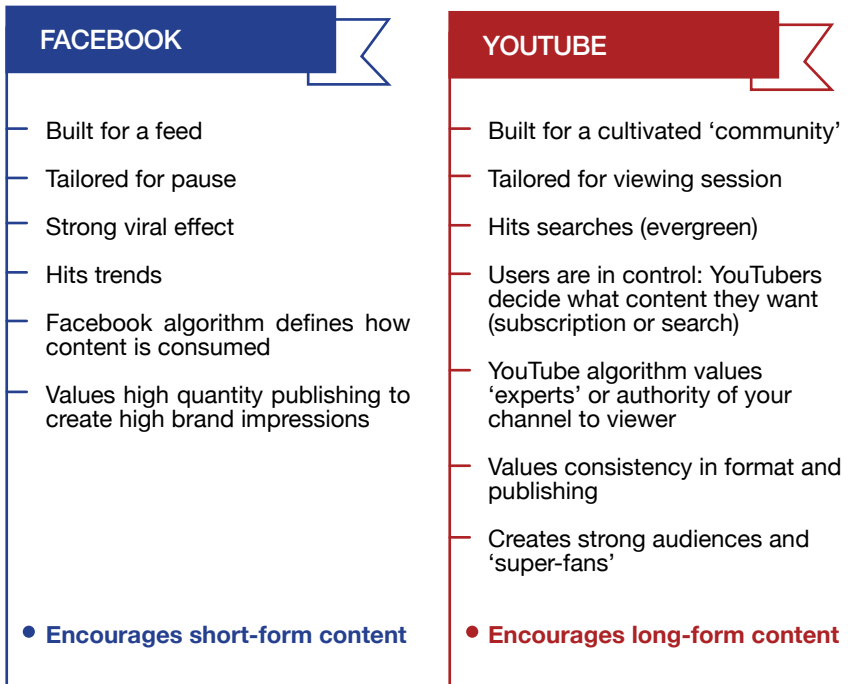
Building different kinds of content—tone, focus, topic and length—also allows you to reach different core audiences on different platforms. Allowing different kinds of audiences to interact enables you to make an impact.

⁷ Arab Youth Survey 2016: Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth. ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/aF4BV0>

A Platform-Thinking Approach

DECONSTRUCTING PLATFORMS: FACEBOOK V. YOUTUBE

Facebook and YouTube are two of the main go-to social platforms for news video consumption. Each represents an opportunity to speak to a specific audience, and thus requires you to develop content accordingly.



!
Different platforms
Different content
Different thinking

Producing News Videos for Facebook

PLATFORM OVERVIEW

Facebook generates billions of video views on average per day. It is the dominant social media platform across the Middle East and North Africa, with 136 million users, of which 93 per cent access the platform on their mobile phones.⁸ The main age group of users is 18-34 years old.⁹ 52 per cent of Arab youth share news and stories on Facebook.¹⁰

Facebook video-first timeline

2004

Launched (exclusively for Harvard)

2006

Opened up to everyone aged 13 and over

2011

Becomes the largest online photo hub

2014

Native video

2016

Facebook Live - 360 video

13

8 Wendel, Samuel (2016, November 8). With a Little Help from Facebook, Digital Advertising in the Middle East is on the Rise. Forbes Middle East. Retrieved from: <http://www.forbesmiddleeast.com/en/with-a-little-help-from-facebook-digital-advertising-in-the-middle-east-is-on-the-rise/>

9 Kemp, Simon (2017, January 24). Digital in 2017. Global Overview. We Are Social and Hootsuite. Retrieved from: <https://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/digital-in-2017-global-overview>

10 Arab Youth Survey 2016: Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth. Ibid.

Producing News Videos for Facebook

KEY ELEMENTS OF A NEWS VIDEO FOR FACEBOOK

1. USE POWERFUL VISUALS

Show, don't tell. Make sure the images you are using are strong enough to tell the story in one frame.

Pro Tip: The Five Second Rule

The first five seconds of a video is what matters most in capturing your audience. What you show them at the beginning will either make them stay or cause them to skip to the next thing they have at hand.

- Use the best visuals
- Stimulate interest through the opening text

2. APPEAL TO YOUR AUDIENCE'S EMOTIONS

Building emotional connections with your audience through your stories matters. Emotional impact will likely increase engagement, so always ask yourself whether your audience is going to empathise with the character(s)/ story you're presenting.

3. DESIGN YOUR STORY TO BE MEANINGFUL WITHOUT SOUND

Always add subtitles. 85 per cent of videos on Facebook¹¹ are watched with the sound off. This brings us back to the importance of powerful imagery.

4. KEEP YOUR VIDEOS AS SHORT AND CLEAN AS POSSIBLE

Short - Length can vary depending on the kind of video and the platform it's meant to be published on, but the golden rule of social video is to tell a full story in the shortest possible time. Facebook real-time videos should typically be shorter— than feature stories or short documentaries - try to stick to maximum of 120 seconds.

Clean – Avoid saturating the screen with text, images and transitions for decorative purposes. Only include elements that help with the understanding of the story and with getting your message across.

5. THINK MOBILE FIRST

Watch your final videos in 25 per cent size. Texts and images have to be comfortable to the eye.

User Experience (UX) Design

Your audience is your customer and has to be satisfied with your product –i.e. videos. If they are happy with the experience you provide, they will come back.

¹¹ Patel, Sahil (2016, May 17). 85 percent of Facebook video is watched without sound. Digiday. Retrieved from: <http://digiday.com/media/silent-world-facebook-video/>

Producing News Videos for Facebook

AL JAZEERA'S EXPERIENCE

[Ziad Ramley](#) and [Yasir Khan](#), of Al Jazeera English, published a piece on the lessons they learned from growing monthly views of Facebook videos by 500 per cent in six months.

One of their main messages is that you have to find your own social voice. While reviewing their social video strategy, they experimented by taking cues from other successful social news outlets. However, they discovered that either the results were limited, or they didn't have the input or resources available to produce the same content as the other organisations. One thing they were clear on was what makes a story an Al Jazeera story. So, they diverted their energies into establishing what these would look like on social media, and used that to determine what their goals should be.

Read the full account of their experience and what they came up with.¹²

12 Khan, Y. and Ramley, Z. (2017, April 8). We grew monthly Facebook video views 500% to 100M in six months. Here's what we learned. Medium-AJ Labs. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/0IBT8w>

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Al Jazeera English

20 hours ago

Giving hope to Syrians



even if it is a small shred of hope

Producing News Videos for Facebook

THE ROLES OF THE VIDEO PRODUCER AND SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VIDEO PRODUCER ARE:

- ✓ Researching the story.
- ✓ Gathering visual elements.
- ✓ Writing the script.
- ✓ Laying out a sequence with pictures and script.
- ✓ Finalising the content with editor and supervisor.
- ✓ Creating video file exports for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, website.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR'S MAIN TASKS ARE:

- ✓ Producing title and description (with input from the video producer).
- ✓ Uploading/scheduling video release based on best timings.



Al Jazeera English
about a week ago

The Americans who live in Mexico



Producing News Videos for Facebook

THE SOFTWARE

The software required for producing social videos will depend on the specific needs of the team or organisation and the available resources.

- **Content Management System (CMS).**

Define what you're looking for in a CMS. You can choose between open source or proprietary. Both have advantages and disadvantages, which you'll need to examine in the context of considerations such as your production needs and goals, budget, and team technical skills and size.

- **Editing Software**

AI Jazeera's Suggestions:

- o Adobe Premiere Pro
- o Adobe Photoshop
- o Adobe After Effects



Producing News Videos for Facebook

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

In addition to the software, make sure you have access to as many as possible of the following resources:

1. Agency access (wires and footage)

Reuters, AP, AFP, AA.

2. Stock photography services

Shutterstock, Getty Images.

3. Music library

You can use paid music services such as Audio Network and APM Music. If on a budget, try YouTube's free music & sound effects library, Free Music Archive: Music for Video.

4. Social newsgathering tools

Tweetdeck, Feedly, Photodesk, Storyful Multisearch Extension, Trendsmap.

5. Licensed UGC

Storyful provides verified and licensed UGC for storytellers.



Producing News Videos for Facebook

THE WORKFLOW OF A VIDEO PRODUCER

Identify Story Ideas

- Sources (see p. 20)
- Never be afraid to pitch something out of the box



**Video Production
Pitch / Idea Approved**

Gather Facts and Visuals

- Double check the facts
- Are there strong visuals?
- Keep copyright in mind



**Scripting and Video
Editing**

- Story treatment and development + visualisation
- Find the right approach
- Build the story
- Get creative producer/ designer on board

**Final Video approved
by Supervisor/Copy-
editor**



**Export, Distribute
and Engage**

- Optimise video for the platform
- Think about the best time to publish
- Thumbnail and title are key engagement opportunities

Producing News Videos for Facebook

IDENTIFYING STORY IDEAS: SOURCES

Use the following sources to gather and verify news stories:

• Internal Sources

If you work in a newsroom, internal sources such as the news plan, a newsgathering unit, and reporters and correspondents are all useful for looking up and checking stories.

• Agencies/Wires

Reuters, AFP, AP, AA, EPA.

• Audience/Influencers

• Other sources

Local and regional activists, experts, opinion leaders.

• Social Media

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube.

As mentioned in the Resources and Tools section, be sure you use relevant social newsgathering tools to filter for stories:

- o Feedly.com (RSS Reader)
- o Dataminr.com (Breaking news on Twitter)
- o Crowdtangle.com (Viral story tracking)
- o Newswhip.com (Viral story tracking)
- o Trendsmat.com (Location-based Twitter trends)



Producing News Videos for Facebook

IDENTIFYING STORY IDEAS: FIVE POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

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Producing News Videos for Facebook

EDITORIAL APPROVAL: VIDEO PRODUCTION PITCH AND IDEA APPROVED



AJ+
on Saturday

#BeingBlackAndMuslim

COURTESY: BOBBY ROGERS



Stories are pitched to and approved by the executive producer. The best way to include this in the workflow is by having a morning meeting. In addition to pitching and approving stories, this can be the platform for:

1. Reviewing daily news sources.
2. Reviewing insights from other Facebook pages and, if relevant, previous TV bulletins.
3. Discussing previous video performance (topics, length, format, amongst other variables).
4. Agreeing on deadlines for approved outputs.

Producing News Videos for Facebook

EDITORIAL APPROVAL: PITCH FORMAT

Video producers should be well prepared before pitching stories. Before the morning meeting, it is crucial to know all the story details, including the context, as well as having a clear idea of what kind of visuals are to be used.

Filling out the following form before pitching a story can help video producers to make sure they cover all the relevant information.

PITCH FORMAT

Story angle:

Possible visual elements:

Issue or theme it addresses:

Who does this appeal to?
(Audience/Persona – e.g. 18-40, 25-35, Egypt, North Africa, Middle East.
News value and impact)

Things to consider:

- Is there a strong visual?
- Is your story contextualised?
- Is there a bigger issue involved?
- Does it evoke emotion, personal identity, and how?

Producing News Videos for Facebook

GATHERING FACTS AND VISUALS: ESSENTIAL STEPS

1. Gather and verify facts, data and key information.

- Establish a discovery and verification process for digital content.

o Sources and tools, as discussed above, are key for discovery and verification processes.

- If it is within your possibilities, subscribe to a social media news agency. Usually they provide discovery, verification and licensing of UGC.

2. Determine the visuals and assets for your story.

- Sources will depend on what's within your reach and whether you have access to footage and news packages, news agency subscriptions, stock photography and other material via your newsroom.

- A common and very useful source is UGC, mainly pulled from social platforms. Remember it must always be verified.

3. Be sure you have the right to use the material you have chosen and that you are using it ethically.

- Always ask for permission to use content, whether from journalists, citizen journalists, social media users or any other person who owns the content.

- Keep in mind that there are ethical considerations surrounding the use of UGC. Ways of crediting the content owner and safety and security issues are just some of the considerations journalists need to be aware of whenever they plan to incorporate UGC into coverage.

- Your team should have a clear policy on how to proceed on this. If you have a legal department, involve them so you can have their input and counsel on topics such as copyright and fair use.

The Al Jazeera Media Institute has published a guide for journalists to verify UGC as well as a book on social newsgathering and news verification in the Arab World. Both publications examine tools, skills and ethical and legal considerations when gathering and verifying UGC.

Guide for Journalists to Verify Digital Content:

<https://goo.gl/zF3g1Q>

Finding the Truth Amongst the Fakes:

<https://goo.gl/nwCmuC>

Producing News Videos for Facebook

GATHERING FACTS AND VISUALS: DON'T LIMIT VISUALS TO FOOTAGE

Sometimes, there's no powerful footage – or no footage at all – to visualise a story. In such cases, another visual media can help.

The main premise to follow when incorporating any visual element into a story is that it should help the audience to understand and/or feel the story. Do not add visuals that don't serve this purpose.



Infographics and Graphs

Simple infographics and graphs can work well in stories on subjects such as elections.



Online Interaction

Online conversation can not only strengthen a story but can drive it as well. Incorporating people's interactions on the topic of your story can add great value or can become the story itself.



Animation

If you have the support of a creative team, try using animation instead of video to visualise some stories.



Stills

Images from agencies can replace video.



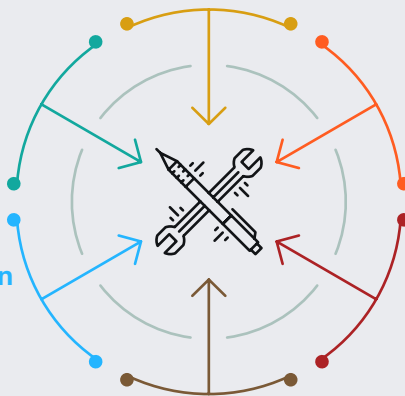
Memes and GIFs

Depending on the type of story and the audience, using memes and GIFs can enhance the narrative, in particular to show how people are feeling or to illustrate the funny or ironic angle of a story.



Quotes

From experts, stakeholders and social media users.



Visual formats other than video are increasingly being used to tell stories. Think about the above-mentioned resources not only as footage replacements but as mediums that can themselves become the visual drive of a story. Consider raw video for breaking news stories. Quality is important, but content matters the most.

Producing News Videos for Facebook

SCRIPTING: WRITING FOR SOCIAL VIDEO

To build a good story, focus on the following five elements when scripting:

1. Information/facts.
2. Grabbing attention: conflict, contrast, argument, tension.
3. Emotions: what kind of emotions does your story appeal to? Will these emotions move your audience?
4. Identity: appealing to identities found in your audience will boost content performance.
5. Structure: beginning, middle, end.

When writing for social video, also consider the following:

- Stick to your brand's voice, taking into account that your script should be suitable for social media. This typically means, speaking directly and being conversational as opposed to formal.
- What is the right approach or angle for the story? This will define the tone of your script.
- Keep the length of the video in mind when writing.
- Think mobile first. Assume that the story will be watched on small screens, so keep text as short and concise as possible.
- Add in short interviews/witness clips in form of sound bites where appropriate.
- If using graphics and text to support the story, make sure you use them wisely and don't over-complicate the story.

When putting your script together, remember to build a visual sequence in which you match sentences with visuals to create meaningful stories.

It might be useful to have the sequence approved by an executive producer and checked by a copy editor before moving on to the next phase of the workflow.

Producing News Videos for Facebook

VIDEO EDITING: WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND

Before starting your editing process, consider the following:

- If you have access to a creative staff, involve them in your story at an early stage, so they can help you with its visualisation.

UX video design plays an essential role here.

- The first challenge is to grab the viewer's attention –remember the five-second rule. The second is to keep them until the end.
- The title and thumbnail are also important hooks - be sure to share ideas with social media editors.
- Use still photo to draw attention to your text (TXT and moving images can sometimes be distracting or confusing).

Producing News Videos for Facebook

VIDEO EDITING: BASIC TECHNICAL EDITING STEPS

Lay in A-roll

o Be sure to pan the audio to centre (use the strongest channel where necessary) and be sure the level is just below -6 db.

Add music

o If appropriate for the piece, you can use music pops to create chapters and breathing space.

o Be sure the music levels compliment the audio and don't overwhelm it.

o Loop the music if necessary.

o Consider starting the music where the beat drops, rather than at the very beginning.

Add B-roll

o Keep natural sounds where appropriate. They can add life, so consider keeping them wherever possible. Make sure that levels do not overwhelm the A-roll.

Add transitions where appropriate

o Transitions should have a purpose.

o They shouldn't distract the viewer. Avoid using wipes, blurs, light ray, or any other transitions that might pull attention from the story or make it complicated to follow.

Finesse the audio

o Listen for pops or abrupt transitions. If necessary, use a very short cross-fade (1-4 frames) to smooth out transitions. Use longer fades when ending a music 'chapter'.

Add bumpers

o Add bumpers to the end of your videos to brand them.

Producing News Videos for Facebook

FINAL VIDEO APPROVAL

Once the editing is complete, the video should be approved by your supervisor. This can be done at the edit suite.

It is also a good idea to show the video to a copy editor again at this point, as last minute changes can lead to errors in the text.



Producing News Videos for Facebook

EXPORT, DISTRIBUTION AND ENGAGEMENT: BEST PRACTICE CHECKLIST

- Optimise video exports for specific platforms.
- Create an engaging thumbnail.
 - o Keep images tight.
 - o Faces work better than objects.
- Keep the title and description short and engaging.
- Facebook Post Frequency: Too many posts in a day will reduce engagement, reputation and overall reach.
- Think about the right time to post – consider timeliness, trend curve, audience time zones and suitability of the topic for the time of day.

Tip Box: Video Export requirements from Facebook.

- H.264 video with AAC audio in MOV or MP4 format.
- An aspect ratio no larger than 1280px wide and divisible by 16px.
- A frame rate at or below 30fps.
- Stereo audio with a sample rate of 44,100hz.
- Video files must be smaller than 4 GB.

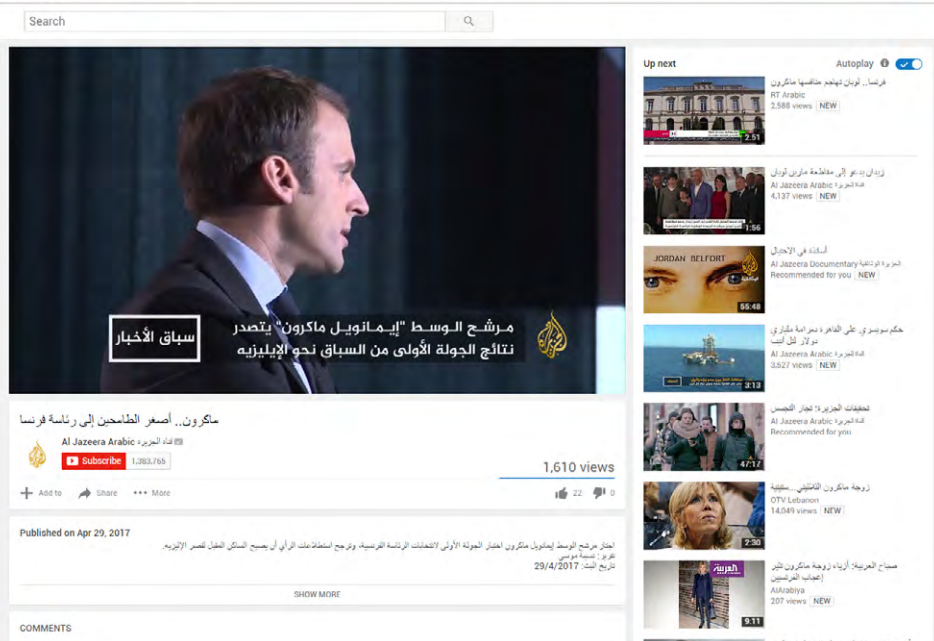
PRODUCING FOR YOUTUBE: HIGHLIGHTS AND CONTENT STRATEGY TIPS

PLATFORM OVERVIEW

One third of internet users -over a billion people- go to YouTube to watch hundreds of millions of hours of video daily.¹³ More than half of these views are on mobile devices.¹⁴

According to Google, the Arab World is a growing YouTube market: there are over 100 million Arab youth today, the highest proportion of youth to adults in the region's history.¹⁵

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13 Statistics. YouTube. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>

14 Ibid.

15 Think with Google (2016, April). YouTube Series: The Rise of YouTube in MENA. Google. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/9LjMn3>

Producing for YouTube: Highlights and Content Strategy Tips

PLATFORM HIGHLIGHTS

YouTube is a platform that allows you to bridge content and develop audiences. Below are the main features and advantages to consider when deciding if the platform should form part of your content strategy:

- Develops a strong, supportive community around your organisation.

- Provides best practice for possible syndication (the platform has great localisation tools).

- Supports content that can bridge other platforms like podcasts and Video on Demand (VoD) systems.

As Conner Jay, AJ+'s strategist for YouTube, puts it: "YouTube is a community. The content created for the platform should be like your audience's favourite book or show: they should want to curl up while watching it".



Producing for YouTube: Highlights and Content Strategy Tips

WHAT YOUTUBE VALUES

YouTube values good content, measured by:

1. Watch time – the total time watched on a channel.
2. Audience retention – percentage of each video watched.
3. Viewing session – time spent binge-watching and engaging.

YouTube rewards consistency because its audience demands consistency.



AJ+ عربي

Home Videos Playlists Channels Discussion About



عربي.. نروي القصة معاً AJ+ فريق
125,789 views 11 months ago
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CONTENT CATEGORIES

If Facebook is today's go-to platform for publishing real-time news videos, YouTube is the platform where people go to consume more evergreen content that can fall into any of the following categories:

- **Education:**

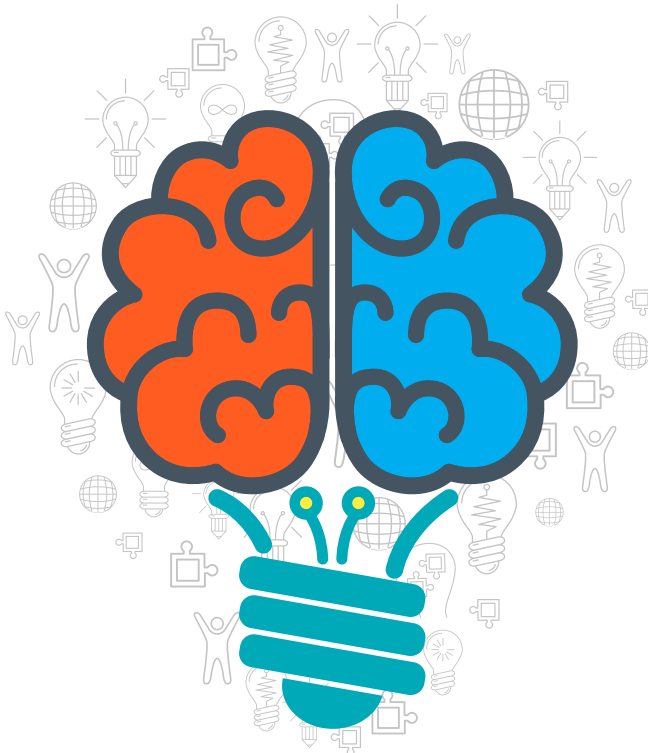
YouTube is the 'how-to' platform. People go there to learn and enrich themselves. YouTube isn't useful for breaking news, but it is a great platform for explaining topics, such as 'how does the electoral system in x country work?'

- **Entertainment:**

Reality shows, TV shows, music and original content from YouTubers are some of the offerings that draw people to the platform.

- **Inspiration:**

YouTube audiences look for emotional and relevant stories that inspire them, such as brand channels that create visually and emotional compelling content, like GoPro and Nike.



Producing for YouTube: Highlights and Content Strategy Tips

SETTING UP A VERTICAL

YouTube is all about vertical content strategy. Each YouTube channel needs:

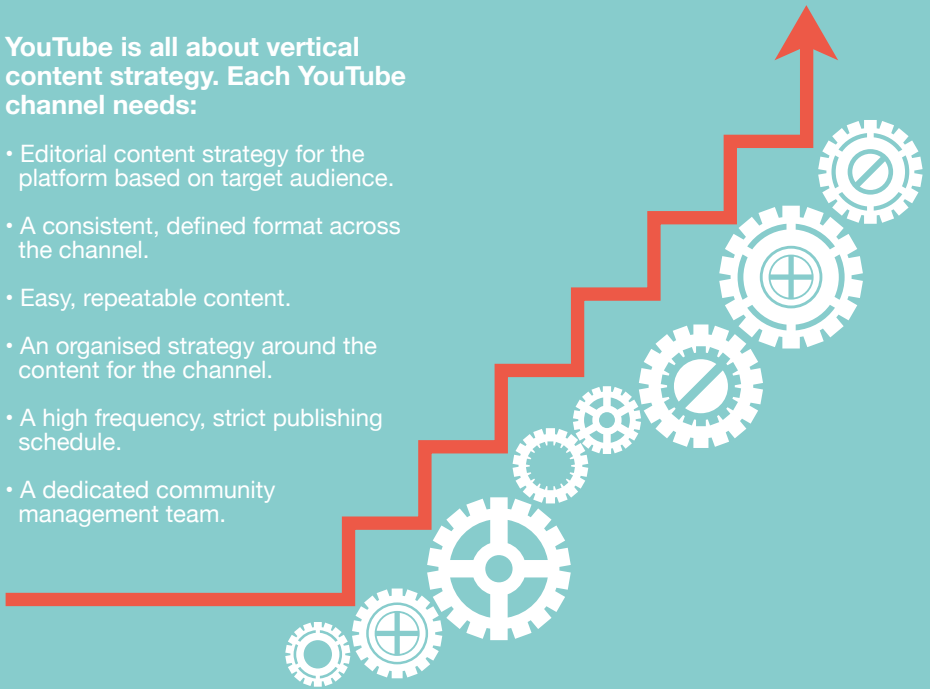
- Editorial content strategy for the platform based on target audience.
- A consistent, defined format across the channel.
- Easy, repeatable content.
- An organised strategy around the content for the channel.
- A high frequency, strict publishing schedule.
- A dedicated community management team.

A new vertical can allow:

- The building of a new audience.
- The creation of templates for platform and specific content.
- The diversification of editorial focus and stories the organisation can cover.

The YouTube Creator Playbook for Brands¹⁶ explains in further detail what makes content good for the platform and gives valuable tips on how to orient your editorial strategy and determine how your YouTube strategy, if you are to have one, will help in achieving the goals of your overall content strategy. Be sure to adapt the advice to fit your brand identity.

¹⁶ The YouTube Creator Playbook for Brands. YouTube and Google. Retrieved from: <https://goo.gl/KECQuQ>

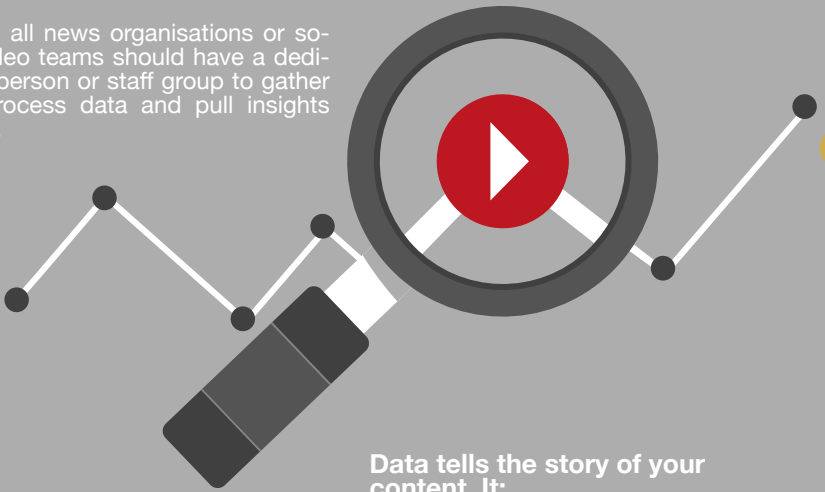


CONTENT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

DATA AND ANALYTICS

A fundamental aspect of a successful content strategy is the measurement of content performance through data and analytics. Data can be turned into valuable input to inform content strategy.

Ideally, all news organisations or social video teams should have a dedicated person or staff group to gather and process data and pull insights from it.



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Data tells the story of your content. It:

Data and analytics is a topic by itself. Here it is just worth mentioning that executive producers, video producers, audience developers, social media editors and everyone else involved in the process of producing social video should be familiar with how the team measures performance and how the produced content is doing.

- Defines your audience's behaviour.
- Creates patterns for your content.
- Defines how your content works and where it works.
- Informs who is watching, reading and engaging with your content.

LOOKING FORWARD

Formats dictated by advances in technology are trends powerful enough to influence and even shape editorial policy.

It is undeniable that the web has moved from text and image to video. Platform strategies and technical developments such as 360 video, virtual reality and augmented reality, have further increased the importance of video for media organisations.

However, this doesn't mean that journalists should see video as the sole form of storytelling.

We should certainly make sure we keep pace with evolving technology and audience behaviour towards it: we should know how to use these digital tools and develop strategies to bridge them with journalism, as well as identifying which digital platforms and tools our audiences are using, how and for what purposes.

However, we should not abandon other forms of storytelling, such as long form text or photojournalism, just because video is all around us. The same Reuters Institute report cited in the introduction above found that text is still very relevant when it comes to online news consumption.¹⁷

The key is having data that informs how your audiences consume content, and putting together successful content strategies which define formats and platforms that truly speak to them. If video proves to be one way of accessing your audiences, then we hope this handbook has been useful to you!

¹⁷ Kalogeropoulos, A., Cherubini, F., and Newman, N. (2016). Ibid.

This guide was developed by [Diana Larrea Maccise](#) and [Montaser Marai](#), from the Al Jazeera Media Institute. The Arabic version was proofread by [Ghadeer Abu Sneineh](#).

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PRODUCING VIDEO FOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS



**ALJAZEERA
MEDIA INSTITUTE**



AJMInstitute



+974 44897666

institute@aljazeera.net

<http://institute.aljazeera.net/en>