A Review of Regional Video News Funded by NZ on Air



May 2018

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AUTHOR: GAVIN ELLIS

Dr Gavin Ellis is a lecturer, media consultant and researcher. He is a former editorin-chief of the *New Zealand Herald* and his association with journalism now spans more than half a century. He was chairman of the New Zealand Media Freedom Committee and the 2005 recipient of the British Commonwealth Astor Press Freedom Award. He was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2015 for services to journalism. He is the author of *Trust Ownership and the Future of News: Media Moguls and White Knights* (Palgrave, London 2014) and *Complacent Nation* (BWB Texts, Wellington 2016). He holds a doctorate in political studies and lectures on journalism, media institutions and propaganda at the University of Auckland. He is a weekly media commentator on Radio New Zealand National. He has served on the boards of the Council for Security Cooperation Asia-Pacific, the Asia New Zealand Foundation, and the Science Media Centre.

Introduction

In 2016 New Zealand on Air (NZOA) provided \$1.3 million under a new Regional Media Content Fund for four projects covering seven regions. The purpose of the funding was to test a range of multi-media regional news and information programmes serving diverse needs in regional New Zealand.

The initiative followed findings that existing regional television programming was not producing significant audience numbers.

The four project providers were Te Hiku Media (Far North), Very Nice Productions (lower North island), Star Media/CTV (Canterbury) and Allied Press (lower South Island). The material was to appear under the programme brands Haukāinga (Te Hiku), Local Focus (Very Nice Productions), CTV (Star Media) and The South Today (Allied Press). Although three of the four proposals had included broadcast platforms, only Southern Television was still transmitting at the end of the review period.

In late 2017 NZOA initiated a review of the content produced in the first year of funding. The review involved content analysis plus a series of interviews with the providers and the distribution of a questionaire to stakeholders. The methodology is set out in appendix A.

The following report is divided into three parts: Individual project analyses, comparative analysis, then findings and recommendations.

Executive summary

After examination of content produced by the four providers, the review concludes that:

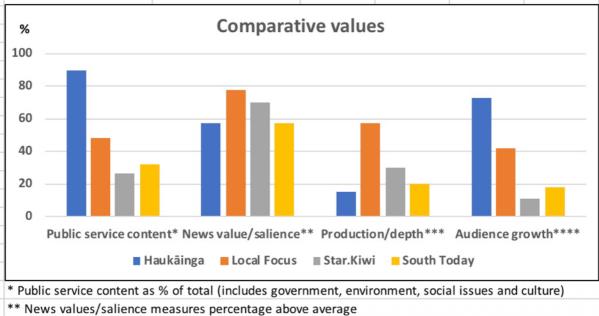
- The output under review allows the residents of regional New Zealand to see their own stories and they would not do so without the funding provided by NZOA. Audience numbers are generally low but coverage of specific topics is evidence of the potential for larger viewership.
- Better guidance is required to ensure that NZOA funding supports civic journalism – journalism that helps people function as participatory citizens – and coverage of stories that give residents a better understanding of the fabric and culture of regional society.
- Providers must be given more specific instructions on NZOA expectations on quality, quality control and oversight.
- For their part, providers need to re-examine their training, structures and processes. The autonomy invested in often inexperienced young video journalists should be reconsidered in the interests of both quality and staff development. The setting of numerical targets should be revisited with a view to finding a system that puts equal value on quality and quantity.
- Audience numbers are a vital component in calculating the effectiveness and value of these services. NZOA must adopt a system of quarterly audience reporting that is highly prescriptive and backed by clear statistical definitions. All providers must report on exactly the same basis over exactly the same reporting period. Website and social media analytics should be separately reported. Providers should also be encouraged to promote regional video news and to ensure worthwhile placement of the content or access points on

homepages. A weekly digest of regional video news on network television would be an excellent means of increasing each provider's 'brand recognition' but, more generally, NZOA and the providers should considers new ways to extend content reach. The opportunities created by the Labour-led government's injection of funding into public service media is an ideal opportunity to further this aim.

• Regional video news providers must employ more innovative thinking to supplement their limited resources.

Direct comparisons between providers are difficult, particularly given variations in the statistics reported by each provider. However it is possible to gauge relative performance in a number of areas. The following chart examines four parameters.

- The first assesses the percentage of total output devoted to public service content.
- The second and third attempt to assess relative quality performance by examining the percentage of sample video that scored above average (i.e. 4 or 5) on a combination of news value and salience and a combination of production values and news depth.
- The final parameter attempts to assess audience growth between the first and fourth quarters but was hampered by a lack of comparative Q1 figures for Star.Kiwi. The Q1 figures supplied for Haukāinga appear suspiciously low and its rate of growth may, in fact, be lower than indicated. On an average of the first three parameters, Local Focus achieves the highest performance, followed by Haukāinga, Star.Kiwi then The South Today. Haukāinga's score was undoubtedly improved by the very high number of culture items relative to other providers.





***Production/ depth measures percentage above average

**** Measures growth between relevant figures in Q1 and Q4. Star.kiwi figures available only Q3 & Q4.

The review recommends NZOA considers the following actions:

- NZOA continues to fund regional video news as part of its commitmet to regional production.
- NZOA continues to fund the present providers but modifies service contracts
- NZOA ties ongoing funding to public interest and civic journalism
- NZOA requires improvements to quality and editorial oversight as a condition of ongoing funding
- NZOA modifies output targets to reduce the numerical emphasis and substitute baseline production levels and quality measures.
- NZOA requires uniform and definitive reporting of audience analytics
- NZOA requires providers or their clients to undertake cross-promotion of regional video news content
- NZOA considers new ways to extend content reach
- NZOA re-examines the Te Hiku agreement and its relationship with Channel North and Ngati Hine.

PART A

PROJECT ASSESSMENTS

1. Haukāinga (Ti Hiku Media)

Overview

Te Hiku Media is a charitable collective, owned by Northland iwi, established in 1990. The organisation focuses on iwi radio broadcasting in the Māori language, live video streaming, online access to iwi archives, regional media video content production and the development of digital technology for enhanced access to 'te reo o te kainga'. Channel North is controlled by the Northland TV Charitable Trust and initially broadcast to the Whangarei area via an analogue transmitter then via Freeview. It currently operates entirely as an online provider via website and social media platforms.

After NZOA indicated it did not wish to fund two regional news providers based in Northland, Te Hiku Media and Channel North TV together proposed Haukāinga as "a production of fresh and exciting regional media content for distribution on a number of platforms". These platforms were to include digital terrestrial TV, terrestrial Radio and online digital platforms. The content would be bilingual in English and Māori.

NZOA approved funding of \$180,000 for 2016/17 under which Te Hiku as lead contractor, subcontracting Channel North, agreed to provide 240 x short format news stories (duration approx. 3 minutes each), 4 x live stream events (duration approx. 960 minutes each), and 80 x on-demand videos from live stream (duration approx. 15 minutes each). Videos were required to tell a story and contain a mix of cutaways and pieces to camera. The delivery platforms were to be Channel North's Freeview television channel, channelnorth.co.nz and Tehiku.co.nz. Channel North had content supply agreements with Ngati Hine FM, which would also service some of Haukāinga's needs.

Channel North's Freeview channel ceased broadcasting on 31 August 2017. Haukāinga is currently delivered via websites and social media. Te Hiku's technical resources are limited but equipment includes Canon XF305 professional digital camcorders.

Te Hiku Media's Q4 report to NZOA provided full-year statistics that indicated it had met its requirement for 240 short form videos totaling 863 minutes of air time or an average of 3 minutes 29 seconds per item. The aggregation of live stream statistics from each report indicate the provider met its live streaming event target for each quarter but, at an average of 910 minutes per quarter, fell slightly short of the duration target.

Content: Subject overview

Analysis of the Haukāinga schedule (appendix B) included the first two months of 2018 – a total of 302 items. The subject mix was a strong indication of Te Hiku's determination to reflect Te Ao Māori and to emphasise aspects of Māoridom that received insufficient coverage or negative emphasis in mainstream media. Cultural

coverage was dominant and when combined with arts/entertainment – a mix of Māori and Pākehā performance and visual arts – represented almost half the total output. Cultural coverage was imbued with a strong sense of Tikanga Māori that may be aided by the programme's unusual production style (discussed later in the review). Social issues (13 per cent of the total) concentrated on areas such as housing and health but with an emphasis on solution rather than problems. Coverage of government, at 20 per cent, was skewed by the 2017 election and coverage of the Te Tai Tokerau electorate but also included representative Māori bodies that may be underrepresented in mainstream coverage. Environmental issues also formed a significant component in the subject mix and, again, were addressed from a distinctly Māori perspective. At the other end of the scale, law and order (emergency services) barely registered in the subject index – a stark contrast to mainstream media coverage of Northland – and virtually none of the Haukāinga coverage related to crime.

Te Hiku CEO Peter-Lucas Jones says the provider has a steady flow of requests for coverage from Northland groups and individuals – a number that is beyond its ability to satisfy. "If we cover it, they love it," he said. "If we don't cover it, they go mental."

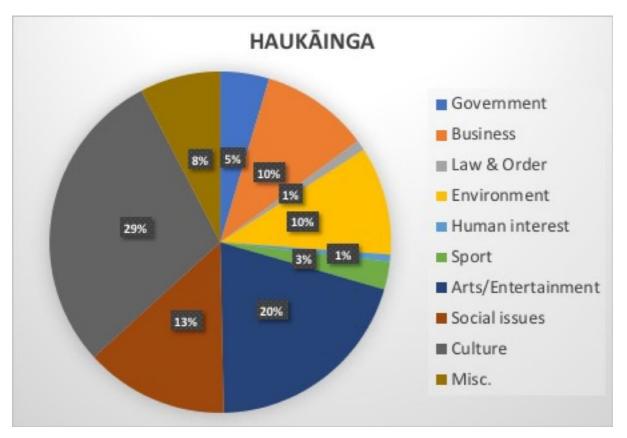


Fig. 2: Haukāinga content by subject

Content: Individual video sample

The 20 Haukāinga items that were analysed covered culture, arts/entertainment, human interest, social issues, environment, business, emergency services and education. Each item was given a score of 1 to 5 across the seven criteria, where 1 equaled very poor and 5 equaled very good. It is fair to say that Haukāinga rated well on intent but only average on delivery.

The above average score for news value, salience and regional identity was good (a score of 4) but production value, content depth, general interest and audience cutthrough each rated only average (a score of 3). In two cases the content depth was judged to be very poor (a score of 1) and in four cases the production values were judged to be poor (a score of 2). The analysis of each video item is shown in the table in appendix C.

The difference between intent and delivery is almost certainly due to the method used by Te Hiku to produce its items. Subjects are chosen by senior members of the Te Hiku team who gather information working from the Te Hiku office. Te Hiku has very limited video resources of its own. It is tied to an arrangement whereby two-thirds of its content is shot by videographers from either Ngata Hine or Channel North. Te Hiku is charged \$650 for each such call-out (which is subject to strict administrative procedures), leaving only \$50 of the budget to cover its own costs. Therefore, it is unable to employ or task journalists to provide coverage from the field on those stories.

As a result, virtually all of the videos feature the subject talking directly to the camera, seemingly unprompted by any questions from a journalist. The items do not feature question and answer interviews with a journalist and usually appear without a voice-over. As a result, the item may lack context or depth and the subject may exhibit a certain "possum in the headlights" quality. Video recording is average at best and in several cases was accompanied by very poor audio recording. General interest and audience cut-through suffer as a result.

These journalistic and craft issues are unfortunate because the subject matter chosen by Te Hiku was both salient and newsworthy. In almost every case there was potential to reflect an aspect of Northland life that was unlikely to be covered by mainstream media or which could be covered on Haukāinga in a unique way.

A number of the videos were exclusively in te reo Māori, several featuring a traditional oratorical style that carried with it a power and dignity seldom seen in mainstream media. Such videos are consistent with Te Hiku's focus on te reo Māori and add a unique dimension to the visual offering. The lack of an English translation may appear to reinforce the status of te reo as an official language. However, the reality is somewhat more prosaic: it comes down to money. Only 28 per cent of people in Northland speak te reo Māori¹ but Te Hiku lacks the funds and resources to provide on-screen English captioning where the subject exercises a legitimate choice to speak te reo Māori. Nevertheless, a willingness to include such videos in the mix is seen by some stakeholders as an encouragement, particularly among the young, to learn the language.

Although they did not form part of the individual video content analysis, the live streams to which Te Hiku is committed under its contract with NZOA – particularly of festival events – is an extremely strong part of the Haukāinga output. Resource and finance intensive, these programmes, (particularly when combined with flow-on VOD items) form some of the most popular content on the site. They represent many hours of production and are usually Haukāinga's most proficient work in craft terms – multi-camera and with good sound recording. The Te Tai Tokerau Festival (Haukāinga's most watched programme with 208,000 unique visitors) required 12 Te Hiku staff "to

¹ NZ census 2013. The proportion is higher than the national figure of 21.3 per cent.

make it happen" but resulted in 1200 minutes of live stream video and 685 minutes of VOD. It included 10 reporter-to-camera interviews and 12 school kapa haka performances. The VOD output from the 2018 Ngāpuhi Festival in Whangarei included 12 reporter-to-camera interviews with artists and 12 separate performances (several more than an hour in duration).

Audience

Audience figures supplied by Te Hiku in its quarterly reports to NZOA indicate a rising number of unique visitors to its website. In its first quarter Haukāinga attracted 6193 unique visitors to its short form videos, more than doubling in Q2, and rising to 23,213 in Q4. Across the 12 months a total of 50,347 short form Haukāinga videos were viewed. These statistics were outstripped by live stream and VOD event coverage. Across the year 31,000 videos were livestreamed and 204,300 viewed on demand. No data was provided for viewership of Haukāinga on the terrestrial Freeview platform prior to August 2017.

Haukāinga's engagement with social media, especially Facebook, has been problematic. User expectation sometimes exceeded Te Hiku's ability to supply and the lack of a separate Haukāinga Facebook page for much of the review period makes it difficult to determine the role that social media has played in the programme's penetration. Te Hiku's Facebook page has fewer than 10,000 followers and its recently established Haukāinga Facebook page has approximately 1500 followers.

The demographic statistics to be gleaned from Te Hiku's quarterly reports suggests its audience is predominantly in the 35-64 years age group and is skewed more than two-thirds female. However, Te Hiku CEO Peter-Lucas Jones maintains that these statistics present a less than accurate picture because they do not capture multiple use of the household personal computer by various family members. Similarly, he says, there is anecdotal evidence that younger people (secondary school and school leavers) have been significant users of social media to access VOD content such as festivals and kapa haka events. The audience, Mr Jones believes, is significantly younger than the statistics suggest.

The geographic spread of the online audience for Haukāinga, according to the quarterly reports, shows only between 11 and 17 per cent of the audience was in Northland (listed as Whangarei) with a further 36-38 per cent in Auckland. This suggests a worryingly low penetration in Haukāinga's 'home' market but accurate social media statistics may show a higher target market penetration.

Stakeholder feedback

The communications departments of all three Northland territorial local authorities – Whangarei District Council, Kaipara District Council and Far North District Council – responded to the questionnaire. In all three cases staff said they were unaware of Haukāinga and had not had contact with Te Hiku. Similarly, they believed general public awareness to be low. Whangarei District Council did have some contact with Channel North but only with regard to production work for the council. Channel North staff occasionally attended council meetings. A Northland educator contacted for the review had not accessed the Te Hiku website and Haukāinga but after doing so praised the type of content and the positive approach to stories. He said that the unusual production technique involving subjects speaking directly to camera may, in fact, be more engaging for Māori audiences than traditional mainstream television interviewing. It gave the appearance, he said, of speaking directly to the viewer. He believed Haukāinga would benefit from stronger promotion in the North.

Extensive surveying was beyond the scope of the review. However, an approach was made to the chief executive of the He Korowai Trust, Ricky Houghton (a finalist in the New Zealander of the Year Awards 2018), for a view of Haukāinga's reception among Māori. Mr Houghton's response is attached (appendix D) but in summary he said:

- Haukāinga covers stories unlikely to be covered by mainstream or national media.
- Coverage is highly appreciated within the community and Haukāinga has an audience.
- There *is* awareness among young people.
- Distribution is "adequate" but could be improved.
- The requirement to produce such a large number of videos could be revisited.

Assessment

Te Hiku has a well-developed sense of what Haukāinga needs to do to fulfil its mandate and meet its obligations to NZOA and the community. However, it is hampered by significant resource and logistical issues that adversely affect the quality of its delivery in journalistic and production terms. In particular, the arrangement with Ngati Hine and Channel North should be revisited with a view to ending it.

Although it appears to have a significant audience for its live streaming and VOD festival events it has yet to secure a significant audience for many of its short-form videos, particularly in its target Northland market. There is insufficient data to establish the effect of the closure of Channel North's Freeview channel although it unlikely to have been major. Similarly it is difficult to gauge the effect of the establishment of a Haukāinga Facebook page relatively late in the project² although it – and other social media platforms – offer important ways to attract a wider audience.

The level of recognition of Haukāinga is too low and the promotion of the programme is inadequate. There is little evidence of a coordinated marketing campaign.

In the main these are resource and budget issues that could be overcome. It is equally evident that the type of material produced for Haukāinga has a significance to Māoridom in general and Te Tai Tokerau in particular that is not provided by other media. While iwi radio can provide a measure of coverage, the visual elements that are intrinsic components of some of these stories would be lost if Haukāinga was discontinued. Further findings and recommendations are given later in the review.

 $^{^{2}}$ The Haukāinga Facebook page should have been set up much earlier in the project. The fact that it was not done – and complaints to Te Hiku about failure to post festival items on the parent website – suggest that this, too, is a resourcing issue for the provider.

2. Local Focus (Very Nice Productions)

Overview

Very Nice Productions' (VNP) was unique among the four providers in both the breadth of its geographic coverage and the fact that it was contracted to another media company that published its output. Its content was published on NZME's main website nzherald.co.nz under the *Local Focus* sub-brand. Its object was not to compete with NZME media in the lower North Island (where it operated) but to "uncover stories that would not otherwise be told".

VNP, which specialises in factual programming, is owned by Myles Thomas who has an extensive background in television production and post-production. It was contracted to NZME to provide the Local Focus element of the video content within the Focus section of nzherald.co.nz. Within the nzherald.co.nz website are regional sub-brands, usually corresponding to NZME's regional newspaper titles, each of which carried VPN's content. This took three forms: a "NZH Local Focus" landing page under the NZ Herald>Regional News section; a standardised section labeled NZ Herald Local Focus covering multiple regions; and local video-based stories by Local Focus staff on the regional newspaper's sub-website.

The provider employed four full-time video journalists initially based in Hamilton, Rotorua, Hastings and Whanganui. They worked under the direction of an Aucklandbased executive producer and shot and edited their own stories. Each Local Focus reporter was equipped with a Sony X70 compact professional camcorder (also used by TVNZ video journalists), a multiple microphone audio kit, and a laptop PC for editing using Adobe Premiere Pro production software.

Each reporter covered a wide area. The Hamilton reporter covered Waikato and Coromandel; the Rotorua reporter covered the Bay of Plenty and Gisborne regions; the Hastings reporter covered Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa; and the Whanganui reporter covered Taranaki, Manawatu, Horowhenua and the Kapiti Coast. During the course of the contract, the Whanganui reporter was replaced by a Palmerston North-based journalist and the Hastings reporter was replaced by a Napier-based journalist. These changes affected output and the focus of coverage, particularly in the Whanganui and Taranaki regions. In addition, the widely-experienced executive producer Alistair Wilkinson left to join TVNZ's *Seven Sharp* and, after a gap filled by Mr Thomas, was replaced by former *60 Minutes* producer Belinda Henley who had been an executive producer at NZME.

VNP's contract with NZOA provided funding of \$400,000 and required it to produce 480 items including news and features of varying lengths to a maximum of seven minutes. Within the contract period the provider produced 491 video items spread relatively evenly between the four regions. The total duration was 1030 minutes with an average item duration of 2 minutes six seconds.

The NZME regional newspapers in the areas covered by Local Focus also produce their own video items for inclusion on the relevant regional section of the nzherald.co.nz website. These videos are often below the production standards of Local Focus content.

Content: Subject overview

VNP was clearly determined to achieve an even spread of coverage by each of the four regional video journalists and almost achieved that balance by giving each reporter the same quarterly target to meet. It also achieved a good mix of subject matter (see appendix B).

Government was the largest single topic of coverage but this was affected by VPN's decision to put significant resource into local candidate coverage in the lead-up to the 2017 general election. There was also an emphasis on environmental stories but, given the geographic spread of Local Focus coverage and the significance to local residents, that was unsurprising. In other subject areas Local Focus achieved a broadly even spread of coverage. While it covered arts and entertainment, it had a prohibition on covering celebrity-based stories that have become a feature of nzherald.co.nz.

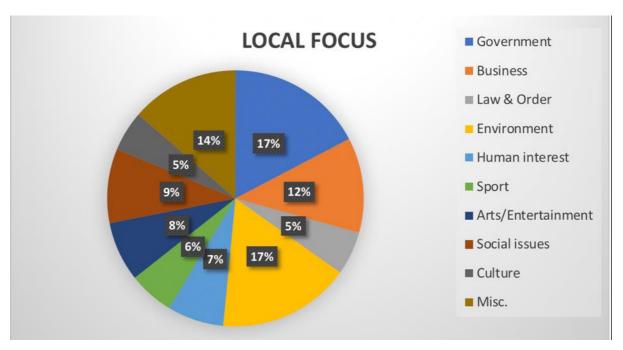


Fig. 3: Local Focus content by subject

It was evident from the schedule that the geographic emphasis of Local Focus shifted with changes of personnel. When the Whanganui reporter was replaced by a journalist domiciled in Palmerston North, there was a drop in coverage of the Whanganui region and an increase in stories from Taranaki. Variations were also evident with other staff changes.

The Local Focus schedule had a full quota of newsworthy items. However, in many cases the subject matter would fall outside the definition of "stories that would not otherwise be told". That, perhaps, was a promise that VNP should have considered more carefully and put in context. Many of its topics might readily appear in regional newspapers and on their websites (an example: Asbestos forcing the closure of Taupo

District Council offices). Where they would "not otherwise be told", however, was on national news media. Few of these stories would have appeared on TVNZ or TV3 news programmes. Without Local Focus the numbers of video items from the regions carried on nzherald.co.nz would have been substantially reduced. It was the NZME/nzherald.co.nz association that provided Local Focus with its real strength – telling regional and local stories to a wider audience.

Content: Individual video sample

The 20 Local Focus items that were analysed covered government, culture, human interest, social issues, environment, business, law & order and sport. Each item was given a score of 1 to 5 across seven criteria, where 1 equaled very poor and 5 equaled very good. Local Focus averaged 4 out of five in all seven categories, demonstrating above average ability in story choice, journalism and craft skills. On three items it achieved the top score of 5 across a majority of categories. The analysis of each video item is shown in the table in appendix C.

The consistently good scores achieved by Local Focus appear due to three factors: the professional experience and mentoring skills of its executives, the use of journalists who have been well trained in videography, and the use of professional-level video and audio field equipment. Reporters shot and did the first cut of stories that had been scoped in advance with the executive producer. The first cut was then discussed and any required changes made before the item was uploaded. This process, and the interaction that was a standard component, is evident in the sample videos. Some of the camera work was worthy of broadcast on national television, marking the transition from reporter-with-a-camera to the all-rounder videojournalist. This work extended to the use of drones.

What is also evident, however, is the dependence that the system has on the talents and skills of individual reporters in the field. This, of course, is no different to the situation in which any news organisation finds itself. However, the small number of field staff – only four reporters and each with a discrete region to cover – means the effect is more evident on-screen. While the sample's production values and content depth scored three or above on every item, some reporters fared better than others. Changes of personnel clearly resulted in a downshift in skills until the new reporter was fully trained. The natural talents of staff – journalism, performance and videography – were another variable with which VPN had to contend.

That said, the 20-item sample was a good reflection of the quality and range of material that appeared on Local Focus. The top mark of five was scored 26 times across the seven criteria: News value (4 times), salience (five times), regional identity (seven times), production values (5 times), content depth (once), general interest (twice) and audience cut-through (twice). Content depth was the criterion with the largest number of 3 (average) scores (nine times). Often this related to a failure to include input from other parties that could have added to the story. This may well be due to resource limitations and the need to complete assignments quickly. Under its agreement with NZOA, the VPN team was required to produce 120 items a quarter. That translated into two stories a day across a five-day week although the rising number of videos produced meant the output in Q4 was closer to three per day.

It was curious that the provider did not nominate "How Maddy stopped self-harming" as one of its sample videos (it was included in the reviewer's sample). This item, shot as part of the NZ Herald's "Break the Silence" series on mental health, embodied many of the stronger elements of the Local Focus offering. Videojournalist Hunter Calder encouraged a young woman to reveal deeply personal details about her mental issues. He followed this with a second item in the series "It's not about wanting to die" about a transgender man's struggle with depression. Both items involved skilled camera work and editing as well as good journalism. If there was any weakness in these items it was, perhaps, the fact that the Herald itself should have shot them along with the other videos produced by NZME for the series rather than drawing on the resources of Local Focus. This provider is not funded to generate input into NZME investigative projects. While the content is worthwhile, it may be useful to establish some clearer ground rules that state VPN should be separately contracted by NZME to provide such material.

Audience

Local Focus is the obvious beneficiary of an association with one of the largest news websites in New Zealand, nzherald.co.nz. The NZME 2017-18 annual report stated that the NZ Herald Focus feature, of which Local Focus is a component, regularly achieved 1.5 million views per week across all platforms. Local Focus videos achieved a total of 931,617 views on all NZME platforms across the four quarters³. The figure increased from 157,462 in Q1 to 284,145 in Q4.

The average number of views per video was highest in Q1 at 1640 and fluctuated thereafter. The average across the four quarters was 1589 views per video. The average number of unique users per week was 25,500. This compares well with other providers in the regional project but by a modest margin.

It is impossible to accurately assess Local Focus' audience penetration via social media. Although VNP gave a Q1 figure of 266,678 Facebook views, there was no comparable data for the following three quarters. The Q4 report stated that, during the year there had been 5,965,292 views of Local Focus videos. However, this was an autoplay figure and, by VNP's own admission, 90 per cent meaningless. If 10 per cent were valid viewers, it would translate to almost 150,000 views per quarter but even this number need to be treated with caution. VNP does claim 361,000 Facebook views for its highest rating story but it was unusually high. The following nine most popular stories averaged 136,000 Facebook impressions, suggesting that the overall average number of Facebook impressions for each video was significantly below that figure. The number of Facebook 'reactions' (some form of interaction by the user) on top stories 2-10 ranged from 932 to 7600 and the number of 'shares' from 124 to 1291.

Facebook makes no distinction between a one-second view and full duration viewing. VPN does include a breakdown of viewing patterns on the nzherald.co.nz website, which indicates that two-thirds watched to the halfway point and a quarter to the end of the video.

³ Analytics supplied in Local Focus quarterly reports were inconsistent. Some reports gave total views and a separate figure that did not include views of previously uploaded videos. Other reports did not make that distinction or reported only views of material produced during the quarter. The total number of views quoted for the four quarters is assumed to include all material irrespective of the date of upload.

We cannot determine the geographic spread of users from VNP's supplied analytics. Such a breakdown would be useful in order to determine where the greater benefit of the project lay – in reflecting a region to its inhabitants, or telling the country as a whole about what is happening in its component parts. Both attributes, of course, are important.

Stakeholder feedback

The response from local authority communications departments in the areas served by Local Focus was disappointing. Only the Napier City Council responded to requests to complete the questionaire.

Feedback from the Napier council suggests that, although they were aware of Local Focus and had been engaged with its video journalists on stories, they had a number of issues with the project.

Most notable was the matter of accessibility. Staff found the videos hard to find unless they were promoted on the NZ Herald home page and felt this lack of visibility was also responsible for a lack of public awareness. Promotion of the videos on NZME websites was inadequate. The response also noted sporadic coverage and changes in VNP personnel.

VNP is unique among the four providers in being an independent production company commissioned to provide material to an organisation with regional newspapers operating independent of the Local Focus coverage. The views of the editors of those regional titles were thereofore sought.⁴

The attitude toward Local Focus was universally positive, with editors believing that it complemented their own coverage of the region (including their own video which tended to be spot news coverage) and often referred to Local Focus material as 'feature-like'. One editor echoed the VNP proposal, saying Local Focus covered stories that would not otherwise be covered.

One editor believed Local Focus was well-received and known to the regional audience. The other editors were unsure of the level of awareness but one stated that his sub-site's largest video audience was for Local Focus.

The quality of Local Focus production was judged to be 'of a good standard' and the journalists operating in each area were seen as 'professional'.

An issue faced by the regional newspapers was that the Local Focus coverage area was larger than the circulation areas of individual titles and included areas covered by Stuff Media titles (e.g. Hamilton, New Plymouth and Palmerston North). This placed limits on cooperation between the regional titles and VNP, although relationships were described as good. Nevertheless, it *is* evident that interaction between the two operations is limited and one editor suggested that closer cooperation, such as VNP attendance at his newspaper's news conferences would be worthwhile. The problem may be due to mixed messages. One editor said that he had been told VNP was to operate independently and another noted – somewhat pointedly – that his newspaper and Local Focus were controlled by different companies.

⁴ Responses were received from the regional editor of the *Bay of Plenty Times* and *Daily Post* (Rotorua) and the editor of the Wanganui Chronicle. As the editor of *Hawkes Bay Today* had resigned, the response was provided by the deputy editor.

The fact that the photographers on each newspaper are also required to shoot video could lead to an our's-and-their's attitude which could preference the in-house material but Local Focus operated through the NZME head office system which appeared to limit such effects. In fact, better cooperation and increased VNP resources in the region were suggested as possible improvements.

Assessment

The output of Local Focus reflects the professional experience of its head office personnel. This experience, their hands-on editorial and production approach, and their emphasis on training and mentoring played a large part in this provider achieving the highest across-the-board scores for content. While professional attributes may vary among field staff – particularly in the early stages of their involvement – they all possessed the skills required of a proficient video journalist.

The range of stories it covered was well balanced, although its coverage of Te Ao Māori was at what might be considered a minimum acceptable level. The content of individual videos was engaging and would interest both regional and wider audiences. Videos by some video journalists were showing increasing sophistication and fieldcraft.

It does appear, however, that the numerical demands of the NZOA contract pushed VNP staff to the limit. Each field reporter covered a very large territory. The required story output, combined with the travel involved in covering their designated territories meant each reporter was producing at least – and perhaps more than – the output of a video journalist on one of the broadcast networks who had the benefit of more resources and infrastructure.⁵ VNP chief executive Myles Thomas acknowledges the Local Focus team is working to capacity.

VNP has a strong working relationship with the head office of NZME and with the digital staff of nzherald.co.nz. Its relationship with regional components of NZME appear cordial but not well coordinated. There are logistical issues associated with coordination. For example the VNP video journalist covering Horowhenua, Wanganui and Taranaki is based in Palmerston North, making attendance at *Wanganui Chronicle* daily news conferences problematic. Nevertheless, a form of virtual connectivity should be possible and is highly desirable.

The manner in which Local Focus material is published on nzherald.co.nz should be improved. Local Focus content is hard to find. The determination of the company to impose its 'signature' brand (the NZ Herald) across its digital domains works against strong identities for regional sites. For the uninitiated, navigating from the nzherald.co.nz homepage to a regional newspaper – perhaps the most logical place to look for regional video material – requires scrolling to the final item on the homepage index and a somewhat cryptic link to "NZME Network".⁶ NZ Herald Focus and Local Focus Videos are a standard section on the nzherald.co.nz homepage (requires scrolling) but includes only the latest nine videos produced across the NZME spectrum and may feature only a single Local Focus offering. There is room for improvement in placement and display.

⁵ Network television video journalists – operating as reporter, videographer and editor – would generally produce two and sometimes three stories a week, according to an industry source.

⁶ The nzherald.co.nz mobile app similarly requires scrolling down the index but does point to "Regionals".

Similarly, the Local Focus Facebook presence, while benefitting from its association with nzherald.co.nz could also be improved, perhaps by the inclusion of region-specific Local Focus pages. This would require a break from the nzherald.co.nz brand but would provide an additional channel for exposure. So, too, would expansion beyond Facebook (which may be at the beginning of its decline).

NZME has considerable resources at its disposal but they are not translating into commensurately high audience numbers for Local Focus. Promotion would lift its audience beyond the 25,000 unique users a week that is only marginally higher that the other providers' audiences. Cross promotion is a common feature on NZME brands. That cross promotion should include Local Focus. At a regional level there should be cross promotion in NZME regional and community newspapers

Further findings and recommendations are given later in the review.

3. Star.Kiwi/CTV

Overview

The www.star.kiwi website is a division of Star Media which also publishes *The Star*, a free weekly metropolitan newspaper that circulates in Christchurch, plus six Canterbury community newspapers. CTV is a sub-set of the www.star.kiwi website and selected video content is also published on the Rise Up Christchurch section of the star.kiwi website under a CTV imprint. Videos are also published on the Ngai Tahu and Plains FM websites under partnership agreements.

CTV (Canterbury Television), an emblematic victim of the Christchurch earthquake, was back as a broadcaster on Freeview⁷ when this provider's initial application was accepted. Within six months (and a year after its purchase by Star Media) CTV ceased to broadcast and the material to be provided under the \$400,000 contract to NZOA was thereafter published solely on the Internet. Therefore this review is based on the contract variation that, for 2017, substituted the broadcast of 30 minute episodes of CTV News and a week in review programme with a minimum of 42 minutes regional news audio-visual content a week on www.star.kiwi. That material took the form of individual video items and was not collated into news bulletins. The review makes no judgement on the commercial decision to close CTV's broadcasts.

CTV journalists were integrated into the Star newsroom (serving all Star titles and digital platforms) prior to the cessation of broadcasting which resulted in a total of 13 job losses. Initially CTV videographers had teamed with reporters to cover items but the operation soon adopted a video journalist approach with one person responsible for reportage, filming, scripting and editing. The ability to live-stream was added during the review period. Two video journalists are employed on regional news.

The beginnings of star.kiwi coincided with the Port Hills fires and therefore set a very high benchmark for the venture – close to half a million page views. While it was unable again reach those heights, the incident illustrated the potential for regional news to attract a significant potential audience in exceptional circumstances.

⁷ The CTV Building was destroyed in the 22 Febrary 2011 earthquake but the station was back on air on 18 April 2011 on the Freeview platform.

Content: Subject overview

Star.kiwi's mix of subjects differed from the other providers (see appendix B). There was a much higher concentration on sport (17 per cent). Although most of this coverage preceded the decision by Stuff Media to pull out of coverage of regional sport, given that decision, future coverage at this level may be warranted. Sports coverage was a good mix of local and South Island coverage with a strong emphasis on school sport that seldom receives video coverage elsewhere.

The largest difference between Star Media and the other providers, however, was the high percentage of stories related to law and order (21 per cent or 140 items). Much of this content could be characterised as 'ambulance chasing' or 'cop chasing'. There was a high incidence of accident and crime aftermath coverage, much of which one would expect to see covered by *The Press* or local radio. When questioned about the high level of such coverage, Star Media executives said that it did rate well with the audience but a major factor had been its use as training exercises for staff (straightforward reportage). They maintained that such coverage was declining as staff became more proficient but car crashes continue to appear in CTV News and it is questionable whether this is a good use of NZOA funding.

The low number of stories related to social issues was surprising, given Christchurch's obvious problems arising from the ongoing social effects and reconstruction of the city following the earthquake. Similarly, the level of government coverage was lighter than anticipated, particularly given the level of coverage devoted to the general election (28 stories and 113,000 followers). It would seem that local governance would be a fertile area for a higher level of enquiry.

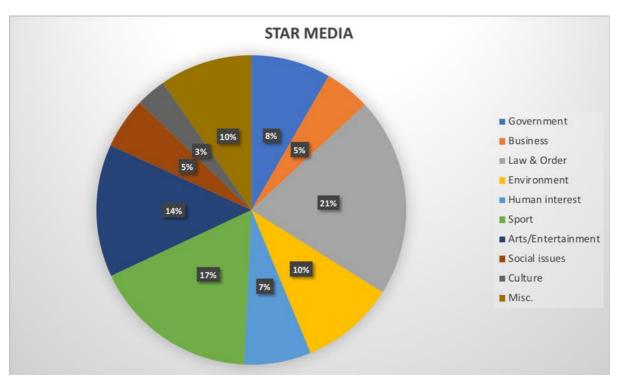


Fig. 4: Star.kiwi content by subject

Content: Individual video sample

In common with some other providers, Star Media had good intentions but had issues with production values and journalistic skills. The analysis data can be found in appendix C. Of the 20 videos reviewed, the production values on two were poor and one was very poor. Twelve were rated only average. It was interesting that the five videos chosen by the provider were generally patchy in their scores across the seven categories and only one was consistently above average. The five chosen by the reviewer were generally high on intent but had deficiencies in the craft areas. The most notable was the live streaming of the Christchurch America's Cup parade, an ambitious hour-long production the outcome of which can only be described as amateurish. Conversely, the coverage of election night 2017 (which averaged the top score of five) was a credit to the team. It demonstrated excellent use of very limited resources and produced live coverage not available elsewhere.

The videos selected by the provider and several of the items chosen by random date selection suggested limitations in editorial direction. Six of the stories had only average news value and salience. Thirteen had been produced in such a way that their general interest and audience cut-through were only average. This suggests that oversight may have been limited.

There are obvious limitations associated with the sole-operator approach. Camera skills were average, sound recording quality was sometimes an issue, and editing was basic. Too often, video was illustrative actuality footage, with voiceovers carrying the bulk of information and too few on-camera interviews. Pieces to camera by the video journalist were rare. There is evidence, however, of improvement over time in skill levels.

Audience

Star.kiwi/CTV received a large audience boost from the February 2017 Port Hills fires, which compensated for the closure of CTV Freeview in December 2016. It claimed one million Facebook views and almost 500,000 website page views in that month. The number of website video views, however, was somewhat lower at less than 40,000. By April this number had dipped below 10,000 video views per month before starting to trend upward again.

In July a stand-alone Facebook page⁸ was launched and in its Q4 report provided only combined platform analytics claiming total video views of more than 81,000. A more accurate gauge of audience may be the average number of views per video posted on the star.kiwi Facebook page between 1 March and 28 March 2018 – 6700. The lowest number of views for an individual video was 1800 and the highest 18,000 in that month. However, it is the nature of Facebook analytics that it is impossible to gauge how many watched the full video.

⁸ Videos had been carried on the star.kiwi Christchurch Rise Up Facebook page.

Some topics are obviously capable of generating significant spikes in social media viewing. For example, a poignant five minute before-and-after video marking the seventh anniversary of the February earthquake attracted 138,000 views.

The geographic spread of the audience was only intermittently reported by Star Media. In Q2 67.74 per cent of viewers were in Christchurch. The previous quarter indicated that 13 per cent were outside New Zealand. Web analytics supplied by Star Media show almost two-thirds of the www.star.kiwi audience is female and more than twothirds in the 18-54 age group. Facebook page demographics⁹ show similar trends.

Stakeholder feedback

Star Media has a good working relationship with Christchurch City Council and works closely with it on video story ideas. The council's communication staff share star.kiwi/CTV videos on the council's Facebook page. The council has its own digital news channel but there seems little conflict with the Star Media operation, which is alerted to stories on the channel for video follow-up. The council believes the star.kiwi operation has improved and has noticed an increase in the number of requests to film at its facilities.

The closure of the CTV Freeview platform does not appear to have influenced the attitude of council communication staff who are firmly wedded to digital platforms for the dissemination of information. In fact, one staff member said "Star Media introduced the service recognising [it could] fill a gap in the market". It would be improved, however, by greater frequency in posting new video on the site.

A local video producer was critical of the production quality of star.kiwi/CTV videos. In his view, too much was demanded of young and inexperienced staff who were unable to fully meet the demands of one-person operations. Camerawork, audio and editing were sub-standard in his view in spite of reasonable quality equipment. He was also critical of the service for paying insufficient attention to the social and infrastructural issues that continue to affect the city and its residents. However, this was a criticism that he also levelled at network television and the daily press.

The perception among Christchurch academics is that the material has a high profile through Star Media's use of Facebook but that the material lacks relevance to the city's needs. One commented: "Students just think it's amusingly irrelevant". Some graduates have worked at Star Media in both print and video. One found the organisation resistant to suggestions for engaging younger people.

Assessment

Star Media makes a significant contribution to regional news production in Canterbury through its print and digital platforms. The contribution made by the CTV component has value but could be made substantially more relevant and engaging.

The mix of subject matter does not adequately reflect the purposes of the NZOA funding. Crime & emergency services and local sports stories have a place in the news mix but it is questionable that they should be funded in this way. CTV showed that it

⁹ Based on Facebook page 'likes' and therefore not an accurate gauge of video views.

was capable of civic journalism in its coverage of the general election and of some local issues but this was subsumed by too many stories of minor relevance and value. Christchurch has an ongoing need for serious video news production – telling the stories that most directly affect the inhabitants in a post-quake city. Star Media is well-placed to tell those stories but to do so it needs to make changes.

Two videographers responsible for 42 minutes of video a week are worked to capacity and their relative inexperience in this field of journalism places heavy demands on their shoulders. There is no doubt that they work to the limits of their abilities but they need more advanced training. They also need better editorial direction and this may require a rethinking of the internal structures under which they operate and the level of resourcing and training available to the CTV operation.

Star.kiwi has struck up partnerships that are worthwhile but which could be more productive. The association with Te Rununga o Ngāi Tahu could be particular fruitful given that former Maori Television broadcaster Julian Wilcox is its chief operating officer. Stronger associations are also possible with institutions such as the University of Canterbury, the New Zealand Broadcasting School and Ara Institute of Canterbury. However, stronger partnerships require greater relevance and some fundamentals must change.

Star Media must have a more definitive brief to guide the editorial direction of its funded content. In particular, that content needs to be focused on public interest journalism. While it is not for NZOA to determine the editorial content of a news service, it can – and should – provide a set of expectations that guide funded news coverage in the direction of public service. That focus would require Star Media to reassess the resourcing (including editorial oversight) and levels of journalistic experience.

CTV had a strong brand identity that was tragically made stronger by the destruction of its former headquarters. The Star (and its antecedent the daily *Christchurch Star*) had an equally strong brand. There is some question over whether that strength is maintained by star.kiwi and a series of Facebook pages that do not highlight either of the legacy brands. Closer attention to brand marketing and cross promotion of the CTV offering throughout the Star Media group could increase both the level of awareness and engagement.

4. Allied Press/ The South Today

Overview

Allied Press, publisher of the *Otago Daily Times*, is the producer of The South Today (TST). It was contracted by NZOA to provide audiovisual regional news and information for inclusion on www.ODT.co.nz; eight other regional print websites; and terrestrial broadcast in Dunedin and Invercargill. NZOA funding amounted to \$396,821, with Allied Press also making both cash and non-cash contributions. The requirement was for the production of a minimum of 1200 items (25 per week X 48 weeks) covering the South Island from Canterbury to Southland.

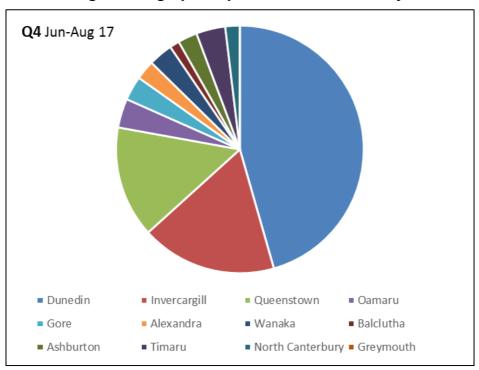
TST also employed a video journalist approach but differed from the other providers in the review in that its field equipment was iPhone-based rather than low-end professional cameras.¹⁰ In addition to three dedicated reporters, it is employing journalists from the wider Allied Press operation to shoot stories and edit "where skills existed", although final editing was undertaken in Dunedin by digital producers tasked to move material to the various digital platforms and to prepare it for broadcast on Southern Television in Dunedin and Invercargill. It is apparent that the use of print journalists to provide video was challenging. The provider's Q2 report acknowledged that training, the demands of their print publications, a transition to a 'digital first' philosophy, and liaison issues with the other divisions of Allied Press had affected production.

TST's use of social media was sub-optimal for the first eight months but, after it decided to load directly into Facebook rather than make individual physical posts, its engagement increased significantly.

Although Allied Press had considerable experience as a regional broadcaster on Channel 39 in Dunedin, TST was a work in progress in a new digital environment. Various changes were made during the review period to improve the offering and to overcome the consequences of decisions that challenged established practices within Allied Press. By the end of Q4, a more stable environment was in place.

Content: Subject overview

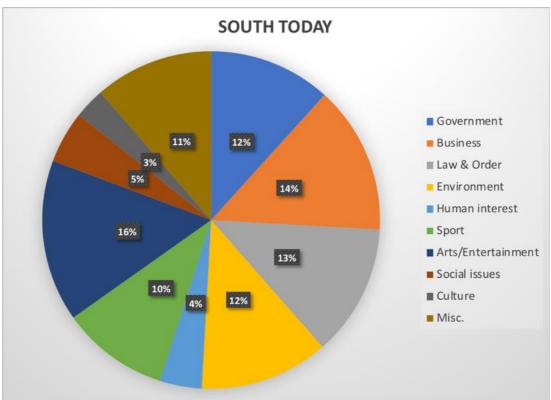
TST achieved a good mix of subjects (see appendix B) and a relatively even spread between major subject areas. It made strong efforts to ensure that each of the regions in its coverage area had its stories told, achieving the best geographic spread in Q4.

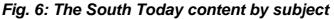




¹⁰ The custom-built kits also contained shotgun microphones, stands, tripods and lights. Fifteen kits were distributed around the coverage regions.

Although TST material was distributed across several websites, there was a sense that its output was driven by the need of Southern Television's 29-minute broadcast of The South Today. As a result of this need for a bulletin mix of content, there was a higher percentage of material on some subjects that might be the case in serving websites alone. In particular, the incidence of law and order stories (13 per cent of the total) was higher than might otherwise be the case. Similarly, sports coverage (10 per cent) included a high proportion of stories about regional rather than local teams.





There were some gaps in coverage. In particular, the number of stories concerning Te Ao Māori and Te Rununga O Ngāi Tahu was lighter than might be expected.

As the year progressed, TST achieved a better balance of geographic coverage. In Q1 almost three-quarters of the content related to Otago, with Southland receiving 17 per cent of coverage and Queenstown Lakes District (QLD) 11 per cent. There was no Canterbury coverage. By Q4 Otago represented less than half the coverage and Invercargill and Queenstown each accounting for about 20 per cent. Canterbury and the West Coast were included in that quarter's coverage. TST's Q4 report contained a useful graphic representation of the improvement in geographic spread (appendix E)

Content: Individual video sample

Like Haukāinga and star.kiwi/CTV, TST had aspirations that were not equally matched by the quality of output. It scored above average on news value, salience and regional identity but only posted average scores on production. The analysis of individual videos is in appendix C. The items chosen by the provider were not, overall, the best examples of work produced for TST and showed inconsistent scores across the seven categories. It fared better on items chosen by the reviewer and by random date selection but, again, there were variable results.

An item on the hearings on the Southland Regional Development Agency demonstrated TST was capable of producing material to network broadcast standards. An item from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery similarly had high values but was let down by its average production values. Production values and content depth – the principal measures of craft and journalistic skills – were the criteria on which TST registered its poorest scores. On the 20 items reviewed, 80 per cent had only average production values and two were rated poor in that category. Content depth showed marked inconsistencies. Six items warranted above average scores but five had poor levels of depth. Weaknesses in production values may be put down to lack of training in the first year of video journalist operation although several items showed the limitations of iPhone video and, in particular, audio recording quality. Lack of content depth, however, revealed more fundamental journalistic failings such as incomplete stories and lack of balance.¹¹ This suggested that better editorial oversight of the video items was warranted and that the level of autonomy granted to each reporter be re-examined.

Although the TST bulletins on Southern Television did not form part of the individual video review (to maintain consistency with the analysis of non-broadcast providers' videos), examples of the full programme were examined. There is a marked variation in the experience and talent of presenters, some of whom should not be on air. A Southern Television presenter was suspended during the review period after being charged with assault but, even allowing for that disruption, it is apparent that Allied Press needs to do more to ensure that programme presentation is to a higher professional standard. A number of its presenters do not meet that standard.

Audience

TST was unique among the projects in still having a broadcast component. Although three of the four proposals had included broadcast platforms, only Southern Television was still transmitting at the end of the review period.

Southern Television does not form part of the standard television audience surveys and the only snapshot of viewership that was available was a survey of 500 Dunedin residents conducted by the Allied Press marketing department in April 2017. The survey, results of which were included in the TST proposal for continued NZOA funding in 2017-8, indicated that 26 per cent watched Channel 39 and almost half had other people in the household viewing the channel at that time. Extrapolated across the Dunedin City 5+ population this would translate to approximately 30,000 viewers a week, with more than half watching daily. The audience age was strongly skewed 50-plus. More than 60 per cent watched the channel's news programmes.

¹¹ For example, an item on Easter trading laws failed to state which Dunedin City councillors had voted against liberalisation; a story on a Korean Christian 'cult' recruiting Otago University students suggested the organisation was sinister but was based on hearsay; coverage of a city protest against the holding of a transgender prisoner in solitary confinement 'for her own safety' did not state until the end of the 2½ minute item that she had a history of making false allegation against other prisoners.

It is difficult to reconcile Allied Press' analytics with the other providers. The unique visitors per month reported in quarterly returns are considerably higher than any of the comparable platforms for other providers. It is far more likely that the statistical basis is different, rather than TST massively outstripping all other providers. Whatever the basis for its statistics, the figures do show unique visitors to the various Allied Press websites carrying TST videos rose for the first three quarters before plateauing in the fourth quarter slightly below 700,000 per month. The average number of unique visitors per month on Facebook rose significantly from quarter to quarter: Q1=316,551, Q2=408,374, Q3=456,580, Q4=547,179.

The manner in which Facebook records video views nullified a full year analysis. Fourth quarter statistics were astronomically high and suggest that the social media site's video autorun facility was activated when changes were made to TST uploads. However, the first three quarters showed monthly video views fluctuated between 20,000 and 32,000 per month. The number of views for the top video each month ranged from 1200 to 5300, consistent with the performance of other providers.

TST content was delivered across 11 websites (the vast majority, however, on the *Otago Daily Times*' website), two broadcast channels and on social media. While quarterly returns record the geographic distribution of stories produced, there are no statistics by which to gauge the geographic spread of the audience beyond the fact that between 80 and 90 per cent are New Zealand residents.

Stakeholder feedback

The communications manager of Dunedin City Council, Graham McKerracher, responded positively to the questionaire. He stated that DCC staff were frequently interviewed and that Southern Television presented a fair and balanced view of council activities. However, he described it as "the much under-loved third cousin of Allied Press" in need of greater resources and better marketing. Mr McKerracher had a number of useful suggestions to make and his comments are therefore reproduced in full as appendix F.

The Queenstown Lakes District Council communications manager, Naell Crosby-Roe, responded by saying that his office haven't proactively engaged with TST but had responded to enquiries for interviews with elected members and Council officers where possible. He did not believe there is a wide awareness within council of the online channel or its purpose. Many officers were unaware of the broadcast channel when his office tried to resource interviews. This lack of awareness – exacerbated by the fact that the Freeview broadcast is not available in Queenstown – was cited as a reason TST was not seen as a significant platform for Queenstown news. He expressed concerns about the quality of reportage.

"The value could probably be improved," he said, "by perhaps taking a more in-depth approach which gives people a reason to visit the site other than scanning other news or social media sites – it currently has no point of differentiation from more established sources of news and information."

Assessment

Allied Press is ideally placed to be the provider of video regional news services in the lower South Island. It has numerous platforms on which to publish such material and an unparalleled reach in the regions it targets. The range of subjects it covers is wide and reasonably balanced and it has gone to some lengths to ensure that it has a balanced geographic coverage. Its efforts in these areas are commendable.

The issues that face the provider relate not to quantity – it exceeded the targets set by NZOA – but to quality. In that, it is not alone. Most of the other regional providers face similar issues.

Allied Press has tried to do what none of the other providers have achieved – use the fully integrated resources of a multimedia newsroom. This is the newsroom of the future and Allied Press is in the awkward position of doing the right thing but suffering the consequences of a difficult transition. It has yet to fully realise the potential and lacks some of the specialist skills, experience and some of the required talents to produce a polished product.

Intensive specialist training and investment in the right people must be part of Allied Press' future strategy. It may also be required to revisit some of the decisions it has made in the transition process. There are quality compromises associated with the use of iPhone video and the purchase of some higher-end equipment would be advisable, particular for staff designated as video journalists. It should also re-examine internal structures and the level of autonomy given to TST-dedicated field staff. The Video Centre of Excellence is aspirational but its desired function and performance are not reflected in the quality exhibited in many of the reviewed videos where a score of 'average' should not be seen as a commendation.

This provider has perhaps the greatest potential to achieve the aim of providing a comprehensive regional video news service – particularly one backed by the reputation and regional strengths of the *Otago Daily Times* – but it must set its sights higher. Perhaps the answer lies in doing a little less but doing it better.

PART B COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

It became apparent during the course of the review that, although all four providers had a regional focus, each served a potential audience with different needs. Haukāinga addressed the identity, needs and aspirations of Northland Māori; Local Focus covered a wide area of the North Island that spanned the economic spectrum from affluent Tauranga to neglected regional towns; Star.kiwi/CTV served a city still struggling seven years after a devastating earthquake; and The South Today needed to represent regions that – Queenstown and Wanaka aside – see themselves as the forgotten part of New Zealand.

Each had a different operating structure. Haukāinga was primarily driven by Te Hiku Media – a well-established iwi radio broadcaster – but much of the fieldwork devolved to Channel North (previously a tv broadcaster in Whangarei) and Ngati Hine FM; Local Focus was produced by a video production company under a supply contact to NZME, publisher of the *New Zealand Herald* and regional daily newspapers; Star.kiwi/CTV was part of a Christchurch-based community media group publishing The Star, a weekly free metroplitan, a range of small community newspapers, and (until December 2016) operator of Freeview channel CTV; and The South Today was part of Allied Press, publisher of the *Otago Daily Times*, a large number of community newspapers, and operator of a Freeview channel in Dunedin and Invercargill.

Although three of the four providers received similar amounts of funding from NZOA (Haukāinga received less than half the level of the other providers) and each met the target set for it under its NZOA contract, the level of output showed marked variation.



Fig. 7: Funding and output comparison

Leaving aside Haukāinga (whose output requirement and budget was significantly lower than the other providers), it is interesting to note that Local Focus – the professional video production company – produced the lowest number of items. It also had the highest consistent quality. This is a matter discussed in the final section of the review.

Similarly, there were marked variations in the emphasis given to certain subjects. In some instances this was driven by the focus of the provider and was especially so in the case of Haukāinga, which has a clear mandate to focus on subjects of particular interest to local iwi. Local Focus place a low priority on entertainment stories because of the existing emphasis on such material on the nzherald.co.nz website. In other cases, however, the emphasis seemed almost haphazard and that was particularly

the case with star.kiwi's coverage of crime and accidents, which resulted from a range of circumstances. The following chart provides a comparison between each provider on the basis of the percentage of coverage given to each subject area.

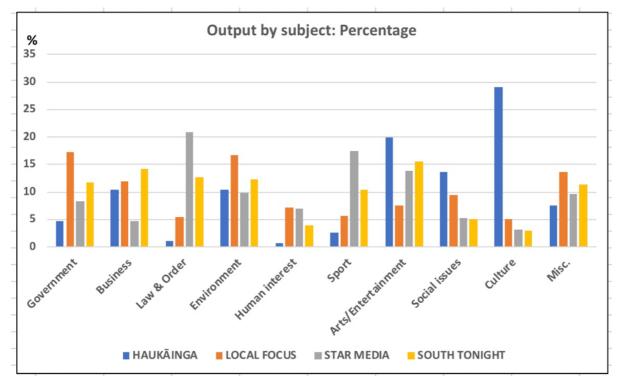


Fig.8: Comparative output by subject

Allowance must be made for the special needs of each provider's region(s) but the wide variations suggest very different attitudes to how the NZOA funding should be spent.

Quality issues have been noted in the individual assessments but may be reinforced by a comparison between the providers on production values and content depth. Graphic representations of the comparison are set out in appendix G but the core findings are that only Local Focus has consistently high production values. Six out of 80 videos top scored on production values and all were produced for Local Focus. The production quality of The South Today is well below Local Focus but is above that of star.kiwi. Haukāinga needs quality improvement but much of this could be overcome by redressing an unsatisfactory production arrangement.

The same criticism may be made of Haukāinga on content depth, and for the same reason. Local Focus again shows greatest consistency and satisfactory performance on content depth while Haukāinga shows the greatest inconsistency. Of the two middle-grade providers, star.kiwi rates higher than The South Today on content depth. Across the board, there were only four instances of top scoring (5=very good) stories out of a total of 80 items but eight examples of poor or very poor (1 and 2) content depth.

Video equipment levels differ between providers, with Sony XF70 camcorders at the top end and iPhones at the other end of the spectrum. Audio equipment, particularly the range of specialist microphones, varies between providers. Several have issues

with audio quality, which is a combination of inadequate equipment and insufficient training. Editing software is adequate across the board but editing skills show marked variation, not only between providers but also between video journalists employed by the same company. Similar variations exist in relation to on-camera performance and voice-over.

A comparative analysis would be incomplete without contrasting the organisational differences that exist between providers.

Te Hiku Media (Haukāinga) has the most centralised story assignment generation but the arrangements to which it is bound with Channel North and Ngati Hine FM mean that two-thirds of its field production is effectively beyond its control. Under current arrangements, Te Hiku will identify a story subject but sends its own videographer to only a third of the assignments. The remainder are subject to a bureaucraftic system involving requests to either Channel North or Ngati Hine FM that are then subject to other approval processes. Te Hiku acknowledges this is an unsatifactory arrangements but says it is bound by agreements.

Local Focus' Auckland operation exercises close control of its video journalists in the field – discussing assignments in advance, mentoring during assignments and handson editing of the video journalist's first cut. The Auckland office liaises with NZME head office (the client) but liaison with regional newsrooms – a potential source of both stories and resources – is informal and varies from region to region. It is notable that relations with regional newsrooms have altered with changes in Local Focus personnel. There is unrealised potential for cooperation between VNP and regional newsrooms even if its separate ownership prevents the closer integratioin being attempted by NZME in Auckland.

The videographic component of star.kiwi/CTV appears to operate outside the Star print/online editorial operation and is confined to designated video journalists. There seems to be limited use made of the full editorial complement of Star Media or integration of content. For example, the work of the video journalists carried on the website tends to stand alone as VOD clips without supporting text. News stories written by other Star staff tend to carry still images rather than supporting video. There is room for more integration of resources. Quality issues also suggest a need for greater editorial oversight of video production by staff with the required skills.

The South Today has potentially the most interesting structure as part of a fully integrated news operation centred on the *Otago Daily Times*. The aim of integration is laudible and in keeping with news developments worldwide. However, the benefits of integration have yet to be realised. In particular, weaknesses in command and control systems, plus insufficient trained and talented staff, mean that there is inadequate centralised control of story selection, field production and reportage, and of post-production quality. Allied Press has the resources and ability to create an integrated news operation to produce high quality regional video news as part of a wider news offering but requires an in-depth audit of its processes, resources, and structures.

PART C

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a genuine desire, across all four recipients of NZOA's regional video news funding, to produce video news that meets the needs of regional audiences that are neglected by nationally-focused news organisations. Each has worked to the limits of its capacity to meet the targets set under its funding agreements. Audiences remain low but there is clear potential for higher viewership, as Haukāinga's kapa haka festivals and star.kiwi's Port Hill coverage attest.

Regional coverage

Analysis of 3206 items in the four schedules indicates a diverse range of subjects. The vast majority were on topics that were below the threshold for coverage by national media: Either they were too local or the subject matter was of interest to a narrower audience. The national television networks have largely abandoned regional news and there is little doubt that few of the topics in the schedules would have received coverage by TVNZ or Newshub. Websites operated by other news organisations have begun to carry video reports but (a) priority on major websites is given to news for a national audience and (b) their regional sub-sites have very limited video capacity. Analysis of the schedules, individual videos and VOD material led to the conclusion that video adds a dimension to regional news coverage that is both unique and worthwhile. The amount of funding and resource devoted to telling regional New Zealand's stories – by both public and corporate entities – is at miminal levels.

The conclusion to be drawn is that this material does allow the residents of regional New Zealand to see thair own stories and they would not do so without the funding provided by NZOA. Audience numbers are generally low but coverage of specific topics is evidence of the potential for larger viewership.Platforms need to promote the content better.

Subjects

Subject range is impressive but the balance between subject areas raises some concerns. Undue emphasis has been placed by providers on some areas while paying insufficient attention to others. While it is accepted that the needs of the audience differ from one provider to another, funding from NZOA in this instance should carry with it an assumption that a strong element of public service is expected. Should public funding be used, for example, for stories about car crashes or ways to spend the school holidays?

Better guidance is required to ensure that NZOA funding supports civic journalism – journalism that helps people function as participatory citizens – and coverage of stories that give residents a better understanding of the fabric and culture of regional society.

Quality

None of the providers was immune to criticism over quality. While it must be accepted that they do not have the resources of network television or metropolitan newsrooms,

it is reasonable to expect that they will produce material to a professional standard. That has often not been the case. In many cases, training of staff has been basic, the choice of personnel has paid insufficient regard to presentation talents, quality control has been inadequate, and there has been less editorial oversight than is desirable.

There is, however, another dimension to the quality issue which NZOA itself should address. The four funding agreements, based on what the applicants offered to deliver, specify a numerical target that providers must meet. In the case of Haukāinga this amounted to 180 x 3' minute short form videos of news stories, 4 x 960' minute live stream events; and 35 x 15' minute On Demand videos. Local Focus was committed to produce a minimum 960 minutes of content made up of 2-minute videos and some longer "slab" videos and 6 investigative series. Star Media's CTV commitment (amended after the channel's closure) was for 243 30-minute news programs and 50 weekly reviews. The South Today was committed to providing a minimum of 1200 1-2 minute stories. Each provider worked assiduously to meet or exceed those requirements but at the expense of time-consuming attention to quality. In so doing, they all admitted their people were pushed to the limit. Staff turnover suggests some were pushed beyond that point. Numerical targets such as these put quantity over quality.

Providers must be given more specific instructions on NZOA expectations on quality, quality control and oversight. For their part, providers need to reexamine their training, structures and processes. The autonomy invested in often inexperienced young video journalists should be reconsidered in the interests of both quality and staff development. The setting of numerical targets should be revisited with a view to finding a system that puts equal value on quality and quantity.

Audience

It was difficult to gauge the size of the audiences for each of the funded operations. No two providers used the same basis of calculation and some changed the basis between reporting periods. In addition events such as the Port Hills fires caused large spikes in usage. These anomolies made averaging problematic.

Were one to hazard a guess at the size of website audience, it is likely that the number of unique visitors¹² in each quarter was between 20,000 and 32,000 per provider. Far larger potential audiences accessed the content on Facebook and Youtube but it is impossible to gauge how many actually watched the videos as Facebook analytics capture autorun that stop as the page is scrolled. If the number of unique visitors on social media was comparable with website audiences, each provider may have a total audience of unique visitors of the order of 40,000 to 60,000 per quarter but only a proportion of that number would watch the videos beyond the halfway point. All of these assumptions are open to challenge – they are no more than best guesses – but the fact that there are no robust numbers highlights problems in the reporting process.

It became apparent while examining websites, Facebook pages and other media produced by the providers that the level of cross-promotion and marketing of the

¹² Unique visitors refer to the number of distinct individuals requesting pages from the website during a given period, regardless of how often they visit

regional video news is sub-optimal. Much more could be done in every case to enlarge the audience for this material. Too many people are unaware of the portals or what they contain. Cross-promotion means more than carrying a website's URL on the masthead of a regional newspaper.

Regional video news would receive an enormous boost if it could gain exposure on network television. During the review a suggestion was made for a weekly regional digest to run as part of the weekend current affairs slots on TV One or TV3. The suggestion was for a hosted 30-minute programme to which all four providers contributed items they had produced for their respective outlets. Although the detail of the government's public service media package has yet to be revealed, such a weekly digest is an idea that could be part of the mix. The providers were keen to participate – or produce – such a digest.

Audience numbers are a vital component in calculating the effectiveness and value of these services. NZOA must adopt a rigid system of quarterly audience reporting that is highly prescriptive and backed by clear statistical definitions. All providers must report on exactly the same basis over exactly the same reporting period. Website and social media analytics should be separately reported. Providers should also be encouraged to promote regional video news and to ensure worthwhile placement of the content or access points on homepages. NZOA should consider new ways of extending content reach.

Resources

It was apparent during the review that all of the providers worked to the limits of what their funding and resources could provide. Some took advantage of the presence of tertiary media institutions in their areas but this was by no means uniform. Regional news is an ideal training ground for students and many of the institutions in which they are enrolled have equipment (and, in some areas, expertise) that is better than the provider's. There is real scope for ongoing partnerships with tertiary institutions. For example, a group field trip by students from AUT University could be accommodated at marae while carrying out 'task force' production of material on Northland's housing crisis for Haukāinga. Students from Canterbury or Otago University could be tasked to produce a series on the social issues facing Queentown's low-paid workforce. Tertiary institutions are well-equipped and highly-motivated reservoirs of journalistic resource. They should be part of the regional video news strategy.

Regional video news providers must employ more innovative thinking and create new partnerships to supplement their limited resources.

Continuation of funding

One of the conclusions drawn from this review is that the residents of regional New Zealand should continue to have their stories told by the same means that are available to populations in centres where national news media choose to concentrate their resources – and coverage. In short, video news should be regarded as a right of cultural citizenship. This is a fundamental issue for the board of NZOA to consider but, if that is accepted, the question then becomes: Who should provide it?

It is clear that none of the current providers supplies the perfect offering. However, each brings to the table qualities that suggest it may be the preferred source. They stand up well when compared to other potential providers in areas that are not well-resourced for geographically dispersed news coverage. "News coverage" must be the key focus in determining the future of this funding. The aim will be best met by groups with editorial resources and journalistic skills. To those skills, however, must be added additional qualities associated with the characteristics and needs of the communities to be covered.

Very Nice Productions has the strongest production values of all four providers and is linked with a major media company. NZME, in turn, has major national assets such as nzherald.co.nz, a network of regional newspaper wesites, and strong social media presence to disseminate and promote Local Focus material. VNP's contract relationship with NZME means that it is insulated from any restructuring or contraction in the fragile regional newspaper market. For the same reason, an independent source may be preferred to Stuff Media, which is already rationalising its regional assets.

Allied Press, through the *Otago Daily Times*, is the country's most recognised regional media company. It has the greatest potential of all four providers to maximise newsroom integration to provide sustainable, professional video news coverage. It has a proven track-record in regional and civic coverage and a well-established and relatively stable audience. It has yet to fully realise its potential in the area of video news but is well placed to do so.

Star Media has a growing range of community newspapers, magazines and digital platforms in Christchurch and the Canterbury region. Rapid growth plus the purchase of CTV and then the cessation of broadcasts seems to have had a destabilising effect on integration and video production. However, it has the potential to make far better use of its editorial resources for video news coverage. It also has the means to promote that coverage.

Te Hiku Media has the weakest editorial resource but brings a cultural perspective that is lacking in mainstream regional media in Northland. It has strong ties to iwi and Northland's Māori infrastructure. It also has the means to promote its NZOA-funded programming via radio. It has begun to accrue valuable institutional knowledge – including experience in live-streamed coverage – and potential changes to operating structures could improve its editorial qualities.

NZOA could re-open applications for funding in this area but should consider whether these regions will produce viable alternative sources of *regional news coverage*, whether alternative sources would produce better quality coverage, and whether they would possess the linkages to promote their content. That seems unlikely and more may be gained by working with the current providers to improve on what is already being produced.

Recommendations to NZOA:

- I. NZOA continues to fund regional video news as part of its commitment to regional production.
- II. NZOA continues to fund the present providers but modifies service contracts to improve quality and better meet the needs of regional communities.

- III. NZOA ties ongoing funding to public interest and civic journalism
- IV. NZOA requires improvements to quality and editorial oversight as a condition of ongoing funding
- V. NZOA modifies output targets to reduce the numerical emphasis and substitute baseline production levels and quality measures.
- VI. NZOA requires uniform and definitive reporting of audience analytics
- VII. NZOA requires providers or their clients to undertake cross-promotion of regional video news content
- VIII. NZOA considers new ways to extend content reach
- IX. NZOA re-examines the Te Hiku agreement and its relationship with Channel North and Ngati Hine.

APPENDIX A Methodology

Content analysis

Each provider was asked to submit a full schedule of content produced in the four quarters under review.¹³ These schedules were analysed to determine the subject matter across a common set of topics: Government (including local authorities and representative bodies), business, law & order (including all emergency services), environment, human interest, sports, arts & entertainment, social issues, culture, and miscellaneous (which included education and charitable endeavours). A total of 3206 items were categorised in this analysis.

In addition, providers were each asked to nominate five items for detailed analysis. To this selection were added five items chosen by the reviewer to reflect a wider range of subject matter plus 10 items chosen by a random date generator. A total of 80 videos (see appendix C) were analysed and values determined according to seven criteria: News value, saliance, regional identity, production values, content depth, general interest, and audience cut-through. From this analysis average performance under each category was calculated for each provider.

The analysis of a sample selection of individual video items served a range of purposes. Firstly, whether it met the criteria as a valid news story and how well the subject was explored. Secondly, how well the video was produced in craft terms. And, thirdly, how well it fitted with the stated focus of the programme.

Report analysis

Each of the quarterly reports submitted by providers to NZOA was analysed and cross-referenced to identify common elements and issues.

Interviews

Executives from each production company were interviewed by telephone after the content analysis was completed. Interviews averaged 55 minutes in length and covered the analyses, issues arising from the quarterly reports submitted to NZOA, plus feedback from stakeholders.

Stakeholder questionaire

A questionaire was emailed to local government communications managers. It sought responses to the following questions:

1. Are you aware of [programme name]?

2. If so, have you engaged with the company on behalf of council on any video news items on the programme?

3. What has been the nature of your contact with the company and has that engagement been positive in promoting an understanding of issues and events in your district?

4. What is your assessment of the value of the programme?

- 5. Do you believe the residents of your district are aware of the programme?
- 6. How could the programme be improved?
- 7. Any other comments?

A variant was also sent to selected local media and to a number of community group leaders.

¹³ The provided schedules included items produced up to the end of February 2018.

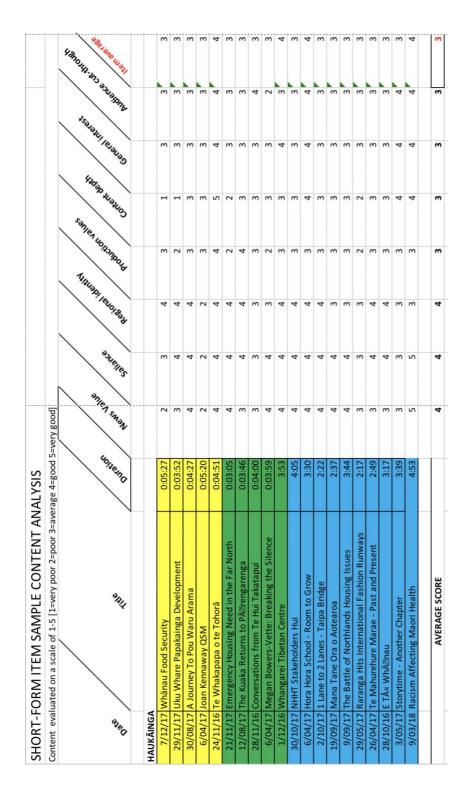
APPENDIX B Content by subject

				-	10	
TA-LOT	302	491	672	1741	3206	education
Allee .	23	67	65	198	353	all emergency services; environment includes some earthquake coverage and weather events; Misc includes charity and education
CULUE	88	25	21	51	185	ts; Misc includ
5-97555 1R13055	41	46	36	87	210	d weather even
THE HALFE LEVEL	61	37	93	270	461	te coverage and
1.50 1.0055	80	28	116	179	331	ome earthquai
1503-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-01-	2	35	47	70	154	ent includes s
Seither Hau	31	82	66	215	394	ces; environm
SRID & MEI	3	27	140	220	390	mergency servi
S.Saulas	31	59	32	247	369	cludes
Rovertuni ent	14	85	56	204	359	dies; law & orde
	HAUKĀINGA	OCAL FOCUS	STAR MEDIA	SOUTH TONIGHT	TOTALS	Note: Government includes local bodies; law & order in

APPENDIX C Sample item content analysis

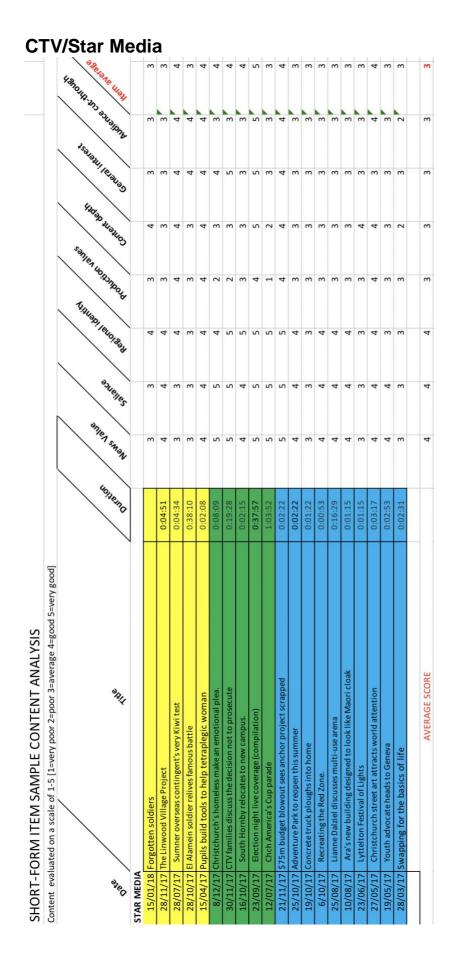
Selection colour key: Yellow - provider Green - reviewer Blue - random date.

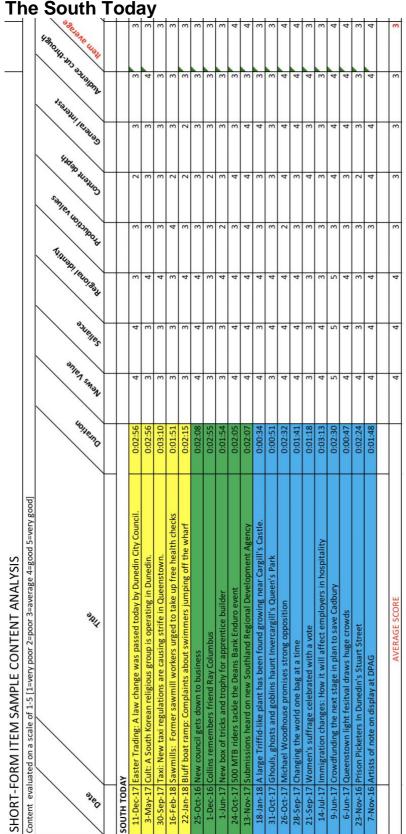
Haukāinga



Local Focus

SHORT- Content evi	SHORT-FORM ITEM SAMPLE CONTENT ANALYSIS Content evaluated on a scale of 1-5 [1=very poor 2=poor 3=average 4=good 5=very good]									LOCAI
are	*NJ	401,end	anien swan		APC APC APC	nies up in the	Helt depty	Ceneral Interes	dience	`
LOCAL FOCUS					.	-	-	·		
23/02/18	Ethkick football tournament kicks off	00:02:17	£	3	4	4	4	3	4	4
25/01/18	Rotten floor leads to elderly Feilding couple's 10-year 'leaky home' fight	00:07:20	S	5	5	5	4	4	5	S
29/11/17	Small school, big success	00:02:01	4	4	4	4	З	4	Э.	4
12/10/16	Community rallies to save Woodville Railway Station	00:01:39	£	£	4	4	4	ŝ	3	ю
11-Oct	Hamilton at a crossroads - King vs Southgate	00:02:58	S	S	S	ŝ	3	4	4	4
31/12/17	East Coast the place for women in chains	00:02:09	4	4	4	4	3	ŝ	Э	4
28/11/17	Load of bollocks': Horowhenua Mayor Michael Feyen says he serves the people	00:03:03	S	S	S	3	3	4	4	4
20/09/17	Napier candidates - How well do you know Napier?	00:01:57	4	4	S	£	3	4	4	4
2/08/17	How Maddy stopped self-harming	00:05:20	S	S	ŝ	S	5	4	S	S
16/03/17	Frustration grows in Waipa at centralised Police services	00:02:35	4	4	4	ŝ	з	4	3	4
20/02/18	Jamie Oliver-inspired eatery Happy Puku staffed by homeless	00:02:05	S	4	ß	ŝ	4	ñ	Э.	ŝ
7/02/18	Female workers take control of Hawke's Bay fish shop	00:02:12	3	S	3	S	4	3	3	ß
3/11/17	Seven-year-old arsonist among 'menace' pupils	00:01:29	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
25/10/17	Food waste on menu for ladies who lunch	00:03:12	4	4	4	5	5	5	S	S
27/09/17	Woodville says 'get on with it'	00:01:56	4	4	5	ß	œ	ß	Э	4
17/05/17	Asbestos forces Taupo District Council move	00:02:33	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	S
12/05/17	Business helps fill nationwide physio shortage	00:02:20	4	4	З	5	4	4	4	4
9/03/17	Kawhia Beach cleaners get new trailer from power trust	00:01:55	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
13/01/17	Skin cancer spike in BOP	00:02:00	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
14/12/16	Two men got killed'	00:02:18	3	4	3	3	3	3	æ	ß
										Ī
	AVERAGE SCORE		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4





APPENDIX D Stakeholder response from Ricky Houghton, Chief Executive, He Korowai Trust

Thank you for contacting me for my perspective on Te Hiku Media and the Haukāinga regional media project. The project has been running for a couple of years now and has proved beneficial at engaging the Northland community digitally. From my observation this is through live video streaming significant topical events, and online videos about local news and current affairs. *1. Has engagement with Haukāinga and Te Hiku Media been positive in promoting an understanding of issues and events?*

Engagement with Te Hiku Media has been positive, particularly around raising awareness and distributing information about news, regional topical issues and current affairs. From my observation I see them actively scoping out and covering stories that would likely not be picked up by national media, or mainstream media.

They are very well known for the live video streaming and the videos they produce. Of particular note are the videos that are shared through social media and accessible on Te Hiku Media's website, www.tehiku.nz. The staff at Te Hiku Media are regarded as approachable, and this is visible at the various live video streams that they produce for community events, at festivals and at competitions, as well as at hui they attend from time to time.

When you have an individual say to your face how much they appreciated the fact that the local regional media producers covered their event that means much more that the 10,000 clicks one may get online for a post. It actually helps build a sense of a real-world community which we don't want to lose simply because everything is going digital. Quite often, all that is talked about is growth of audiences and if we have that as our sole goal we will fail our people, specifically those in the regions.

2. What is your assessment of the value of the programme?

My assessment of the program is that it has an audience and a following of people interested in news and information in the Far North. The audience is intergenerational which is important. I notice the videos and on demand content being shared online and watch it myself for a unique Haukāinga perspective, our stories shared our way.

Live video streamed events tend to have large followings of young people which is encouraging. There are also qualitative social and cultural impacts of their broadcasts that exist. People enjoy the videos for entertainment, news and information. An added benefit of having Te Hiku Media leading this project, is that there are often strong Maori themes, values, perspectives and Maori world view conveyed in stories that are often better understood and taught visually, which this project provides. The stories produced hold relevance beyond the date of production, largely because it contributes to the fabric of our diverse community.

3. Do you believe Northland residents and Māori in particular are aware of the programme?

I believe that young people know who Te Hiku Media are, and in that sense the Haukāinga program is known for live video streaming and short videos about topical news items and matters of Northland interest. There is no other Media hub in our region who have demonstrated their willingness or tenacity to tackle stories about everyday people, who actively and positively influence the communities we represent.

Regional Media Growth expectations should be aligned with the growth of Māori population, and the wider Northland population, in the Northland area. It's highly likely Te Hiku Media and the Haukāinga project have an opportunity to grow in audience numbers, so more focus on increasing market penetration in Northland to build a sustainable audience is worthy of investment. The program is not likely to be at 100% market penetration, and setting

benchmarks for the project at realistic goals (i.e. 60-75%) would work towards a sustainable market penetration.

I'm aware through my contacts in the region that people, and organisations (both Māori and non-Maōri) contact Te Hiku Media and Haukāinga programme with leads, and invitations to cover events as they are trusted.

4. Is distribution on digital platforms an adequate substitute for broadcast television?

I believe the distribution on digital platforms is an adequate substitute for broadcast television in the regions. Terrestrial audiences are decreasing by the day and digital audiences are increasing. People like to be able to access content when and where they are, in their own time so on-demand content is a huge benefit for Haukāinga.

The digital distribution model that Te Hiku Media uses for the Haukāinga project is adequate but I think it will improve given an opportunity to review how they can further develop their distribution model.

Community and regional broadcasting is also public broadcasting, and there's a place in society for a diverse mix of public broadcasters of all shapes and sizes. While this digital distribution of funded content is being tested, its important for us to remind ourselves that If we lose regional diversity we lose our democracy and the richness that makes us regional.

5. How could the programme be improved?

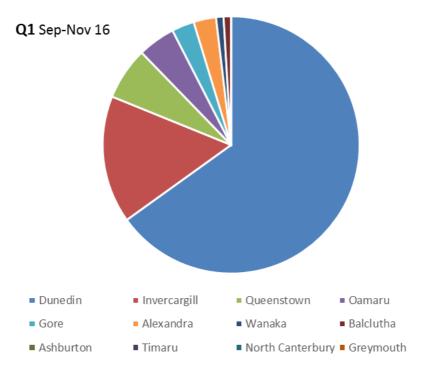
The investment amount could remain the same but perhaps by lowering the number of videos this would provide for resource to also focus on research and increasing the quality of the content.

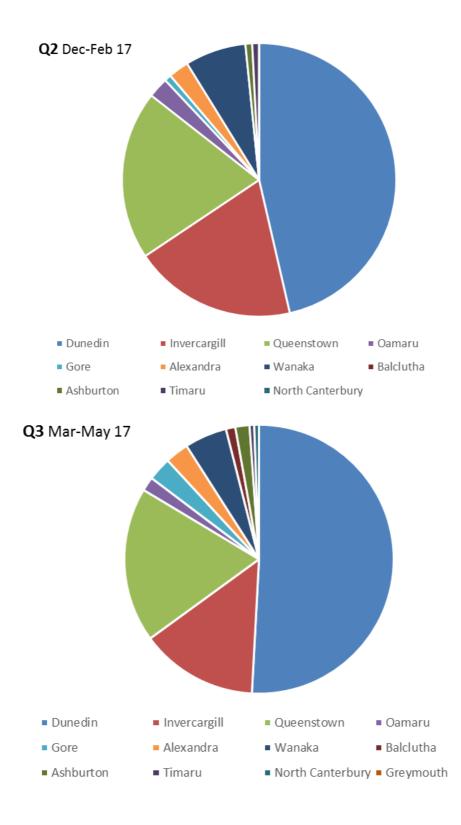
I'm mindful that something has got to give in the process of producing so many videos. There are videos that might do very well online and others that could be improved by further information research. In saying that, I really enjoy the Haukāinga programme for the value they provide to the region by telling stories that matter to our people.

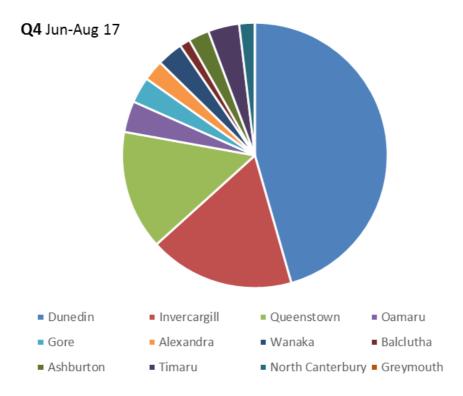
6. Any other comments?

It's critical that with change we create the opportunities to try new things. We need to embrace failure and learn from failure so we can adapt our methods and find a solution that works. Te Hiku Media and the Haukāinga programme have been brave to try new things and learn along the way, and have taken the communities of the region on their journey with them. They are well known for giving it a good go and delivering. Te Hiku and the Haukāinga programme have grown a regional online audience which is a niche market, and are programme focused. Long may the good work continue.

Appendix E The South Today geographic spread of content







APPENDIX F Questionaire response from Graham McKerracher, communications manager Dunedin City Council

1. Have you engaged with the company on behalf of council on any video news items?

Yes, DCC staff are frequently interviewed by the Southern Television news team for its news bulletin.

2. What has been the nature of your contact with the company and has that engagement been positive in promoting an understanding of issues and events in your district?

Southern Television gives a fair and balanced coverage of the issues that the Dunedin City Council is involved in.

3. What is your assessment of the value of Channel 39?

It runs on the smell of an oily rag, is the much under loved third cousin of the Allied Press Group and needs to be better resourced. Having said that, what it does produce to cover regional news is phenomenal given its skeleton crew. It fills the hole that has been left by the reduction of regional television coverage by the two main broadcasting channels. I believe it would get a greater audience viewership if it was able to broadcast across the whole of Dunedin. Access to Ch39 is through Freeview

- 4. Do you place greater value on the broadcast news service or its online variant? At the moment it is broadcast news, but that is because the audience looking for local news is mostly made up of older generations and is therefore our target audience. The online version will in our view grow as more tech savvy generations grow into the age where they are seeking local news from any platform they happen to be using. Certainly if I look at the online advertising hits we get on our online advertising with the Otago Daily Times our bang for buck is already better online than it is by generating print adverts in the daily paper.
- 5. Do you believe the residents of your area are aware of (a) the broadcast news and (b) the online news service?

No – we think Allied Press could do a way better job of marketing their own news and local entertainment producers than they do at the moment. The ODT, the Star and the Taieri Times could in our opinion be better utilised to promote Ch39 as well as Ch39 finding better ways to promote itself. The fact that you access it via Freeview does cause problems for those who are on SKY (they can't get it) so that means a large chunk of the Dunedin public can't see Ch39 (that may start to change now that SKY has lost its sporting rights to rugby, but certainly applies in the short term).

6. How could the content be improved?

Ch39 needs to lift its profile, better resource its limited staffing resource and pay TV journo rates to improve the quality of the broadcasters gathering and presenting news for the channel. In terms of coming up with local content for feature programmes, it needs more variety than just the documentary and local news type programmes it produces at the moment. Like all privately funded broadcasting it is

limited by its advertising sponsors on what it can and does produce – without advertising support, documentaries they may want to run won't be produced.

7. Any other comments?

Southern Television is still a broadcasting gem because it does air most of the events, concerns and aspirations of the people who live in or near Dunedin and Invercargill, but it is only kept working through the love of existing staff, not through prudential spending which it needs to keep it maintained to a modern professional standard. We believe there are synergies that could help improve it and we think integrating the ODT and Ch39 News Rooms would improve the journalism aspects of Ch39 while at the same time improving the video and broadcasting standards of the ODT, which would be beneficial to both in the long run.

May I personally add that we are blessed in the south to have an independent news organisation still functioning, which means we get better regional coverage than most, and while like any good comms manager I despair at the level of journalism at times, I think the population of Otago is well informed of local issues. I will always be a supporter of having widely spread media power rather than having just one or two outlets for the whole of New Zealand. Please keep funding regional television.

Appendix G Comparative production values and content depth

Production values

News content

