

# I'm an addict, give me some news



By [Thamsanqa Malinga](#)

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My wife normally scolds me for being a news bulletin hopper. She contends that once you've gone through one bulletin it's as good as having been through all of them. Well, looking at it, she is right, and frankly I have nothing to say in my defence. News bulletins have become like some fast-food outlet burgers - lean, dry and lacking in taste.



I am hooked on news bulletins. I channel hop just to catch bulletins on various channels and still I am not satisfied. Recently I have developed a penchant for news on the social media platforms where I follow various media houses and publications with a view of catching the 'breaking news' story. Online; blogs; tweets and live tweets, I consume all of them. Due to me and my peers' constant urge for news, media houses have found themselves under enormous pressure to produce content. Newspapers no longer wait for the print version to 'break'. Radio stations finally have the guts to disrupt programmes just to deliver breaking news stories. All of this has led to what I termed "speed journalism", but, how different are the news in these platforms and how reliable are they?

Just few days ago I had the pleasure of following the ANC Policy Conference via live tweets when various journalists were tweeting updates on the conference. This gave me real-time news from the event and it also satisfied the 'breaking news' craving I have always had. With live tweets I have always felt as if I am part of the event, I can even reply to the tweet and ask questions that the tweeter can answer after having sourced a response for me. News has never been as convenient, fresh and spontaneous. Talk about "speed journalism" at its best.

## How reliable, impartial?

The question of how reliable and impartial are speed journalism news reports was brought to the fore when Clayson Monyela took on *City Press* journalist, Carien du Plessis who was live tweeting on the report-back from one of the commissions of the Policy Conference. She was accused of 'misrepresenting facts'. As it turns out the press conference was also covered by a local news channel and eNews, and Monyela happened to be watching.

In my line of work I have the pleasure of interacting with the news scribes and that comes with the unfortunate eye-straining task of interacting with coverage clips. The similarity between the clips and the message you sent out at times is quite unbelievable. The fact that in this day and age a story does not have to wait to go to print as social media platforms are forever available has pushed journalists to churn out stories rapidly. This, however, has also led to journos just rehashing the story as presented by the press release without actually writing their story.

Then there are the television and radio broadcasters as well who do not want to be outdone. They will try to cram all the bits covered on social media throughout the day into a 30-minute evening bulletin in a way that makes you feel as though your television set needs a dose of Ritalin to help slow things down a bit. No wonder the leader of the official opposition missed a news clip on TV recently and went on to criticise the public broadcaster for not covering the incident.

## The bloggers' role

Bloggers have also played a part in the emergence of this "speed journalism" trend. Bloggers have their reputations to depend on, and many a time this is brought about by relevance and frequency of content. This also helps the blogger to build up a brand and ultimately make some money as a spin-off. However, trying to be relevant and having frequent up-to-date content has its shortcomings. Some bloggers eventually end up peddling unverified stories in the name of chasing readership figures for their blogs. As a communications specialist I have had to deal with a flood of negative queries and comments as a result of a blogger who wrote a piece that was a complete opposite of what we were communicating. This happened because the blogger was trying to build and maintain a reputation of 'breaking news'.

So, is 'speed journalism' lowering the standard of news? Well, I don't know. What I know is that I want news and I also want the story behind the story and I want it fresh and fast. I certainly will not choke trying to force down a dry piece of content when there is an option of channel hopping, searching for something better. Give me some news I say, be it in blogs; tweets; online but don't just churn out volumes for the sake of it, make it factual. Please.

## ABOUT THAMSANQA MALINGA

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