Finding the sticky spaghetti

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)   21 Oct 2016

As consumers' patterns of consumption dictate, with content aggregated and apps serving up information to people that is useful and relevant to them, media brands will matter less and less. Therefore, in the future media brands such as CNN will become secondary.

"Media brands are becoming increasingly less important as more people are informed by sources that they trust… and these brands are people that they trust. For them it is not about formally packaged news, but shared experiences," says Andreij Horn, head of 24.com.

Media brands need to understand that this trend is happening and make plans. "Otherwise we are doing ourselves a disfavour. We must be conscious of the trends even if they make us uncomfortable or panic. It is better to confront it," states Horn.

According to Toby Shapshak, editor-in-chief and publisher of *STUFF*, humans are resistant to change and the real problem in journalism is that we are reluctant to change. "Instead we cling to a range of sentimental practices. But if you do not disrupt yourself, someone else will. We need to keep throwing spaghetti to the wall to see what sticks. Do research so you know what your audience wants," says Shapshak.

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It cannot be ignored that the nature of news has changed. Everywhere you go, everyone has a camera in their hands through their mobile phone or device. Significant news has been captured on mobile devices. While not everyone is a reporter in the traditional sense of the word, everyone is a potential news source.

"It is literally about being in the right place at the wrong time with a phone... that's citizen journalism. That's what happened when a plane landed in the Hudson," says Shapshak.

"On social media, citizen journalism is about posting what your friends like and what you care about. So when a citizen covers the news, it is almost by accident. They cover it because it affects them and because it is news that they care about," says Horn.

The trick is to understand that social media just like any other source has to be interrogated. As journalists we have to make sure the information that we send out is correct, regardless of where we source it from says Shapshak. "As such we need to apply rigour to all our data sources. The reason we trust certain brands, such as CNN, is because they have processes in place to verify information," says Shapshak.

Fake news and stories are a problem on social media. Facebook's robots cannot differentiate between whether a story is true or false. This is where humans come in. "Journalists are trained to work with a variety of sources; it is what we do, and we have bulls**t detectors. All humans have the ability to filter out what is false and therefore while it is chaos now, it will self-correct," says Horn.

Horn and Shapshak were part of a panel on the relationship between journalists and social media at the recent CNN Multichoice African Journalist Awards 2016 Media Forum that took place in northern Johannesburg recently.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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