

## Citizen journalism through Mobile Phones/ BBC WAP Use Flourishing in Africa.

Citizen journalism has been hitting the news lately, accelerated by the use of mobiles and blogging during the latest events in the Middle East. Something which has been around for some time is starting to become more and more mainstream by the day. Sadly, most seems to be centred around world trouble spots, but therein lies its strength. In the UK, the London bombings of July 7th last summer saw the sudden emergence of citizen reporters, most using their mobiles to make short videos of the immediate aftermath. No news teams in the world, however well equipped and connected, could ever have got this footage. The BBC were inundated.

According to one of the News Editors that morning: "One important source of information not properly exploited by us on July 7 was 'the public'. Much has been made of the fact that citizen journalism came of age a year ago. News 24 made very good use of eye-witness accounts live on air but we were unprepared for the volume of material from viewers and listeners on that day. From blogs to mobile phone photos, we simply couldn't cope quickly enough with the vast amount of information and the number of pictures flooding into the BBC"

Now, Sky News have a dedicated 'public' slot each evening, offering people the opportunity to text, email and/or hit the screens via webcam to give their thoughts and perspective on the news. Perhaps not 'citizen journalism' in the true sense of the word, it's another example of how mainstream news, the general public and emerging technology are all rapidly converging.

Fellow MobileActive's such as Erik Sundelof are 'founding techies' in this revolution. According to a recent article on the Pocket Picks website - playfully titled "Look Mum, I'm on the news" - citizen journalism is not going away and it's almost certainly going to change the face of news as we know it. And don't we know it...

Source:

<http://www.mobileactive.org/node/34355>

## **BBC Wap use flourishing in Africa**

Africa, in particular Nigeria, is dominating international mobile phone access to the BBC's website. According to July's statistics, 61% of the BBC's international Wap users came from Nigeria and 19% from South Africa. "Wap is the one platform where African countries continue to appear in the top five in our statistics," said BBC developer Gareth Owen.

Africa is the world's largest-growing mobile phone market with unreliable landlines encouraging the growth. Wap technology - which stands for wireless application protocol - allows people to access basic information on the internet, like news summaries, through their mobile phone handset. According to the BBC's statistics, page views for Wap usage are growing at 100% year on year.

UK users account for 65% of Wap traffic; and international usage for 35%. Mobile phone providers in many African countries have only recently begun rolling out Wap-enabled handsets.

And the large take up of BBC news via mobiles in Nigeria contrasts starkly with the relatively small number of users accessing the internet via pcs - hampered by slow and unreliable landlines.

The BBC's Technology correspondent Mark Ward says that in many places on the continent PC ownership is low but PC literacy surprisingly high.

Internet cafes tend to be very popular, as much a meeting place as well as a place where people access their email, he says.

The BBC receives regular messages of thanks from people in Africa, who say the only access they have to news is via their mobiles.

"I'm in Uganda and the only access I have to the outside world is this pinhole 2 info cause I don't have access to TV. Thanx," said one texter from Uganda. The country accounted for 7% of BBC Wap usage in July.

Other top countries helping account for the 58m Wap page views in July were Jamaica, Singapore and Israel. In the UK, the BBC has about a 20% share of the market with a reach of 1.2m users monthly.

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4795255.stm>