

A.D. Lichenko  
(National Aviation University, Ukraine)

## Scrolling Story as a Modern Format of Multimedia Storytelling

*Multimedia journalism combines different forms of storytelling – text, video, podcasts, photos, charts, etc. There are a few modern types of multimedia stories – long-form scrollytelling: data-driven story, visual essay, listicles, etc. The objective of this research work is to define the significant features of long-form scrolling stories.*

Today scrolling is a habit of smartphone users, and sometimes people can't break it. The advent of touch screens on smartphones and tablets has turned scrolling into something everybody does without even thinking about it. Scrolling made an impact on media. Primarily it changed news consumption. Authors of the report "Scrolling news: The changing face of online news consumption" explain the causes and results of these changes: "The design of user interfaces on smartphones favour feeds of content and video formats. This was reflected in respondents' tendencies towards behaviours such as scrolling, swiping and watching when consuming online news as opposed to pro-active searching, exploration and comparison of information [3, 21]". Journalists understand such changes, so they use innovative approaches to storytelling.

Scrolling story is a long-form article with scroll-driven animation and visuals. This type of digital stories is also known as "scrollytelling" (combination of two words – "storytelling" and "scrolling"). The main feature is that scrolling stories use a vertical landscape to unfold a story, and the reader should scroll down the web page to see the dynamic change of content. Ole Reissmann, the managing editor of *Bento*, stresses that vertical storytelling is really different from other often very long and very conventional multimedia stories. He notices that in 2019, horizontal scrollytelling will feel stale and old and vertical stories will be all the rage [4]. The information can be presented as separate blocks, so the reader does not perceive it as a long text. Moreover, it is a very significant factor, because the media audience often prefers short news and doesn't read long articles.

The article «Snow Fall», created in December 2012 by *The New York Times* reporter John Branch, is one of the first examples of scrollytelling. It is a long-form scrolling story about the avalanche at Tunnel Creek. When the readers scroll down, they will find not only text but also videos, maps, photos related to the story. Such visual elements help to make the article more interesting to the audience, and attracts readers to a "game" and interaction with content. Scrolling provides even better usability for long-form articles than slicing up the text to several separate pages.

Reuther's investigation «Tracking China's Muslim Gulag» is another interesting example of scrollytelling. The authors used satellite photos not only as visual elements but also as evidence. Maps and satellite photos are also used in the article «Borderline» (*The Washington Post*). Such visual elements give more weight to the statements.

Long-form scrollytelling commonly employs sliding text, animation or game-design elements to improve user engagement and readability of the text. There are several commonly used visual elements in long-form scrollytelling:

- photos;
- videos;
- graphs, charts, etc.;
- maps;
- satellite images;
- infographics;
- interactive data visualization;
- 3D visualization;
- 360-degree videos.

The choice of visual elements always depends on the purpose. They must illustrate the content and main problems; provide additional information or details; show interactions or changes in time etc.

Scrolling stories are conveniently adapted for reading on mobile phones. This is important because today people often read news on smartphones. For example, in the *Digital News Report 2017*, we can see how, over time, far more people in the US are using the smartphone as their main device for news, while far fewer are relying on a desktop computer or laptop (Fig.1) [2, 17].

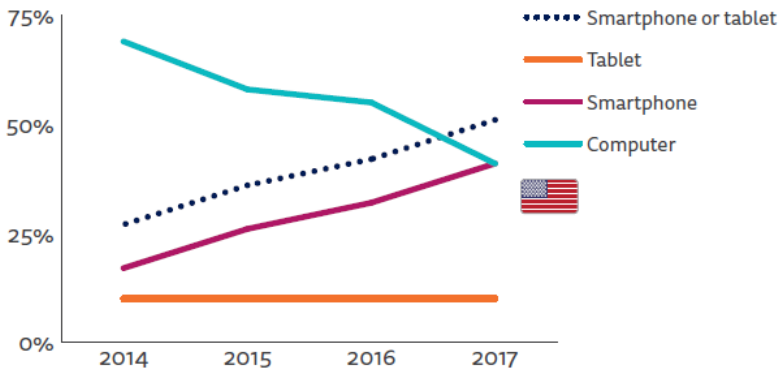


Fig.1. Changing device use for news 2014-2017 – USA [2, 17]

Despite the dynamism and visual diversity, readers still have a small interest in long-form articles; they quickly lose attention and spend little time on their viewing. Therefore, journalists are trying to place the main and most significant information only at the beginning of the story (at the top of the page). The lower part of the page should accommodate secondary information or the least significant visual elements. The recent study “Scrolling and Attention” shows that users spent about 57% of their page-viewing time above the fold; 74% of the viewing time was spent in the first two screenfuls, up to 2160px [1]. The audience should not have

difficulty with perception and interpretation of long-form scrolling story, so journalists need to adhere to these basic principles:

- explicit navigation;
- high-quality graphics and the absence of unnecessary graphic elements;
- combination of different types of content;
- successful implementation for mobile devices;
- high-priority content at the top of the page;
- highlighting important details with color or font;
- etc.

### **Conclusions**

Long-form scrolling story is not a new type of multimedia journalism, but it became especially popular right now when the media audience read news on smartphones and tablets. These stories combine different types of content and focus on visual components. Animation and interactivity play an important role, making content more dynamic. Game-design elements and game principles are also used in scrollytelling. Modern scrolling stories use a vertical landscape to unfold a story, which is more convenient for smartphones than a horizontal landscape.

### **References**

1. Fessenden T. Scrolling and Attention / Therese Fessenden // Nielsen Norman Group. – 2018. – Retrieved from: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/scrolling-and-attention/>.
2. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 / [N. Newman, R. Fletcher, A. Kalogeropoulos et.al.]. – 136 p.
3. Scrolling news: The changing face of online news consumption // Ofcom. Retrieved from: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/115915/Scrolling-News.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/115915/Scrolling-News.pdf)
4. Reissmann O. The rise of vertical storytelling / Ole Reissmann // Niemanlab. Retrieved from: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2019/01/the-rise-of-vertical-storytelling/>.