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**The digital reporter as a one-man-band:  
Disaster reporting in the age of backpack and  
multimedia journalism**

A 60-credit Journalism Project presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Journalism at Massey University

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## **Abstract**

Guided by a technological deterministic framework and using disaster reporting of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines as a case study, this paper offers an analysis of digital technologies' implications on journalism from the backpack newsgathering using lightweight digital equipment (information-gathering convergence) to the multimedia content production utilising the emerging online journalistic tools and applications (storytelling convergence). The paper's empirical evidence supports that despite the technical issues, stress-related problems, focus on technology rather than content and other criticisms associated with backpack journalism, the practice offers desirable features ranging from faster and cost-effective production to more reflective and personal interviews. The use of casual, informal and less intimidating personal equipment also appears to be advantageous in humanising a disaster story. On the other hand, the digital tools and emerging software applications available online enhance the content of disaster reporting by allowing journalists to transform raw information and complex data into interactive and visual content. Contemporary digital audience can benefit from multimedia storytelling by offering them the authenticity and visual appeal of still and moving images, the deeper analysis and details of text, and the interactivity and context of data journalism.

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