



Citizen Journalism: Challenges and Opportunities

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Title:- Citizen Journalism: Challenges and Opportunities Abstract This paper deals with the phenomenon of citizen journalism from a critical point of view. Citizen journalism is known as grassroots and participatory journalism. It has become more widespread especially with digital development. Social media allows every user to participate in social discourse as a member of civil society. Citizen journalism reaches its audience on podcasts on the homepage by participating in video platforms such as YouTube. Growth goes hand-in-hand with a crisis of credibility and the established media. Traditional print

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the phenomenon of citizen journalism from a critical point of view. Citizen journalism is known as grassroots and participatory journalism. It has become more widespread especially with digital development. Social media allows every user to participate in social discourse as a member of civil society. Citizen journalism reaches its audience on podcasts on the homepage by participating in video platforms such as YouTube. Growth goes hand-in-hand with a crisis of credibility and the established media. Traditional print media in particular is struggling to survive and the monopoly of professional journalism has come to an end. This paper will examine the impact of citizen journalism on democratic processes and whether a general assessment of the participatory communication model is feasible. Therefore, the various forms of arbitral participation are examined and some examples of its misuse are discussed. This study focuses on the gray areas that exist between professional media work and citizen journalism.

KEYWORDS

Citizen journalism, Democracy, Social media, Participatory.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will tackle the prevalence of citizen journalism and its importance in communication theory. It will try to answer the question of whether this phenomenon leads to a democratization of public discourse and an approach to social coexistence. This study is interested in the gray areas that exist between

professional media work and participatory citizen journalism. In Jurgen Habermas deliberative model of democracy, the question is asked whether his development democratizes public discourse and whether a clear distinction can be made between established and participatory news or professional and general journalism (Wessler, 2008). This research also evaluates how the government reacts to these new developments and the potential consequences citizen journalism can bring (Ozkececi, 2019).

In this paper, I tackle the prevalence of citizen journalism and its importance in communication theory. I try to answer the question whether this phenomenon leads to the democratization of public discourse and its approach to social coexistence. These studies in communication science are of particular interest in those democratizing efforts to improve on the classical transmitter-receiver model. There is no doubt that questions of citizen journalism are linked to some models of democracy, which do not support an elitist or representative democracy, but a direct democracy with opportunities for participation (Nielsen, 2017; Ozkececi, 2019).

However, this issue cannot be separated from technological developments and related innovations. The digital age opens up new opportunities for journalism that works independently without massive corporations and big budgets. Does citizen journalism challenge or support established authority? Can it bring new threats to democracy or does it mean some kind of participation to strengthen democracy? It attempts to answer research questions with the help of subject-specific literature, which acts as a secondary source. I have researched citizen journalism to highlight democratic achievements without ignoring the potential pitfalls of an oversupply of information (Anderson, and Revers, 2018; Esser, and Neuberger, 2019).

Citizen Journalism

The terms for citizen journalism are grassroots or participatory journalism. Citizen journalism is not a new invention, but a relatively new term for an already familiar phenomenon (Noor, 2017). The struggle between forbidden and permitted ideas runs like a common thread through history. Not only is knowledge power, but also the influence on the media, which conveys this knowledge and makes new perspectives possible (Pain, 2018). The digital age is a completely new opportunity to disseminate information outside the mass media and end the previous monopoly of knowledge. Without a big budget, anyone can create and post news on the Internet. In fact, there is a multitude of blogs, Internet newspapers or distributors, and citizen journalists are also active on social media and video platforms (Zeng, et. al., 2019; Biswal, 2019).

Participatory journalism is the activity of a citizen or group of citizens who take an active role in the process of reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. The objective of this partnership is to provide free, reliable, accurate, comprehensive, and relevant information essential for democracy. But the dividing line in the media world is not clear. What is journalism, what is blogging, and what is just a comment or a simple insult? The boundaries are not only fluid but actually blurry so far. It is not clear when an article is recognized as a journalistic and serious work. It is also not possible to clearly define where the boundary between ordinary or amateur journalists and professional editors can be drawn (Ozkececi, 2019; Pande, 2017).

Well-paid newspaper writers are not necessarily better informed but may report only on those sections of reality that are desirable to a financier, publisher, or editor. However, this does not mean that on the other hand, every blogger who writes an offensive comment on an article is already a journalist. In short, the question of whether they are paid for reporting is of little importance, as the form and amount of remuneration say nothing about the quality of the news. Even well-paid media work is often nothing more than preconceived opinions, poorly researched or unquestionably adopted by agencies (Dombo, 2017; Ozkececi, 2019; Mary, Senthilkumaran, and Kennedy, 2018).

Mainstream and Established Media

Traditional providers, especially commercial print media, are in trouble. Advertising revenue and ad placements in official media are declining (Bhat, and Chadha, 2020). Their monopoly on widespread opinion has been lost because of the digital possibilities of opinion formation and news dissemination. Free and online, all important news can be accessed in just a few clicks. Also, the established media has lost a lot of credibilities and is fighting a battle against the image of being in line and spreading fake news (Ozkececi, 2019; Moitra, Kumar, and Seth, 2021).

In some circumstances, an informal disclosure platform like WikiLeaks can seem more credible than a well-known daily newspaper, which has been valued for decades for its quality journalism and credibility. But old securities are destroyed today—just as much as the clients and recipients of the media. Many traditional publishing houses are about to close or are being taken over by other media groups. Sometimes it is also through a hostile takeover, which can lead to the dismissal of the established editorial staff or a complete change in the newspaper line. Competition from citizen journalists also increases material and financial pressure on professional editors. This pressure often leads to over-optimization and a lack of willingness to take risks on the part of journalists, which in turn leads to a vicious cycle and makes traditional media too boring and uniform (Ozkececi, 2019; Chatterjee, and Pal, 2021).

The scope of media that counts as citizen journalism is relatively broad. Even Wikipedia is included, despite criticism of the sources' non-verification and the influence of so-called forum guards on the content. The advantage of citizen journalism over commercial media is its relatively low cost. Typically, bloggers or website owners offer news for free, while traditional providers rely more on financial and political factors. Advertisers or political parties often demand compliance reporting. Content regulation is also done by press promotion, which requires non-critical flexibility (Allan, and Hintz, 2019).

At the same time, the mainstream media rarely takes the risk of taking an alternative position to prevailing opinion. Otherwise, they could be accused of spreading conspiracy theories or not being serious. This is the reason why most of the commercial media accept the messages provided to them by the biggest news agencies. These are easily adopted without any further verification. The main press agencies are: Asian News International, Hindusthan Samachar, Indo-Asian News Service, Press Trust of India, Samachar Bharati, United News of India, and Satya Path of India. Often editorial offices also copy each other, which is why articles in different media often appear in almost the same words. Sometimes this is misunderstood as an affirmation of the truth of the message. In fact, only the content of that broadcast was adopted. It has already been mentioned, established media are also suffering from a credibility crisis. His messages are being questioned and agencies are also being deliberately accused of manipulation (Saka, 2019).

However, ordinary journalists must also deal with pitfalls that should not be overlooked. The scope of their activities and their recipients are limited. It is not a problem of the lack of technical possibilities that are largely available today. Unlike the earlier distribution possibilities of traditional providers, today's alternative media would theoretically have access to a worldwide audience. However, mainly, they suffer from lack of awareness and sales opportunities, lack of public relations but limited information. Since basically, every internet user can be a citizen journalist, there is competition among millions of people, at least in terms of qualifications (Ozkececi, 2019; Paul, and Sosale, 2020).

Social media allows for direct exchange between communicators and recipients. This form of communication poses a challenge to traditional journalism: traditional media had only classic one-way communication. Therefore, all known print media or TV and radio stations are also now available

online and offer specialized services such as video clips or online forums for bloggers. There is also a gray area between established mainstream media and citizen journalism. This is the case, for example, when recipients have the opportunity to participate, for example by offering comments on articles or by sending photos. In the past, the possibility of a response from recipients was limited to writing a letter to the editor or contacting the broadcaster's complaints office. This gap in communication is seriously questioned by the new media (Gearing, 2021).

But citizen journalism has its disadvantages too. For example, you can see many right-wing extremist sites that recruit like-minded people through the Internet or through the distribution of racist content. There is growing awareness of widespread hatred on the Internet, as perceived anonymity on the Internet apparently encourages a desire to insult or discriminate against other users. With the proliferation of citizen journalism, there has been an increase in information overload. This makes it more difficult for recipients to filter which reports are important. Given the flood of data, an overview can easily be lost (Adria, 2019; El Hachem, 2019).

Beginnings of citizen journalism

When the media became "mass media", so did the suitability of the masses and thus the frivolity of the media. Their commercialization increased, usually resulting in a loss of quality in the material (Miller, 2019). However, it was still reserved for journalists and journalists to edit their articles, which required appropriate training or study in journalism and communication science. Several important prerequisites are necessary for the development of citizen journalism, such as technological innovation and new ways of disseminating news. Media consumption has only gradually increased with the number of recipients and new distribution channels (Wall, 2018). Alternative journalism began to reach its audience in the form of leaflets and self-produced magazines. Depending on the form of government, an alternative opinion may be published with a larger, and smaller circulation. Under the dictatorship, the spread of citizen journalism was a dangerous affair, punishable by imprisonment or death. And in some countries, it is still so today. Today it is the purchase of technical receivers which also requires some financial resources. It is still the case that many so-called developing countries have very limited resources to acquire or even publish media. Nevertheless, it can be said: with the Internet, the monopoly of a few media groups over published opinion ended around the world (Mpfu, 2019).

Citizen Journalism Promotion

In his presentation of the "Deliberate Theory of Democracy", Jürgen Habermas believed in the rationality of public political discourse, where there is an interactive exchange between decision-makers and citizens. "Deliberative politics derives its legitimizing power from the discursive structure of opinion and will formation, which can only fulfill its socially integrative function by expecting a reasonable quality of its results". (Habermas 1992, 369). First, citizen journalism is a participatory form of media use and dissemination. This largely coincides with the form of communication that Habermas suggested in his ideological model of democracy. For recipients, this form of citizen participation has high credibility. For a long time, independent journalism was considered more credible than the established media (see Eberwein 2016; Ali, et al., 2020).

Lay journalists are often more authentic than employees who depend on their donors. The pays issue in the history of journalism speaks neither in favor of nor against the accuracy of reporting. In any case "fake news" can be disseminated more easily through technological innovations. In other words, the recipients themselves are faced with the challenge of deciding whether a message is credible or not. There are enough messages in favor of ordinary journalists that should actually be questioned or reflect a certain ideologically dubious orientation. Criticism of the participatory model condemns the view that the citizen is mature and able to represent political views and make the right decisions.

This would be unrealistic and ignore the difficult and complex problem of political action. It will also slow down the pace of democratic decision-making (Dachs 2008; Nah, and Yamamoto,2019).

Social Media

Social media are seen as the channels through which citizen journalism is currently most widely disseminated. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and similar media are used by a large part of the population. The transition between social communication and journalism is often fluid. For example, it is well known that the politicians has a preference for Twitter, which he says more about every day than he discusses with his advisers. The example shows that the use of social media is not merely a tool of citizen journalism. If even the most powerful person in the world communicates via Twitter, the enthusiasm that began with the introduction of social media must be questioned (Eberwein 2016; Brindha, Jayaseelan, and Kadeswara, 2020).

Social media are used independently of social class. They often serve only as communication channels and replace traditional telephone and chat alternatives. Even where social media are used for journalism and communication of information, they serve as a platform for the already established media. Typically, user-selected articles that have already been published are shared, not new articles. Citizen journalism in digital networks is also an exception. Yet, this minority program also contains social explosives. To make this clear it is necessary to be aware of the dimension of social media. Daily, weekly or monthly magazines were printed on certain release dates which, given their monopoly, were tolerated without question by the recipients. The number of subscribers was manageable and the media with the highest circulation delivered strictly controlled news. Today we are experiencing a boom in news broadcasting, which transmits information almost in real-time (Singh, and Pandey, 2017).

The direct and indirect exchange between communicator and receiver means a revolution in communication, eliminating the hierarchy between sender and receiver. More detailed background reports and analyses are often out of the way. Political experts lose their influence and are displaced by engaged but untrained commentators. Therefore, all security and intelligence agencies responsible for collecting information and data are on alert. It is therefore not surprising that the Internet is monitored and manipulated internationally. Bloggers in forums like YouTube are often sponsored by commercial companies, this is not visible at first glance. This is a particularly successful form of product placement. Also, the influence of political parties or powerful lobby organizations is often disguised as citizen journalism (Banaji, et al., 2019; Namhata, and Patnaik, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The back lines made it clear that today's proliferation of participatory journalism is primarily related to the Internet and social media. Digital development opens up new possibilities for the emergence of alternative media that can be published with little money and relatively little effort. But although the latest events can be spread to all parts of the world in fractions of a second, we as human beings are not better informed and we do not become wiser. More and more misinformation hides the possibility of filtering the many messages we receive every day. For this problem, it doesn't matter whether it is official information or alternative basic journalism news. The net is a fascinating new world, but it's also troubling because of its acceleration. Somehow one is given the feeling of constantly missing something or publishing even more old news. In reality, however, the growth in journalism has already led to the process of democratization of the media. Unfortunately, this process has also been used by undemocratic forces who have successfully fought for social regression. The proliferation of general journalism is also associated with dangers that have led not only to excessive democratization but in some cases to the over-trivialization of the media (Ozkececi, 2019).

Thousands of magazines and channels don't always mean a greater diversity of views. So broad

citizen journalism doesn't mean that every blogger actually has something to say. Whether a layman or a trained professional communication scientist, a journalist usually repeats what he has heard before in other media. Thus the poor quality of traditional media is transferred to the new participating projects. And just as in the analog media landscape, amateur journalism also shows that qualitative media is hardly one of the most successful (King, 2018).

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