

New Media Communication Technologies and its Influence on Journalism

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Introduction

Today, the Media world is experiencing a serious overhaul, a shift in paradigm. The normal way in which people are accessing information, expressing views, forming opinions is changing fast. The usual sources of information like Newspapers, Radio and Television are getting replaced with new forms like Websites, blogs, pod casts, social networking sites etc. Today apart from reading, listening and viewing, people are also browsing, e-Mailing, chatting, networking in various innovative technological applications of Internet. These new forms of interactive communication technologies which evolved in the last part of the 20th century are termed as 'New Media'. New media is an emerging field of different forms of new generation electronic, digital, computerized, networked information and communication systems made possible through the applications of computer technology. The term is in relation to "old" media forms, such as print newspapers and magazines, which are static representations of text and graphics. (Wikipedia)

New Media can provide information, interaction between persons, groups, organizations virtually anywhere in the world at a low and affordable cost. New Media has evolved as an interconnected network of audio, video and electronic communication that will blur the distinction between Interpersonal and Mass communication. The new media are responsible for formation of virtual communities and groups who have similar interests and ideologies there by changing the patterns of human communication with expanding the interactivity by crossing physical boundaries, religion and nationality.

The Rise of New Media

The quintessential characters of new media like interactivity, adaptability, portability and convergence have added phenomenal pace to their growth and evolution. New media makes possible on demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device apart from giving interactive user feedback, on the content with other information seekers. Another important feature of New Media is the

"democratization" of information distribution and consumption of content. The new media also aptly called as 'Social media' due to its inherent access to social participation in creation and usage of information.

A survey conducted on 17,000 internet users in 2008 revealed that social media, particularly blogs are becoming more important part of media consumption of an Internet user than the traditional media channels and social media is turning to be a global phenomenon. The increasing number of users and their dependence on Internet and its applications also bears a testimony to the above fact.

There are 2,695,205 articles in English on Wikipedia contributed by 75,000 active contributors, which are visited by 684,000,000 visitors in 2008. There are **133,000,000** blogs indexed by Technorati since 2002 which are read by **346,000,000** people globally and an average of 9, 00,000 blog posts are received in one day (com Score March 2008). There are **200,000,000** active users of Face book with **100,000,000** users logging on at least once every day in **170** countries / territories in **35** different languages. It is also estimated that there are an average of 100 friends for every face book user. The number of users of Internet and its applications are increasing at an exponential pace. ([www. mathewingram.com](http://www.mathewingram.com)) In India there are approximately 50 Million internet users and around 400 Million mobile users.

The New Media as Information Source

The Internet is already considered as an option in searching for news and information regardless of time relevance, article length and topic complexity. Journalists are now recognizing the role of the new media for the actual news sourcing. The new media technologies like Internet based e-Mail and Social networking sites like Orkut, Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter etc. have become a preferred form of social communication. The same trend is also visible in India. The India Online Landscape Report 2010, a comprehensive estimate of Internet user-ship in urban and rural India based on the estimates of a land survey conducted between April 2010 to May 2010, among 259,341 individuals from 37,024 households in 100 cities and over 20,396 households in 1,040 villages spread across all the 4 regions of the country reveals that the number of people using Internet for various functions like communication, information, recreation etc is increasing.

Thus new media can transform human capacities and relationships. Today the effects of new media technologies are evident in all forms and fields of human activity and very aptly the present age is referred as an 'Era of New Media'. The communication world has witnessed many incidents and instances where the New Media have triumphed in various fronts like political, social, education, medical and economics. The recent 18 days people protests in Egypt saw the evolution of new form of communication i.e. "Speak to tweet". When all forms of communication including Internet went down in Egypt, Google announced a way to keep up the tweets from Egypt. It launched the 'speak to tweet' service which allowed people to call phone numbers, leave a voice mail and the message was sent out to tweet under the hash tag # Egypt. This type of innovation of new communication technologies made the protests to be aptly termed as "Revolution 2.0".

Twitter appears to be one of the most discussed by communications professionals at this time. The free social-networking service allows short messages to be sent to and received by self-designated followers using a computer and Internet connection or a mobile device with an Internet connection. Also, unlike Face book, Twitter's primary users are adults who are aged from 35 to 49. According to Paul Farhi "Twitter attracts the sort of people that media people should love - those who are interested in, and engaged with, the news"

The information about the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008 broke first on Twitter. According to Neha Viswanathan, a former Regional Editor for Southeast Asia and a volunteer at Global Voices, people were sending in messages about what they were hearing about the attacks in Twitter. There were at least five or six blogs from people who were trapped and who were very close to what happened." Thus the new media is providing power to connect, inform and mobilize and act as a catalyst for facilitating the formation for more intimate and content specific communities. It is facilitating communication not only with the outside world when all the traditional forms have failed but is also becoming a preferred mode for advocacy and active communication. Hence a surge in organized 'citizen activism' is seen where in the technology is able to build human infrastructure in the form of powerful online communities.

Impact of New Media Technologies on Current Journalism Practices

Mainstream news organizations recognize the fact that the Internet has the strength to disseminate news and information in an instant. With just few clicks, many are now able to take hold of current news without having to wait for prime-time newscasts in their television sets. As a result, numerous mainstream news organizations have already engaged in what we call web journalism, which is journalism in the Internet. It has become the extension of corporate news organizations to meet the demands of today's audience character.

The technological advancements that the modern society is characterized at present makes the people living today to experience and two things in the most efficient and effective way. The world has changed since the introduction of the computer technology and other communication innovations that time and space barriers have long been overcome in the need for individuals to get connected. Some time ago the fields of communications and the matters of mass media as a field of study were largely confined to the schools of journalism. But now the rise in interest to study this from outside that area stems mostly from the advances in technology, where the changes of modern living has solidified the image of our world as one big global community, where virtually everyone can be easily and quickly reached. This is why most researchers have taken up the mettle in understanding the new media, its functions, and impact it makes in changing the matters pertaining to society, the least of which is that of public opinion.

The introduction of the Internet in the field of mass media has resulted to popular academic researches on its effects on the message consumption using the traditional modes of mass communication. The increase in the message consumption through the Internet has greatly influenced the decline in the use of traditional mass

communication media such as the print, radio and television. Online news users increased in number which likewise resulted to the decreasing use of TV, newspaper and magazines as sources of news updates and current events. According to Loechner Newspapers are losing grounds to a generation of consumers embracing digital and mobile alternatives. Loechner also found that there is a media shift from traditional forms like newspapers, magazines to digital sources. Young adults of the age group from 18 to 24 viewed Internet as more important source than TV. Desire for speedy news latest information was the intent behind this age group to prefer Internet as a source for news rather than traditional forms. This trend signifies that the people today are not bothered about who is writing the news, who is publishing the news and its authenticity and credibility. The news source credibility which plays a significant role in traditional form is not important in New Media forms.

The Pew perception survey conducted by the Pew research centre puts forth some very important details. Public assessment of news organization's accuracy and credibility are found to be lowest in decades. Internet is evolving as one of the major source of National and International news apart from Print and Television. Today new forms of Journalism are emerging like Online Journalism, Citizen Journalism etc. The entire paradigm of Journalism by content is shifting towards the "Social Journalism"- which is defined as journalism by intent. Social journalism is a combination of social media and journalism. According to Woody Lewis "a social journalist can be defined as a person with a premeditated Watchdog role, who uses Social media to communicate and collaborate with readers. Crowd dynamics shape the social journalist stories more than editors". The goal of social journalism is to build a community through engagement. In a way social networks are the new editorial page, rich with opinions and ideas. (Lavrusik)

Many journalists and investors believe the Internet is an important new mass medium. This is evident and supported by the fact that more than 200 million people who are using the Internet service for communication and search purposes. Different industries have engaged the Internet in their operations in order to provide efficient and effective services to the public and this holds true not just among business institutions but also in the public and government domains. With more than 13 million Internet links and websites, traditional media functions have likewise adopted this new medium. Adding to the synergy and dynamics of virtual activities of multimedia in its ability to combine and animate texts and pictures that characterizes the print and broadcast media resulting to a blurred distinction of these mass communication channels making readers and viewers more active in their responses to the information provided to them.

New Media Effects on Journalism - Citizen Journalism

New media is challenging the funding sources of old media. This leaves many newspapers with less financial resources. Financing serious journalism then becomes a major problem. The Internet is rapidly replacing old media as the world's most dominant source of information, analysis and commentary. More and more journalism is moving online. Mass media is a term used to denote, as a class, that section of the

media specifically conceived and designed to reach a very large audience (typically at least as large as the whole population of a nation). The term public media has a similar meaning: it is the sum of the public mass distributors of news and entertainment and other information: the newspapers, television and radio broadcasting, book publishers, and suchlike. To this the Internet, pod casting, blogging, etc. were added recently. All of these public media sources have better informed the general public of what is going on in the world today. Some traditional public broadcasters are turning to these new areas to reach more people quickly. These methods of communication reach a greater number of people faster than traditional communication. Such things as pod casting and blogging give people an opportunity to express themselves in ways that can only be done with such technology. The mass-media audience can form a mass society with special characteristics, notably atomization and lack of social connections, which render it especially susceptible to the influence of modern mass-media techniques such as advertising and propaganda. Whereas the new media users can form well knitted virtual communities in which new forms of advertising like online advertising and net advertising are evolving which target the large virtual communities.

There is the proliferation of newspapers and radio stations across the country currently. Some of these newspapers could be accessed through their websites. Online newspapers and blog sites are also emerging. The existence of many radio stations across the country has come alongside with the wide spread availability of mobile phones. Some of these companies are offering internet services to their subscribers. These developments have brought greater participation of the citizenry in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information thus enhancing the practice of citizen journalism.

Today, media is characterized by vibrant and people-oriented practice. In this vein, comes in what has now been regarded as “phone-in” for ongoing democratic discourses. With the emergence of the cellular phone facilities and almost the ‘death’ of the land-line telephone systems, citizens are able to contribute to radio programs and mobile phone users are able to contribute photos of live scenes of events to media organizations even at amateur levels. The media and accompanying practices have benefited a lot from new media technologies and practice. And this has in turn impacted a lot on the new approach to citizen journalism, wherein the people report their own news about themselves from their own communities; using available simple media technologies such as hand cameras, mobile phones and internet blogging. With the use of mobile phones for example, photos and voice recordings that had been hitherto unavailable, are now used as actualities in TV and radio broadcasts, often supplied by citizens who may not have had any substantial and professional media training. With the new media technologies and the involvement of citizens to report their own news in their own way and about events in their communities, one would say that the news is everywhere and that there is nowhere to hide.

One great impact of the new media/citizen journalism is the timeliness and relevance of news, while quality and content have improved immensely. The rapid growth in information communication technology has broken the earlier world. Now to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the governance process as there

are alternative ways of publicizing news and information. People now have the opportunity to respond in time to what they see, hear and read in the main stream media as mobile phones and internet services have placed the power of reporting in the hands of the public. It has created a window of opportunity for the exercise of the freedom of expression as well as the right to participate. The subjects of discussion are no longer limited. Anything could be texted around or viewed on the internet.

On the flipside, the new media has given way to the flow of news and information that is lacking in quality and content. Propaganda messages which sometimes lack substance are sent through mobile phones and internet. This questions the objectivity of citizen journalists / citizen journalism. Despite some of the criticisms advanced against citizen journalism, it has greatly enhanced the development of the media. The increase of new media has not only opened up the flow of information but also enhanced the active participation of the audience on what goes around. It has therefore become imperative for the journalists to include citizen journalism as a practice in their profession.

Now there is a level playing field created through the online world of journalism. Journalists have no privilege over citizens or news. Although there is so much more information and resources provided by the Internet this could be counterintuitive. Journalists may spend hours wading through vast amount of information to find the relevant material. Suddenly the skill of filtering information in a crowded domain takes on added importance. It is a large competitive space and being first with the story may override publications standards of accuracy.

Use of Social Media apart from creating a user generated content on the web creates conversations, encourages opinions, views, discussions thereby creating a chain of likeminded communities. These conversations have become the main reason for people to use internet as a source of news on a regular basis. As people do not want to simply be fed information, but they also want to find and share it with others as well as connect directly with sources and writers instead of getting through hierarchy of a news organisation. People want control over the information and want to connect with it. News Media has allowed individuals by giving them a method to express opinion and interact with the world. With the knowledge of New Media tools anybody can publish ideas at a relatively nonexistent price. Major Media outlets try to place their journalists at key places, but cannot be omnipresent. But an individual today if present on the site of action or incident can directly go online and publish the story without ever thinking about to say it to news organisation. New Media are a route to connect with the people directly; hence it is journalism with partnership. (Skoler).

The Danger of Internet's Fast News Delivery

Unlike the Internet, the news media are subject to certain standard procedures and rules. These include consideration of ethical standards, responsible practice of profession, respective rules and regulation imposed by networks, the media laws and other special considerations depending on the story or issue being covered. These things show that the news media or news organizations are acting within the bounds

of certain mechanisms, which are meant to safeguard transparency and to uphold responsible journalism. While the Internet has the advantage of fast news delivery, it cannot fully guarantee the veracity of the news in an instant most especially to those sites that do not really serve as extensions of news organizations.

As we see it, the traditional news gathering of journalists remains to be unchallenged in terms of truthfulness and professionalism. The main thing that seems to worry news networks is the way the Internet is able to diffuse information at the fastest rate, which can make them as “the second option” next to the Internet. The changes brought about by the innovations in communication technology greatly affected the practice of journalism. The practice in the discipline of news writing cannot be separated in the modern context and the environment of the society that characterizes the world.

As information transfers quickly on the Internet it can be very easy for disinformation to be spread. Breaking news stories are now produced online. If information is incorrect then there are not enough checks and balances to stop the flow of this misinformed news. Giving consumers the ability to publish more information through internet isn't good news for everyone, as multiple problems may emerge from it. First many blog posts are opinion oriented rather than news oriented, i.e. most blogs do not offer journalistically reported news content. Thus a true form of investigation, unearthing the facts is lost out. As most writers of the blogs focus on ‘what interests them rather than what interests public.’ (Haltz)

New media has challenged journalism as a profession. New media has changed the media environment. The priority of old media has declined and it is forced to adapt the changes. Online journalism has taken on greater importance. Blogs have freed many journalists from old media constraints. The Internet has also become a fantastic resource that can aid journalists in research and filing of reports. New media has aided journalists with improved technology. The new media systems of communication have redefined the traditional concept of news. They have speeded up the information collection, presentation and publication methods. The concepts of gate keeping and editorial supremacy are no longer a part of the new media systems. New types like Social and Citizen Journalism, Participatory Journalism, Activist Journalism are evolving in which the information sources have more freedom of expression. The new media forms do not have the power to substitute the traditional forms of journalism, but can certainly assist and complement the traditional forms in dissemination of information. Thus Traditional media is forced to adopt the new media technology for its own development.

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