Abstract:

Technological development has changed the world we live and communicate. Mobile phones with digital cameras, Internet and blogging have become an effective tool of interaction and communication. New media and social media have successfully made inroads and parked are in every sphere of our life; and in the process drastically changing the outlook and functioning of one vital stream - mass communication and functioning of media. Social Media today plays a pivotal role in providing information across the globe through various platforms and applications.

Over the years Social media has partnered well with main stream media. Revolutions in technology have impacted journalism in ways more than one - instantaneous information, user-generated content and interactive news. An offshoot of this partnership has given power to ordinary citizens to play the role of Journalists thus making way for new genre in journalism called Citizen Journalism.

This paper analyses the trend and growth of Citizen Journalism in India. It will study in detail the larger impact of citizens turning to be active journalists and issues reported and highlighted by them; and in the process bringing to the fore issues of credibility and ethics.

Keywords: Technology, Media, Citizen Journalism, India, democracy.
Introduction

We live in a world that is connected and communicated with technology. Today technology is playing a pivotal role in many streams and frontiers, it has drastically changed the way we pursue information, communicate and interact.

In the grip of these changes that has been highly influenced is the media, it witnessed a radical change and transformed significantly, changed and effected journalism for both the journalist and the audience. It is no longer one way communication it has become highly interactive. It has changed and defined the way functions, new media markets and spurring radical social change in the society.

Gone are the days when newspapers and Televisions were the only source of information, we are live in a world where news is updated 24X7, 365 days not only by professional Journalists by citizens, viewers and audience largely. Thus creating a new genre for audience participation and encouraging citizen Journalism.

Therefore at present a number of television channels, news portals and blog sites across the globe offer common masses a platform to be citizen journalists and share their stories with rest of the world. This trend is growing and we see a rise in Citizen Journalists actively participating and airing more and more issues concerning the masses. Sometimes the best footage of an event was taken on an average person's mobile phone and uploaded to the social network within seconds.

Democracy and Media

Democracy is the “greatest advancement” in history of world; the four pillars that facilitate the efficient and effective functioning of democracy are 1) Legislature (e.g. Parliament) 2) Executive (e.g. Government) 3) Judiciary (e.g. Supreme Court) & 4) Press (e.g. print, electronic and new media). Democracy believes in the empowerment of individual facilitates it through communication and ensures freedom of expression and freedom of conscience maintaining the four pillars.

Democracy in the world has the greatest challenge of running the democratic system by proficiently by encouraging freedom of speech and expression. Media forms an integral part of democracy as it contributes to those factors that are intrinsic to genuine democracy. Access to right information is essential and plays a vital role in ensuing citizens make right choice in a responsible manner and act accountable in a democratic system. Media acts as a mirror in the
society reflecting the many political, social, economical and cultural activities happening around the world, thus facilitating the individual empowerment that provides an arena for public debate. In this 21st century every individual is keen to be updated with the latest developments in all walks of life. Nowadays, media provides a platform for every citizen and individual to exercise his right of being heard and provides a platform through panel discussion, innovative talk shows and public debate organised by the national and regional media is now playing a major role in the enforcement of the right of freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under constitution.

The role of Media in a democracy is to safeguard and promote democratic values and principles; unfortunately today the Media does not believe in newsworthiness anymore, mass media corporations are concerned about improving the financial position of their organisations. What happened in most of the cases is that Global Competition and profit motive made media forget about democracy. Advertisements occupied the pages in newspapers; media is concentrating on promoting an event or a latest movie which is yet to be released so as to increase its revenues by showing the previews and events on prime times as a important story, feature or news. Journalistic ethics and democratic values were seen slowly vanishing from media and advertisement began to rule over media. Slowly but steadily money, investments and stakes by big corporations began to rule over media that was no more interested in veracity.

There is a wide opinion among people that media is no more interested in creating citizenship. We witness a trend where media is failing it its duties by providing public sphere for healthy interaction and dialogue among the citizens. Multinational companies, and corporate own and run media houses like any other business and highlight their achievements and political news was more about personalities than about their ideologies. With dearth of serious debate, voters are left on lurch and confused with paid political advertisements and propaganda containing only meaningless slogans making them disinterested and cynical about politics and losing faith in democracy.

With main stream media is diverting from its objective and focussing more on profit making motive many social and vital issues and stories relating to the masses are either neglected or rejected by the media that has led to a huge gap between issues reported and neglected. With an aim to bridge this gap a new concept and trend of participatory journalism has slowly but steadily emerged across the globe known as public or participatory journalism popularly known as “Citizen Journalism”. A form of journalism when any common citizens in his capacity as a citizen of a nation take up the role of a journalists, an initiative to express ideas irrespective of their educational or professional background, it is an act of citizens playing an active role in
Citizen Journalism

Citizen Journalism is the act of non-professionals, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires (Bowman & Willis, 2003, 10).

The power of technology has given ordinary citizens the power to become journalists, and be part of the new genre of journalism termed as citizen journalists. Citizen journalists are basically the audience, viewers or readers, who too want to contribute to their stories and concerns in the society they live in and take pride in recording events and sharing with others around the world be it entertainment or latest political issue or just an incident. Citizen journalism is also known as public or participatory journalism (Baase, 2008).

In India it has definitely helping people to raise their voices addressing issues that affect common people it has revolutionize the entire media in the country; it is influencing and making an impact in mainstream media. It has become a powerful tool for every citizen to report the news that touches their lives. Citizen journalism is bringing out vital issues to mainstream for debate and discussion and increasingly being recognized as a powerful force in this regard. Empowerment is a crucial tenet of citizen journalism in India, a democracy with more than 100 Million people. The rise of citizen journalism is linked to the notion of active citizenship and the need to strengthen democratic governance.

What is Citizen Journalism?

Defined broadly, it is the kind of journalism in which the users or audience create content online rather than wait to be fed by the traditional media outlets. According to Serena Carpenter, a citizen journalist can be described as an individual who intends to publish information meant to benefit a community. 

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1 Serena Carpenter, "News Quality Differences in Online Newspaper and Citizen Journalism Sites. in Public Journalism 2.0-The Promise and Reality of a Citizen- Engaged Press"- 2010 Routledge. p69
Citizen journalism has further been described as the individual "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information." In their report We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information, Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis write further that "the intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires." 2 According to Joyce Nip, citizen journalism, sometimes called online citizen journalism, can also be defined as a process in which people were entirely responsible for gathering content, along with envisioning, producing and publishing the news product. 3

Citizen journalism embraces all the social media platforms such as Face Book, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace and the Blogosphere. All the content generated from these social media platforms alongside comments from the audience and message board postings, pictures and video uploads constitute what is now known as the User Generated Content (UGC), which is a feature closely associated with the citizen journalism concept.

A good example is the opening up of most traditional media websites allowing traditional journalists to interact via comments and feedback using citizen journalism platforms. The BBC and The Guardian of London have fully embraced in different ways the institutional form of citizen journalism and its practice is widespread in the traditional media to different degrees.

Citizen journalists can be accidental journalists, advocacy journalists and grass root journalists. 4 Ross and Cormier 2010 provided further insight into these different forms of citizen journalism. Advocacy journalism according to them is “one that adopts a viewpoint; journalism with an intentional and transparent bias although it must be distinguished from propagandist reporting”, while accidental journalists are people caught unexpectedly in the middle of an event and who then make use of the social networking websites to broadcast their material. 5

Citizen journalism, also known as public or participatory journalism or democratic journalism 6, is the act of non-professionals "playing an active role in the process of collecting,

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2 Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis in 'We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information'- The Media Center, American Press Institute, 2003 Page 9
4 The US based National Association of Citizen Journalists, NACJ, makes a distinction between accidental journalists, advocacy citizen journalists and citizen journalists. According to eh NACJ, just because someone uses a cell phone camera to photograph an incident and then uploads it to Flicker or Facebook, does not make that person a citizen journalist.
5 Ross & Cormier 2010pgs 58-60,
reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information,” according to the seminal report *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*, by Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis. They say, "The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires."\(^7\) Citizen journalism should not be confused with civic journalism, which is practiced by professional journalists. Citizen journalism is a specific form of citizen media as well as user generated content.

Mark Glasser, a long time freelance journalist who frequently writes on new media issues, gets to the heart of it: The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others. For example, you might write about a city council meeting on your blog or in an online forum. Or you could fact-check a newspaper article from the mainstream media and point out factual errors or bias on your blog. Or you might snap a digital photo of a newsworthy event happening in your town and post it online. Or you might videotape a similar event and post it on a site such as YouTube.

**Review of Literature:**

Citizen journalism is the act of citizens “playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information”, according to the seminal report *We Media: How Audiences are shaping the Future of News and Information*, by Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis. They say, “The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.”

In a 2003 *Online Journalism Review article*, J. D. Lasica classifies media for citizen journalism into the following types:

1. Audience participation (such as user comments attached to news stories, personal blogs, photos or video footage captured from personal mobile cameras, or local news written by residents of a community),

2. Independent news and information Websites (Consumer Reports, the Drudge Report),

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\(^7\) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_journalism#cite_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_journalism#cite_note-0)
3. Full-fledged participatory news sites (Ohmy News, Ground Report),

4. Collaborative and contributory media sites (Slashdot, Kuro5hin), (News vine), (Human Times).

5. Other kinds of "thin media." (Mailing lists, email newsletters), and 6) Personal broadcasting sites (video broadcast sites such as (Ken Radio).

[3] New media theorist Terry Flew states that there are 3 elements "critical to the rise of citizen journalism and citizen media": open publishing, collaborative editing and distributed content. [4].

Schaffer (2006) observed that citizen journalism was emerging as a form of ‘bridge’ media, linking traditional forms of journalism with classic civic participation. He argued that citizen journalists were occupying civic spaces, where professional journalists would only squirm. As many as 98 per cent of the respondents in a web survey stated that the emergence of local news websites with content built from community members was a good thing, even though it may not all be the kind of journalism and finished stories one may see in a newspaper.

Schultz and Sheffer (2009) argued that media outlets have ceded almost total control of the content and distribution process to citizen journalists, who are motivated more by self expression and a desire to change public opinion than they are by traditional journalism. A survey of citizen journalists was conducted to assess what, if any, impact they are having on traditional news values, such as balanced reporting, double checking facts and ethical reporting.

Examples of Citizen Journalism:

11 Websites Citizen Journalists should know about

“Demotix is the award-winning home of global user-generated news. Promoting free speech, changing the news agenda, giving you a voice, and getting you paid for your photos and videos.”

Launched in 2009, London-based Demotix is an open newswire aimed at anyone from freelance professional journalists to amateur hacks. You can upload text, pictures and videos, and the content is shared with over 200 media organizations around the world. Whilst the platform is great for budding reporters to get their news out there, Demotix also actively targets media buyers, so there’s real potential for your snaps and videos to be licensed to mainstream media outlets. Stories can be uploaded via the website, FTP, email, MMS or the Demotix’ Desktop Uploader.

All Voices: “All voices is a global community that shares news, videos, images and opinions tied to news events and people. It is the first true people’s media.” All voices are a US-based citizen media website that has been on the go for over three years now. It’s pretty high-traffic, and the user-generated news website is a very good platform for citizen hacks from across the world to share what’s happening where they are. As with other CJ platforms, you can share news stories, videos and images and the community can search both by category (e.g. politics, sport, and business) and location.
Blottr “Report, collaborate & discover breaking news as it happens...”

Blottr was launched in September 2010. It’s currently aimed at breaking news in six UK cities: Bristol, Birmingham, London, Leeds, Edinburgh and Manchester, but it’s soon to be rolled out across key parts of Europe too. It’s slightly different to other citizen journalist websites in that users can collaborate on news stories. Think of Wikipedia – multiple users can access the same story, each adding and tweaking it as a story unfolds. And back in June, Blottr opened up its technology – branded as News Point – to external publishers, enabling user-generated content on any blog or website.

The recent London riots was a good example of how citizen journalism can bring stories to the masses quickly, as Blottr was one of the first news sites to publish content on riots in Ealing (London) and Salford (Manchester).

Blottr has almost 1.5m unique visitors a month and it now has over 60,000 registered users, around 700 of whom are active contributors. There’s also an iPhone app, and an Android one is on the way.
CNN iReport: “iReport invites you to take part in the news with CNN. Your voice, together with other iReporters, can help shape what CNN covers and how.”

CNN iReport is probably about as mainstream a platform as citizen journalists can access. It’s a community that enables news reporting from different angles and lets users share and discuss stories. Although it’s a CNN platform, the stories aren’t edited, fact-checked or even screened prior to being published.

The beauty of iReport is citizen journalists have a genuine platform for making it into the mainstream media, as CNN producers do monitor the content and if something is unique or compelling enough, it can make it onto CNN. These stories are marked ‘CNN iReport’.

Now Public: “Now Public is a multimedia online news magazine where you can make, break, shape, and share international news as it happens.”

Now Public has 5 million monthly readers, and its content covers everything from technology and environment, to health and sports. Articles are written based on the ‘trending issues of the day’, by contributors who add in background information, photos and videos. Contributions come in from citizen hacks in over 160 countries.
It’s a pretty straight forward tool to use, but new users’ first posts are monitored for quality and to ensure it’s not spam. All subsequent posts should go live as soon as you publish, and the people behind it will advise if there are any issues with the content.

“Ground Report is a global news platform that combines digital reporting tools, a hierarchical journalism workflow and a selective reporter network of over 7,000 contributors to power insightful, on-the-ground news coverage.”

Launched in 2006, Ground Report is a platform for citizen journalists around the world to report on global events, and users can submit articles, photos or videos of news events which are vetted by its Editors before publication. However, those with a ‘Verified’ status can jump the submission queue and publish instantly.

The New York based company operates a Wikipedia-style model, with volunteer editors and feedback provided by the community. Ground Report’s founder, Rachel Sterne, was named as one of America’s most promising social entrepreneurs in 2009.

Wikinews: “Anyone can contribute, and articles are written collaboratively for a global audience. We strive at all times to meet the policy of using neutral point of view, ensuring our reporting is as fair as possible.”
Wikinews is an off-shoot of Wikipedia, and as with the online encyclopaedia, Wikinews is a free-content, collaborative platform. Co-founder Jimmy Wales has previously distinguished Wikinews from Wikipedia by saying: “On Wikinews, each story is to be written as a news story as opposed to an encyclopaedia article.”

As with Wikipedia, Wikinews is all about the ‘neutral’ point of view policy, which is in contrast to other citizen journalist websites which include opinion-led editorial. If you’ve ever contributed to Wikipedia, the Wikinews interface will be familiar to you and it works in pretty much the same way.

Digital Journal: “DigitalJournal.com is a social news site powered by people just like you. Made up of professional journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers, passionate writers and regular Joes and Janes.”

Digital Journal began as a technology news portal back in 1998, and in 2006 it started paying writers to contribute news from around the world. It shares its revenue with the writers, and the user-generated news site has contributors from over 170 countries around the world.

So, how do you get paid? Digital Journal shares a portion of its advertising revenue with all its contributors through what it calls its “money pot”. The cash pool grows, and every journalist can compete for their share – simply put, the more you contribute, the more you can earn.

To get started, you set up a free account and start writing news articles, upload images, embed videos…you know the drill.
Newsvine: “Updated continuously by citizens like you, Newsvine is an instant reflection of what the world is talking about at any given moment.”

Newsvine is a collaborative news website, owned by msnbc.com. It draws content from its users, as well as syndicated content from mainstream outlets such as The Associated Press. Users can write articles, link to external content, and discuss news items submitted by professional and citizen journalists.

Newsvine was voted one of the top 50 websites by Time in 2007, and the basic concept behind it can perhaps best be described as Digg meets Demotix. Users can plant “seeds” on the vine, which are links to stories from around the Web, and post comments next to it with a view to kick-starting a discussion. You can also tailor the page to your preferences, by adding RSS feeds and moving boxes around.

News Participation: “News Participation showcases the work of lay and professional correspondents seeking an open forum for posting news dispatches and commentary.”

News Participation is a fairly new online community aimed at citizen journalists. Whilst it’s designed as a platform for amateur hacks to post news and commentary, it’s also trying to grow itself as a platform for discussion about posted works and the topics within. However, there’s
not too much of a community feel as of yet but hopefully this will grow over time as the site grows its user base.

All you need to do is register, or you can log-in using your Facebook credentials, and upload your images, videos and text. Pretty straight forward.

**Spot.us:** “Spot.us is a non-profit organization to pioneer community-funded reporting.”

Spot.us is an interesting concept, and it’s different from other citizen journalism platforms in that, well, strictly speaking it’s not really a citizen journalism website. It’s a non-profit project that enables the public to commission journalists to report on issues they feel are being ignored – so it’s more akin to citizen-funded journalism for the local community.

David Cohn, Director of Spot.us, says: “We take investigative pitches, here in the San Francisco Bay area, and we try and crowd fund the money that is needed to hire a reporter to do an investigation. Our mission is to support local, investigative journalism. Civic Journalism.” All contributions made by a community are tax deductible, and Spot.us partners with media outlets to distribute content.

**Conclusion:**

The concept of citizen journalism did not have much effect on the media or the citizens a few years ago but with the advancement in technology and citizens having a tool like internet and mobile phones applications, Citizen began actively participating in events and reporting news as their came across and sharing on common platform. Looking at the potential and speed at which news and information were shared media started to use their contents, videos and Photographs as a result more and more came forward and began to act as Citizen journalist. Now, with the growing trend of Citizen Journalism, citizens are making a serious effort to bring in whatever they think is important in the forefront, which has been neglected by the media.
Today be it the print media, television, or new media there are opportunities for ordinary citizens to report on issues around them and actively participate in media discourse. This new kind of journalism is a significant initiative on the way to the democratization of the media. One of the greatest advantages that Citizen Journalists have over mainstream media is speed, by which the news and images can be shown in Television or over the internet. Thus the popularity of Citizen Journalism no longer in question, even the national media around the world are sourcing leads from stories and pictures filed by Citizen Journalists.
References


