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## **CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND THEIR INFLUENCE TO THE COLLECTION AND CONTENT OF NEWS**

This article discusses issues of citizen journalism. Researchers have given many definitions of what citizen journalism is, which is detailed in the first part of this article. The second part examines the advantages and disadvantages of the citizen journalism. Also, this article explores the role of citizen journalism in the dissemination of news. With the advent of new technologies, each user can publish any information, upload photos, video on the internet, which allows them to be a journalist. This trend says that professional journalists have competitors. Can we call them competitors? This article gives an answer to this question considering the advantages and disadvantages, and the possibilities of professional and citizen journalism. The topic of this article is relevant in the century of new technologies and innovations.

**Key words:** citizen journalism, traditional journalism, news, content of news, the benefits of citizen journalism, drawbacks of citizen journalism

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### **Азаматтық журналистика және оның жаңалықтар таратудағы әсері**

Бұл мақалада қазіргі кезде кеңінен дамып келе жатқан азаматтық журналистикаға анықтама беріліп, оның жаңалықтар топтамасына әсері қарастырылады. Жаңа технология қарқын алып жатқан ХХІ ғасырда азаматтық журналистика дәстүрлі журналистикамен қатар қалыптасып келеді. Әсіресе жаңалықтар таратуда олардың үлестері зор. Мақаланың екінші бөлімінде азаматтық журналистиканың артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктері қарастырылады.

Сонымен қатар, осы мақалада жаңалықтар таратуда азаматтық журналистиканың рөлі талқыланады. Жаңа технологиялар интернеттің әр пайдаланушысына кез-келген ақпаратты жариялап, фото, бейнелерді өз бетінше жүктеп, журналист болуға мүмкіндік береді. Бұл тенденция кәсіпқой журналистердің бәсекелестері пайда болғанын аңғартады. Дегенмен, оларды бәсекелестер деп атай аламыз ба? Аталмыш мақала бұл сұраққа кәсіби және азаматтық журналистиканың мүмкіндіктерін саралай отырып жауап беруге тырысады.

Бұл тақырып жаңа технологиялар мен инновациялар ғасырында зерттеуді қажет ететін өзекті тақырыптардың бірі болып табылады.

**Түйін сөздер:** азаматтық журналистика, дәстүрлі журналистика, жаңалықтар, жаңалықтар мазмұны, азаматтық журналистиканың пайдасы, азаматтық журналистиканың кемшіліктері.

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### **Гражданская журналистика и ее влияние на сбор и содержание новостей**

В статье рассматриваются вопросы гражданской журналистики. Исследователи дали множество определений того, что такое гражданская журналистика, которая детализируется в первой

части этой статьи. Вторая часть рассматривает пользу преимущества? и недостатки гражданской журналистики. Также данная статья исследует роль гражданской журналистики в распространении новостей. С появлением новых технологий каждый пользователь может опубликовать любую информацию, выкладывать фото, видео в интернет, что позволяет им быть журналистом. Эта тенденция говорит о том, что у профессиональных журналистов появились конкуренты. Можно ли назвать их конкурентами? Эта статья дает ответ на этот вопрос, рассматривая плюсы и минусы и возможности профессиональной и гражданской журналистики. Тема данной статьи является актуальной в век новых технологий и инноваций.

**Ключевые слова:** гражданская журналистика, традиционная журналистика, новости, содержание новостей, польза гражданской журналистики, недостатки гражданской журналистики.

## Introduction

Researchers have given many definitions of what citizen journalism is. According to Calvert and Torres (2011) citizen journalism is old journalism, which belongs to common amateur journalists among citizens. They collect news and contribute information to the general public voluntarily. Four points, such as “it is not produced by a traditional news”, “it is produced by a group”, “it is open to audience contributions and participation” and “it strives to cover marginalized communities through recruitment of members of these communities and coverage of these communities” are defined by Rutigliano (2008). Also, Carpenter (2010) defined citizen journalism as reporting news online to benefit a community. Citizen journalists are motivated people who tell information about events, which they believe are essential, said a veteran reporter Davis Merritt (Calvert and Torres, 2011).

These days citizen journalism is connected with the internet (Goode, 2009) and their online activity is becoming mostly an essential (Kim and Lowrey, 2015).

Reporting the news of citizen journalists is a significant opportunity to news organisations. More sources of information allows them to distribute news more widely (Armoogum, 2013). However, citizen journalists do not always report news accurately. This term has its strengths as well as weaknesses, which will be discussed in first part of this study. The second part will examine the influence of citizen journalists on the collection of news. Researchers agree that citizen journalists are good collectors of breaking news (Wall, 2012; Armoogum, 2013). However, the content of their news is controversial among researchers, although the content is regulated by citizen journalists (Jonsson and Ornebring, 2011). This point will be considered in the third part of this study. In conclusion, the study will outline the current situation and attempt to predict the future of citizen journalism.

## Benefits and drawbacks of citizen journalism

Citizen journalism probably has more opportunities for disseminating news than traditional jour-

nalism. It is capable of reporting information which professional journalism has overlooked or ignored, claimed supporters of citizen journalism (Wall, 2012). Especially, citizen journalists have attempted to inform the public with news effectively during crisis situations (Nah et al. 2015) and they often focus on politics and crime that are the main issues of contemporary society (Bowman and Willis, 2003).

It is clear that, traditional media depend on news organisations which control the reporting of news (Bowman and Willis, 2003), while citizen journalism is more democratic (Nah et al. 2015).

However, citizen journalism is unable to replace professional journalism, claims Brown (2005). Armoogum (2013) also argues that amateurism is not journalism, in this area there is no place for them because a serious profession requires skills, experience and training, which is lacking in citizen journalists. He said: “The fact that today’s citizen journalists can do reporting, does this mean that tomorrow “Citizen Doctors” will be allowed to cure sick people or that “Citizen Lawyers” be allowed to defend people in court?”. In this case, researchers suggest calling them “News Footage Collectors”, “seasonal or circumstantial news gatherers”, “Information Brokers” or other similar name. Additionally, Niekamp (2010) claimed that reporting is not the main measure of citizens and that as a result, they might be less responsible for their news. Their nonprofessional skills of reporting news can lead to unprocessed and raw news that is difficult to understand (Niekamp, 2010).

Moreover, it would be difficult for citizen journalists to follow the basic rules of reporting news such as, ethics, equality, objectivity, honesty and impartiality (Armoogum, 2013). One fact that, they become citizen journalists because they be able to be at the right place, time and they have tools for reporting news completely. Although, they are non-professional journalists, they are “good” writers of comments (Armoogum, 2013). “Comment is free, facts are sacred” said Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian (*The Guardian*, 2002). Reporting news

is a hobby for most citizen journalists although in a perfect world they should have to work to the same standard as professionals, Leibowitz suggests (2008).

#### **Good collectors of hot news**

The position of the citizen journalists in the way of collecting and reporting news is significant (Horton, 2013). New technologies such as smart phones and the internet allow citizens to report news more rapidly than traditional media. For example, in 2011 a local IT consultant reported the news about the death of Osama bin Laden' in Twitter. Barack Obama announced this news to the public one day after. This news, which was biggest news stories in 2011 was reported by citizen journalists firstly (Horton, 2013).

Additionally, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) recognized that recently the majority of news was reported by citizen journalists. They played a key role in broadcasting news in the streets (Armoogum, 2013). For instance, when London was bombed by terrorists in 2005, citizen journalists reported main footage of this news (Allan, 2006, Derbyshire, 2005). On the first day the BBC newsroom received from citizens over 1,000 photographs, and 20 videos. Although, videos were nonprofessional they were able to present through TV (Derbyshire, 2005). Also, many footage during the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013 were made by cameras of citizens living in the place where blast was happen. Images from cell phones shows a huge fiery burst through barriers on the finish line on Boylston street, all runners and people were thrown to the ground (Boyle, Witheridge and Stebner, 2013). Another example of this issue is when, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1996, a passenger plane of the Ethiopian Airlines crashed into the Indian Ocean. Witnesses of this event were tourists, one woman tourist was walking around the sea with amateur camera when plane fell down, and this situation was captured on her camera. The whole story was broadcast only by the channels TF1, FR 3 and Antenne 2 of French TV stations, and they used video of the tourist. Finally, tragic images were spread around the world rapidly and people knew that it was a hijacked plane with 175 passengers (CNN, 1996). In this case, Allan (2006, p. 152) pointed out that such people are often simply "in the wrong place at the right time".

Citizen journalists are able to provide with breaking news immediately and on regular basis because these days all people have smart phones, iPads and they are active users of social media, they are omnipresent, whilst professional journalists cannot be everywhere. Moreover, their rapidity and sponta-

neity allow them to collect news anytime (Armoogum, 2013).

#### **Content of the news are produced by users**

Researchers have argued that users produce content of the news (Jonsson and Ornebring, 2011; Wall, 2012). Carpenter (2010, p. 1079) claimed that: "Online citizen journalists performed better at providing a diversity of information. Their content adds to the diversity of information available in the marketplace". She believes that the diversity of content of traditional media is narrow and they suffer from decreasing profits while online media is thriving. Also, Pease (1990) observed that idea of newsroom leaderships that is have minority workers in newsrooms lead to declining of diversity, as a result they morally and economically failed.

However, some researchers have claimed that content of news citizen journalists impersonal and inflammatory (Holt and Karlsson, 2015; Johnson, 2012). For example, Holt and Karlsson (2015) found that citizen journalists in Sweden often tell soft news, importantly news such as, policy and local authorities issues or people who suffered by decisions of them are reported occasionally. Mostly they report news of individual relevance, and their style of reporting is unemotional and impersonal. Finally, the results of investigation show that citizen journalism in Sweden was unable to report essential news to the public as their content of news is narrow (Holt and Karlsson, 2015).

Moreover, Johnson (2012) claimed that the content of the news of citizen journalists differ from professional journalists as they use more sensational and inflammatory style. She investigated this issue during the 2008 presidential election in America, comparing traditional media and citizen journalists. On CNN's iReport came thousands text, pictures, audio and video from citizens. Analysing these materials, Johnson argued that in many cases citizen journalists used the facts from materials, which reported traditional media, only adding their opinion before reporting it on iReport. Johnson (2012, p. 48) concluded her investigation saying that: "traditional media is doing a better job of trying to remain objective in their reporting, whereas the notion of objectivity is not something that many citizens journalists may understand, know, or care about".

Bowman and Willis (2003) observed that in many cases citizens and internet users produce content giving feedback or support comments of polls, stories and mini-forums.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has examined who citizen journalists are, and the nature of their attitude

to the reporting of news, particularly focusing on to their ability to collect news, and the diversity of their content. With regard to the theories of researchers, their study has shown that various definitions of citizen journalists (given above) tend to accentuate the relation between citizen journalists and society (Lindner, Connell and Meyer, 2015).

In most cases, citizen journalists are able to collect news rapidly without any difficulties because they are always equipped with devices. Moreover, these days the internet gives citizens to report news immediately around the world. However, without internet they also can provide current news. For example, citizen journalists reported elections using SMS messenger in Sierra Leone, West Africa in 2012 (Marshall, 2012). Their text reports included details as the number of people who were waiting time to vote and their quotes about election. Citizen journalists reported elections by SMS because the building in which the election took place was unfinished, and consequently without electricity. Using this method of reporting Gmail accounts in London received information on time, their news were verified, selected, then posted to Twitter (Marshall, 2012). This example and various other examples given in this study, show that the power of citizen journalists is significant in collecting news.

The content of the news of citizen journalists is different. According to Calvert and Torres (2011), on the whole, citizen journalism covers news such as accidents, disaster and instantaneous news, although some citizens make news covering issues of state, governmental officials and authorities. These volumes of nonprofessional journalism is facilitated by new technologies, as well as cultural and economic changes. Wall (2012, p. 2) argued that: "although often focused on local news, citizen journalism is an international phenomenon".

Finally, this study has supported the analysis of citizen journalists conducted by Kaufhold, Valenzuela and Zuniga (2010), which suggest that a number of attributes such as absence of skills and professional training, unpaid work, unedited publication of content, plain language and their news judgment, separate it from professional journalism.

Seeing a future for citizen journalism Deuze (2009, p. 263) claimed that there is "no reason to assume that people empowered through their newfound publishing freedoms will, at some point, stop blogging, posting, chatting, podcasting, or vlogging". This means that citizen journalism has will continue to have as significant an impact upon society in the future as it does today.

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