

Social Media in Journalism

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Abstract: Journalism is a progressive industry in which new technologies and ways of reporting the news are becoming the norm. Although traditional media like the television, newspapers and radio are still available, there is a growing competition from interactive online media. Social media has revolutionized the way we consume news and information. With platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram becoming increasingly popular, journalists must adapt to the new landscape of reporting and storytelling. With the advent of social media, news can now be shared instantly with a global audience. Newspapers, faced with continuing declines in print circulation, are signing on to social media, hoping to engage and/or attract readers. This paper is a primer on the uses of social media in journalism.

Keywords: Social Media, Journalism, Social Network, Internet

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of social media has dramatically changed the way people access daily news updates. Instead of buying printed newspapers, more and more people are getting news through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, BuzzFeed, among others. In other words, our way of consuming information has changed since the advent of the Internet. Social media is becoming integral part today's society and an indispensable part of everyday life. It enables people to easily communicate and share information. It is getting into our daily routine and creating some kind of addiction of getting quick information [1].



Figure 1: Several sources of news [3].

News consumption today is not the same as pre-Internet news when people waited for their morning papers or sat down at an appointed time for the evening news on television. Traditional journalism practice is being disrupted by social media cultures of communication. People are no longer depending on newspapers, radio or television for the news. They are on Twitter or Facebook, sifting through content and sharing stories from their friends and family. This makes social media a great place to do research and make connections. New

reporters are now responsible for sharing their stories far and wide, and making sure it stays in the news cycle for as long as possible [2]. Figure 1 shows several sources of news [3], while Figure 2 displays journalists at work [4].



Figure 2: Journalists at work [4].

II. SOCIAL MEDIA BASICS

Modern social media, also known as social networking, include Facebook (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, California, USA), YouTube (San Mateo, California, USA), LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, California, USA), Instagram (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), and Pinterest (San Francisco, California, USA). Both the traditional and modern social media are illustrated in Figure 3 [5]. Modern social media began in 1978 by Ward Christensen and Randy Sues who created bulletin board to inform friends of meetings, announcements, and share information. Since then, social media has become an integral part of our life [6]. Social media gives companies another means of reaching people in ways that traditional media cannot. They allow your company to boost their brand. Companies that fail to invest in having a strong presence on social media will soon realize they missed out on a serious competitive advantage. As shown in Figure 4, the critical characteristics of social media are connectedness, collaboration, and community [7].



Figure 3: Traditional and modern social media [5].



Figure 4: Critical characteristics of social media [7].

Social media (also called Web 2.0 or social networking) refers to Internet-based and mobile-based tools that allow individuals to communicate, share ideas, send personal messages, and images. Web 1.0 is the “read-only Web.” Consumers are allowed to read information created by the provider of the online information. Web 2.0 allows users to create information, send posts and share audio, graphics, text, and video online [8].

Social media are computer-mediated communication tools that enable users to share and consume content through varied modalities such as text, image, and video [9]. Recently, the use of social media has been extended to the healthcare field. Healthcare professionals now use SM as part of their daily activities. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests. The majority of those who use social networking sites use them to form self-aggregated interest groups for fundraising, awareness, marketing, and general support.

SM sites may include wikis, blogs, and social networks.

- **Wikis:** These are easy-to-publish websites. They can be quickly and easily edited by multiple users. Wiki” is a Hawaiian term meaning “quick.” Wikipedia happens to be the most commonly used wiki in the medical community as healthcare professionals use Wikipedia to find medical information. However, Wikipedia sometimes contains factual errors that lacks depth compared to traditionally edited, peer-reviewed information sources.
- **Blogs:** These are the oldest, most established, and evaluated form of social media. They provide the opportunity to publish large amounts of information in a variety of media (text, video, and audio) in an open forum. Blogs have been used by healthcare workers for peer-to-peer communication. Medical blogs generally target one of two different audiences: patients or providers. Microblogs provide dynamic and concise form of information exchange through social media.
- **Social Media:** Social media platforms such as Facebook allow individuals to post photos and messages and share them with friends, relatives, and

acquaintances all over the world. Media sharing sites comprise social media tools that are optimized for viewing and sharing. They are great resources for education, community building, marketing, and research. They have become encyclopedic resources.

Today, many social media tools, including social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, wikis, media-sharing sites, are influential in our everyday life and are available for health care professionals (HCPs).

Mobile social media (MSM) has emerged as the combination of social networking and mobile technologies. It is becoming a global phenomenon as it enables IP-connectivity for people on the move. It is mediated by mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptop computers. It refers to social media applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, MySpace, and Twitter that are delivered via mobile devices. These popular social media platforms have made mobile apps for their users to have instant access from anywhere at any time [10]. Figure 5 shows how many people in the US get news from social media [11].

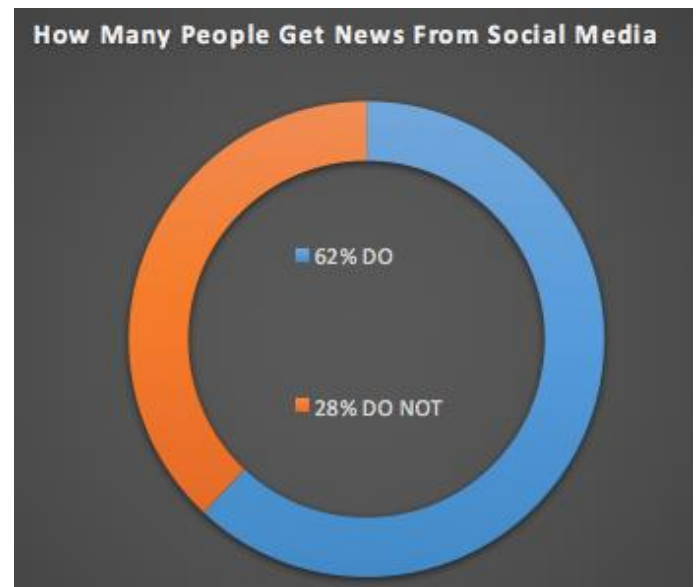


Figure 5: How many people in the US get news from social media [11].

III. SOCIAL MEDIA FOR JOURNALISM

Social media is now influencing business, commerce, marketing, politics, games, sports, movies, journalism, and entertainment, wherever human communication is involved.

Social media determines how people receive and share news. Today social media and journalism are one and the same thing. Facebook is the most widely used social media, and is also increasingly important for news consumption.

Journalism has been defined as the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. Social media journalism is now the emerging and popular trend of collecting, producing, distributing, and consuming news on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others in addition to the conventional news platforms of radio, print, and broadcast. It encompasses a variety of web-related applications, technology, and platforms used by media reporters, agencies, and even unemployed and unprofessional bloggers, writers, etc. to develop content on various topics and share these on social media platforms. Social media journalism is somewhat similar online journalism, which is essentially the online version of traditional journalism [12].

Social media has drastically changed the way journalists do their jobs. It has become a space shared by journalists and citizens. A generation of Internet technologies has facilitated the involvement of citizens in the observation, selection, filtering, distribution, and interpretation of events. People use social media to voice their opinions, whether through the use of citizen journalism or by commenting on news articles. An example of a citizen journalist is shown in Figure 6 [13]. Sharing opinions on news stories has become such an important aspect of journalism in social media, but it also can distract from the story itself.

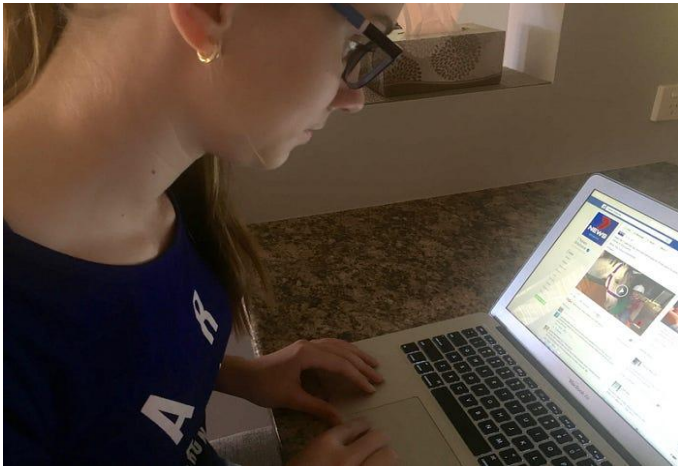


Figure 6: A typical citizen journalist [13].

There are so many opportunities and responsibilities for journalists today through social. Editors are no longer the gatekeepers of news. The editor plays a very vital role in journalism. An editor is a person who is responsible of what is published or broadcasted. He/she takes care of grammatical and punctuation mistakes; he/she double checks the accuracy of the information before making it public property. Social media has revolutionized the way journalists report and tell stories. Social media platforms like Facebook that was originally created as a platform for university students by a person named Mark Zuckerberg a student of Harvard University in 2004, and since then this medium has gained great popularity worldwide, likewise Twitter was introduced in 2006, WhatsApp was introduced in 2009, Instagram in 2010, Blogs and other such things. With 2 billion users per month, Facebook is the world's most popular social media platform, which makes indispensable for news broadcasting organizations and journalists. Journalists use Twitter to share links to their work and what they are reading. A growing number of journalists are using Snapchat as a storytelling tool.

Apart from entertainment, social media has become a major channel conveying news and updated information for the majority of people worldwide. Social media is defined by the characteristics of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectivity. It has fueled an explosion of participation in the news process. It builds the notion of a participatory media culture, where citizens are viewed as going beyond just reading the news. It gives the news consumer the ability to take part in the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of news. The tools for participation allow for users to become co-collaborators in the journalistic process. Social media platforms provide spaces for users to share content such as status updates, links, photos, and videos [14].

IV. BENEFITS

Social media is a fast and easy way for people to communicate with one another. Journalism is itself a form communication.

Journalists and news organizations are not the only ones who benefit from the shift from one-way communication in traditional journalism to two-way conversations. It gives audiences a tool to voice their opinions.

Social media tools help journalists perform their job more effectively. They have forced PR pros to adapt in the digital age or perish. Other benefits of social media in journalism include the following [15]:

- *Conversation:* Social media has changed the relationship between journalists and their audience. In the past, news was a one-way street, with journalists simply delivered information to the public. However, with social media, news has become a conversation, where journalists can interact with their audience in real-time.
- *Diversity:* Social media platforms enable journalists to uncover diverse perspectives for enhancing stories. Social media has given a voice to marginalized communities, leading to a more diverse range of voices in journalism.
- *Timeliness:* There is no timelier place for journalists to get their stories to the public. Via social media, news travels at lightning-quick speeds. Stories allow for a quick and easy way to publish timely updates minus any sort of spam. If you need a timely quote to bolster your reporting, post a request on Twitter or LinkedIn and watch the fast and furious response pour in from experts and eyewitnesses around the world.
- *Speed:* One of the most significant benefit of social media on journalism is the speed at which news spreads. The popularity of social media has been utilized to spread the news in a fast and productive fashion. Speed or immediacy is the main aspect of social media that helps journals best in receiving news.
- *New Heights:* Used strategically, social media empowers journalists at all levels to take their works to new heights in distributing stories, connecting with audiences. Journalists recognize several ways social media can come in handy in their daily work.
- *Global Reach:* Social media opens up doors across oceans and beyond borders like never before. This extends your reach to those most interested in the topic worldwide. In countries such as the USA, Poland, the UK, and South Korea, half of adults use social networking sites. Figure 7 shows Twitter global engagement [16].

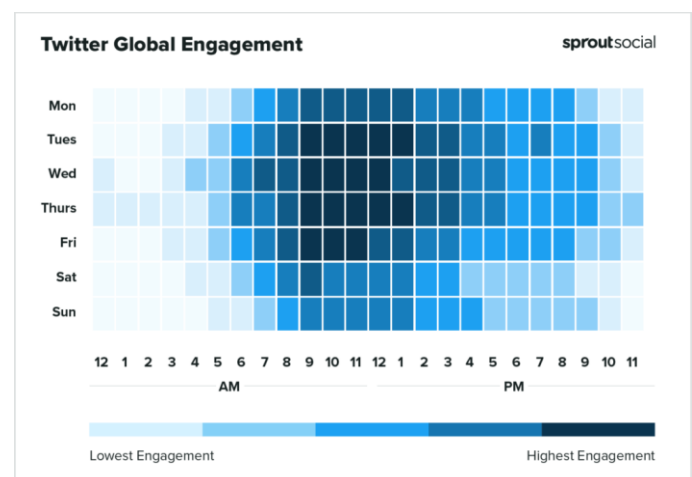


Figure 7: Twitter global engagement [16].

- **Marketing:** In the digital age, social media is a cost-effective method for marketing and is used by media companies to market products and services at a minimal cost. This marketing scheme is being used by four big names in journalism, including The Washington Post, The Guardian, BBC, and The New York Times.

V. CHALLENGES

There are many disadvantages of social media as far as journalism is concerned. While social media has brought about many positive changes in journalism, it has also posed several challenges. A journalist must prevent information overload in the followers' feeds. Social media raises questions about journalism's jurisdictional claim to the news since social media is characterized by its connected and collaborative nature. Other challenges include the following [17]:

- **Misinformation:** News may appear as a source of misinformation. While the reach of social media is great, it lacks a method of policing content and sources. There is mistrust of the media that oftentimes stems from misinformation. Fact-checking and verification have become critical in the age of social media.
- **Quality of Journalism:** The critics of social media believe social media is negatively affecting the practice of journalism. They refer to the many instances of false and fabricated information generated on social media sites. Unreliable information passes onto mainstream media through social media and there is no check and balance; even abuses and allegations have become part of news without any proof. There have been many incidents where journalist's only source of information is social media; it is passed on and gets published or broadcasted in the mainstream media. Thus, some journalists believe that excessive reliance on social media has decreased the quality of journalism. Since many journalists publish without fact-checking, it becomes a struggle to find a reliable source.
- **Fake News:** Journalists can instantly report just by using their smartphones. Since news is so easy to share and almost anyone can call themselves an online journalist, it can be difficult to find real news on social media like Twitter. Platforms such as Facebook try to change their appearances to prevent fake news from spreading. The Internet is flooded with "fake news" and so are social media platforms. Since there is a lot of fake news, the press can have trouble maintaining their credibility with their audiences.
- **Threats:** Threats of personal physical harm are the most common forms of harassment for the journalist, especially TV journalist. Some groups of journalists are more likely than others to have experienced harassment or threats by people outside their news organization. Some have experienced threats or harassment based on their race or ethnicity.

Although social media presents these challenges, its multifaceted capabilities make adoption essential for today's journalism.

CONCLUSION

The rise of Internet and mobile apps, as popular gateways of news consumption, has profoundly changed what constitute journalism. Journalism is not dead in America but merely

evolving. It is the birth of a democratic movement that emphasizes some of journalism's key factors: transparency, honesty, and giving a voice to the ordinary person. Social media has revolutionized journalism, changing the way news is gathered, shared, and consumed. Although people are still getting their news from other areas of journalism such as television, radio, and newspapers, the number of people getting their news from social media is increasing daily. Social media will continue to dominate the journalism industry as a kind of modern news reporting. All media as we know it today will become social [13].

Traditional journalism is going nowhere in the near future. The future of journalism lies in the social media territory. The journalists of the future must reinvent themselves too. More information about the uses social media in journalism can be found in the books in [18-21] and the following related journals:

- *Journal of New Media and Mass Communication*
- *Journalism and Social Media*
- *Digital Journalism*
- *Journalism and Memorialization in the Age of Social Media*
- *The Future of Journalism*

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