



The Birth of a New Journalist

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Abstract: Digital media caters to a generation that is effectively online and therefore expansion of digital business units of mainstream media houses is the order of the day. In general journalism comes in different forms—entertainment driven, celebrity laden, serious, politically focused and likewise. The changing nature of technology impacts directly upon the practice of journalism resulting in a fundamental transformation of the subject. Of course there are expressions that it would be a pleasurable experience to read in print but reality is that it is of no use to digital consumers. Since the 1990's different studies have explored the implications of the internet for journalistic practice and the majority of the results indicate that the internet paves new way of collecting and reporting information into the newsrooms. This paper tries to examine the various issues which make Digital Journalism stand out in the present era.

KEYWORDS: Digital Media, Internet users, Speed, Blog, Newsrooms.

Introduction: The news media is in a crisis across the developed world and the present day generation gap between journalist of mainstream and new media is evident. Digital media caters to a generation that is effectively online and therefore the expansion of digital business units of mainstream media houses is the order of the day. In general journalism comes in different forms—entertainment driven, celebrity laden, serious, politically focused and likewise. The changing nature of technology impacts directly upon the practice of journalism resulting in a fundamental transformation of the subject. There is a significant change in the media as a result of a convergence between the computational logic characteristic of the computers and the communicative logic characteristic of the media. This raises a pertinent question i.e. --Has new technology revitalized the public sphere or has become a tool of commerce for an increasingly un-public, undemocratic news media?

News reporting is aging badly and in this era, there is a gloom in most developed countries. The United States media business has been turned upside down and in a very short span media consumption has changed more in the past few years than in the last 200 years or so. The tools of journalism have been best, more plentiful and exiting. There is also a ready audience 24X7. This has enabled media to break the physical and psychological constraints. The web now has become a newspaper/a radio/a television/a movie theatre as per consumer requirement. The advent of Digital media has created a journalist who holds the powerful accountable, shines light in dark corners and brings people together. For a newspaper, print or online, when it comes to news reporting, it is the same old structure dating back to the Fifties or even earlier. For the reporter, there is the same posture of effacing his/her personality behind facts, and a stiff structure based on a string of carefully arranged paragraphs, color elements, etc.

Today, mainstream news sites are the most widespread form of online news media.¹ As of present, the vast majority of journalists in the Western world use the internet regularly in their daily work.² In addition to mainstream news sites, digital journalism is found

¹ Deuze 2003, p. 206.

² Deuze 2003, p. 206.

in index and category sites (sites without much original content but many links to existing news sites), meta- and comment sites (sites about news media issues like media watchdogs), and share and discussion sites (sites that facilitate the connection of people,³⁴. The development of the internet and its' extremely rapid penetration in all aspects of human life implies the idea of technological determinism - the term, which is used to refer to the common assumption that new technologies are the primary cause of major social and historical changes. Working in an industry that offers internet services and being part of persuading customers that this is everything they need in this world for their life to be more efficient, fun, successful and simple. Blogs are another type digital journalism phenomenon capable of providing fresh information, ranging from personal sites to those with huge number of audiences.⁵ Blogs, wikis and the rise of user generated content represented the diminishing power of traditional media, which served merely the needs of the owners with service to the public only on the second place. The public questioned journalism and the truth presented by the journalists. At the same time they were powerless for not being able to be heard in traditional media. Digital journalism is involved in the cloud journalism phenomenon, which is a constant flow of contents in the Broadband Society.⁶

There are expressions that it would be a pleasurable experience to read in print but reality is that it is of no use to digital consumers. Since the 1990's different studies have explored the implications of the internet for journalistic practice – (Miller, 1998⁷; Deuze, 1999⁸; Singer, 1998⁹ Rivas-Rodriguez, 2003¹⁰; Gillmor, 2004¹¹.) and the majority of the results indicate that the internet paves new way of collecting and reporting information into the newsrooms. This paper tries to examine the various issues which make Digital Journalism stand out in the present era.

READERS: Digital journalism allows for discussion at levels that print does not offer on its own. People can comment on articles and start discussion boards on the articles, which was an impossible phenomenon before the arrival of the internet. The process of discussing a news item is the hallmark digital journalism. Readers can add to the story and connect with other people who shares same interest on the topic. This creates an opportunity for a niche audience, providing people with options to view and read. This process opens up new possibilities such as access to different Medias such as audio, video, digital pictures etc. As the online sources provide quick, efficient and accurate information it is easy for a digital journalist to keep their readers up-to-date. The combination of professional contents (mail, reports, and PowerPoint presentations) and social networking feeds have put traditional and value-added contents (news, books) under great pressure. This in turn becomes very simple for an average reader to have an impact in the news world through blogs. He or she can comment if necessary on news stories on reputable news websites.

On the other hand readers become used to what they already know and cannot catch up with the new technologies in the 21st century. There is also a need for accuracy in digital journalism but as this kind is open to novices, there is a lack of editorial control, writing techniques are new(which sometimes can be challenging to the readers), news can emerge from anywhere , addresses networks with fragmented audiences, delivered at high speed and most importantly is open. Another major dispute is the credibility of online news websites. A digital journalism credibility study performed by the [Online News Association](#) compares the online public credibility ratings to actual media respondent credibility ratings. Looking at a variety of online media sources, the study found that overall the public saw online media as more credible than it actually is.¹² But still it can be inferred that digital media has created a new brand of journalism and journalist.

CITIZEN JOURNALISM: Digital journalism's lack of a traditional "editor" has given rise to [citizen journalism](#). The Internet has broadened the effect that the digital age has on journalism and because of that most people have access, and can add their forms of journalism to the information network. This allows anyone who wants to share something they consider important. Individuals who are not professional journalists who present news through their blogs or websites are often referred to as citizen journalists where

³ Deuze 2003, p. 208-211

⁴ Kawamoto 2005, p. 15

⁵ Kawamoto 2005, p. 16.

⁶ Fondevila Gascón, Joan Francesc (2009).

⁷ Miller.L.C(1998)

⁸ Deuze M

⁹ Singer. J

¹⁰ Rivas-Rodriguez. M. (2003).

¹¹ Gillmor D.

¹² www.mjbear.com

there is no need of a proper journalistic education. Citizen journalists are able to publish information that may not be reported otherwise, and the public has a greater opportunity to be informed. Some companies use the information that a citizen journalist relays when they themselves cannot access certain situations, especially in countries where **freedom of the press** is limited. Anyone can **record** events and send it anywhere they wish, or put it on their website. Non-profit and grass roots digital journalism sites may have far fewer resources than their corporate counterparts, still due to the digital media are able to have websites that are comparable.¹³

But for this kind of journalism to be effective and successful there is a need of citizen editors, their role being to solicit other people, provide accurate information and to mediate interactivity among users. An example can be found in the South Korean online daily newspaper, “OH MY NEWS” where the founder recruited several hundred volunteer “citizen reporters” to write news articles which were edited by four professional journalists¹⁴

COMPETITION from INSIDE: Newspapers have created their own gauge to measure their obsolescence. By encouraging their news writing staff to blog, they unleashed new, more personal, and more modern writing practices. But there is a disadvantage as, many journalists becomes more interested on their own blogs than in their dedicated newspaper or magazine sections.

SPEED and SPACE: More space is equivalent to more news as space available online opens up possibilities for news presentations that cannot be done in hard copy formats. This also allows news to be presented in an innovative way. (Gunter, 2003)¹⁵ Web has the capability to link countries of interest across the globe ensuring political participation. This is enhanced by speed which enables journalists to receive data without leaving the newsroom (Quinn, 2002)¹⁶. This improves timeliness as well as journalistic standards.

There is a disadvantage though as many a times news stories are released and updated in a hurry i.e. without proper ethical checks as news organizations are encouraged by the speed of the internet. Digital media has a detrimental effect on journalistic standards as individuals are expected to become multi-specialists-getting news pictures, writing news copies and designing news pages.

Trust factor: The contract with the Brand. When a version of The New York Times, The Guardian, or a major French newspaper is picked, this act materializes trust in the professionalism associated with the brand. In a more granular way, it works the same for the writer. Some are notoriously sloppy, biased, or agenda-driven; others are so good than they became a brand by themselves. The issue is that when we read a byline we trust and assume that the reporter has performed the required work i.e. collecting five or ten times the amount of information he will use in the end product. The reporting doesn't need to be proven or validated by an editing that harks back to the previous century. Quotes will be used only for the relevant opinion of a source, or to make a salient point, not as an attempt to prove professionalism or fairness.

The influence of magazine writing: Much better than newspapers, magazines have always done a good job capturing readers' preferences. They've have always been ahead in market research, graphic design, concept and writing evolution. This is also applicable to the weekend magazines operated by large dailies. As an example, magazine writers have been quick to adopt first person accounts that have rejuvenated journalism and allowed powerful narrative. But in many newspapers, authors and their editors still resists this.

Impact on Publishers: Many newspapers, such as the **New York Times**, have created **online sites** to remain competitive and have taken advantage of audio, video, and text linking to remain at the top of news consumers' lists. Newspapers rarely break news stories any more, with most websites reporting on breaking news before the cable news channels. Digital journalism allows for reports to start out vague and generalized, and progress to a better story. Newspapers and TV cable are at a disadvantage because they generally can only put together stories when an ample amount of detail and information are available. Often, newspapers have to wait for the next day, or even more than a day if it is a late-breaking story, before being able to publish it. Newspapers lose a lot of ground to their online counterparts, with **ad revenue** shifting to the Internet, and subscription to the printed paper decreasing. People are now able to find the news they want, when they want, without having to leave their homes or pay to receive the news.

¹³ Kawamoto 2003, p. 15.

¹⁴ Bentley 2011, p. 107

¹⁵ Gunter. B. (2003). News and the Net

¹⁶ Quinn.S.(2002) Knowledge

Because of this phenomenon, many people have viewed digital journalism as the death of journalism. Free advertising on websites like **Craigslist** has transformed how people publicize; the Internet has created a faster, cheaper way for people to get news out, thus creating the shift in ad sales from standard newspapers to the Internet. There has been a substantial effect of digital journalism and media on the newspaper industry, with the creation of new business models.^[17] It is now possible to contemplate a time in the near future when major towns will no longer have a newspaper and when magazines and network news operations will employ no more than a handful of reporters.^[18] Many newspapers and individual print journalists have been forced out of business because of the popularity of digital journalism.^[19] The newspapers that have not been willing to be forced out of business have attempted to survive by saving money, laying off staff, shrinking the size of the publications, eliminating editions, as well as partnering with other businesses to share coverage and content. In 2009, one study concluded that most journalists are ready to compete in a digital world and that these journalists believe the transition from print to digital journalism in their newsroom is moving too slowly.^[20] Some highly specialized positions in the publishing industry have become obsolete. The growth in digital journalism and the **near collapse of the economy** has also led to **downsizing** for those in the industry.

Students wishing to become journalists now need to be familiar with digital journalism in order to be able to contribute and develop journalism skills. Not only must a journalist analyze their audience and focus on effective communication with them, they have to be quick; news websites are able to update their stories within minutes of the news event.

Critics believe digital journalism has made it easier for individuals who are not qualified journalists to misinform the general public. Many believe that this form of journalism has created a number of sites that do not have credible information. Sites such as **PerezHilton.com** have been criticized for blurring the lines between journalism and opinionated writing.

Some critics believe that newspapers should not switch to a solely Internet-based format, but instead keep a component of print as well as digital. News publication **The Ann Arbor News**, which ceased print publication in July 2009, is an example of this type of format. The News instead switched to an internet based entity, **AnnArbor.com**, in order to keep up with the transition from print to web.

Digital journalism allows citizens and readers the opportunity to join in on **threaded discussions** relating to a news article that has been read by the public. This offers an excellent source for writers and reporters to decide what is important and what should be omitted in the future. These threads can provide useful information to writers of digital journalism so that future articles can be pruned and improved to possibly create a better article the next time around.

Blogs: With the rise of digital media, a specific move can be observed which is from traditional journalism to amateur journalism or blogging. Blogs are a new genre in journalism due to its narrative style of news along with personalization that is a definite away movement from traditional journalism,^[21] thereby reconstructing the news into a more decentralized and conventional form.. Blogging now plays a major role in the transmission of news and ideas across cities, states, and countries, blogs are now breaking stories. Blogs and wikis made the public possible to play an active role in collecting, publishing and disseminating the information and thereby overtaking the role that was once exclusively reserved for traditional media. Blogs and wikis gave public the possibility to regain the voice and also to represent the corrective mechanism for bad journalism. Social software and blogs represent digital media, which is based on technological innovation, but would wither away unless there was the right time, space and the social moment that enabled its' flourishing. Even online news publications have blogs that are written by their affiliated journalists or other important writers. Blogging allows readers and journalists to be opinionated about the news and talk about it in an open environment. Furthermore comments are allowed in a blog which normally the news outlets do not allow because of monitoring requirements. By allowing comments, the readers can interact with a story instead of just absorbing the words on the screen. According to a study, 15% of the readers who read blogs look for news in them.^[22]

The Indian Scenario: In this digital age we see a gloomy picture in most of the developed nations with regards to the media market i.e. the future of print media. Across the globe there has been a re-shaping of the present media landscape, with the arrival of internet in developing nations and evolution of the same for the developed, the emergence of different forms of new media, and the increase in online social networks. But here lies a paradox as in India as print media circulation continues to grow at a very good rate (nearly

¹⁷ Fondevila Gascón, Joan Francesc; Del Olmo Arriaga, Josep Lluís and Sierra Sánchez, Javier (2011)

¹⁸ www.zcommunications.org

¹⁹ abcnews.go.com

²⁰ www.mediamanagementcenter.org

²¹ Wall, Melissa. 2005

²² Synovate survey

16%). The use of ICT by the population depends on their socioeconomic positions within the society, i.e. digital divide. But it is not technical in nature but a part of larger divisions stemming from structural inequalities. Actually the political, economic and socioeconomic hierarchies keeps disenfranchised Indians from using ICT to the greatest extent possible. The exposure of Indians to new media technologies depends primarily on social locations which includes gender, caste, class and place of residence in this stratified society. Therefore the focus has not shifted from the print versions of the media in India and more than three-fourths of the world's top selling newspapers are published from Asia with India and China dominating the scenario. In India, the growth trends in circulation and leadership are stronger in the Indian language sector, mainly Hindi. (Table-I) The reason is not hard to estimate. With nearly 120 million populations and a focus to educate them all (Sarbo Siksha Abijan²³) has led to the strong increase in the percentage of readership. This increase is also supported by extreme under pricing of newspaper cover prices. But this situation may not be rosy for years as researchers have suggested that by 2040, the Indian Print industry would meet the fate of the US print industry but by that time the Indian media publishers should be in a position of comfort with advertising revenue.²⁴ Also the broadband subscriber base is expected to reach 600 million by 2020.²⁵

The global focus on digital media has swept over India too. Presently India has more than 100 million internet users (Internet World Stats 2011), served mostly by bandwidth (Table-II). The potential for very high social media uses can be derived from the fact that 100 million internet users in India accounts for only 8.5% penetration in population. As more and more users in India are turning to the internet and social media, mobile phones are emerging as the second most-viewed screen for Indian consumers. A recent study by online audience and ad measurement platform **Vizisense** has pointed out that nearly 2 crore of the mobile internet users in India are increasingly turning to their mobile phones. Nearly two crore of mobile internet users are cutting their newspapers and television consumption by 50 per cent and shifting to the mobile phones to access content. The survey was based on a sample size of 2,024 mobile internet users. Nearly 87 per cent of the 4.8 crore mobile internet users go online on mobile every day, it said. In addition, nearly half of these users go online through their cell phones every 2 to 3 hours and the duration of these visits span nearly an hour. This trend is more evident in the areas beyond the top eight metros as nearly 55 per cent of all daily mobile internet users are from outside the top eight metros.



Media analysts believe that the users or viewers spending less time over newspapers and television are a sign of growing fragmentation in viewership. Smita Jha consulting head, entertainment & media, PricewaterhouseCoopers India said, "Gone are the days when a television channel could command dedicated viewers or users as the presence of multiple devices, television channels among other reasons have led to fragmentation. While television is known as the "sit-back" medium, mobile devices are known as the "sit forward" medium. In addition, with a large chunk of our population being young, they are known to multi-task and are moving from one device to another." Just as in 2009, most Internet users access the web to check their e-mail (87% in 2009, 95% in 2011) or search for general information. With an added emphasis on global learning, there is an increasing trend of users searching for education-related information. This is supported by the fact that the youth is driving Internet usage today. Another emphasis can be seen on searching or buying travel products and paying bills online, both registering a growth of more than 20% in comparison with the previous year. While accessing e-mails and searching for information remain the top uses of the Internet in India, 2010 saw a significant jump in Internet users viewing videos and searching for songs (Table-III) – 72% of the total active online population in India watched videos online with YouTube serving as the most popular viewing source. This lead to a decrease in downloading music (-3%) as the online music channels are easily to reach.

²³ All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010 in India

²⁴ Jacob Mathew(2011)

²⁵ Price Water House Coopers

TABLE-I**Indian Media Segments (Cumulative Average Growth Rate-CAGR)**

Segment	2008 \$ billions	2013 \$ billions	% CAGR
Television	4.81	9.45	15.5
Print	3.45	5.32	9.0
Film	2.18	3.37	9.1
Animation	0.35	0.79	17.8
OOH	0.32	0.59	12.8
Gaming	0.13	0.55	33.3
Internet	0.12	0.43	27.9
Radio	0.16	0.33	14.2
Music	0.14	0.21	8.0

Source: KPMG-FICCI Report

Table -II

The following table clarifies the situation of the present scenario of Indian Digital Media industry.

1	Urban Indians getting online for Social Networking	67%
2	Indian netizens watching online videos	73%
3	Total online advertising spend in India	67% (Google & Face book)
4	Primary driver of online activity in India	Social Networking
5	Social networking users in India	60.5 million (nearly the Italian population)
6	Social Media penetration	5%
7	Growth rate of Social Media users in India	52%
8	Time spent in social networking	1 in 4 minutes
9	Use of Face book by Indians	44% (November,2012)

Source: WeAreSocial, a Singapore based research organization.

Table-III

Top Social Networking Sites in India (July, 2009 vis-a vis July, 2010)

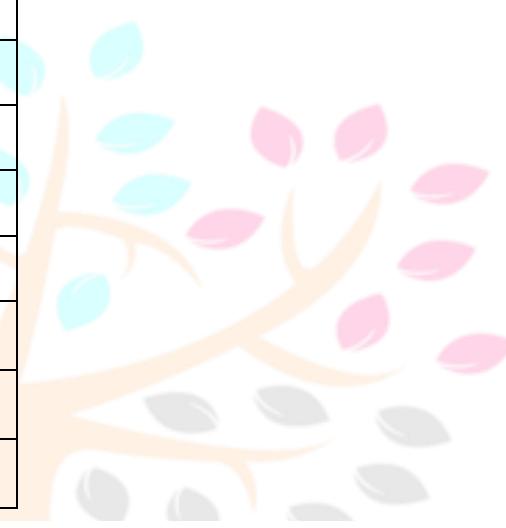
	July,09	July,10	Change in %
Internet-Total Audience	35028	39562	13%
Social Networking	23255	33158	43%
Facebook.com	7472	20873	179%
Orkut	17069	19871	16%
Bharatstudent.com	4292	4432	3%
Yahoo!Pulse	N/A	3507	N/A
Twitter.com	984	3341	239%
Linkdin.com	N/A	3267	N/A
Zedge.com	1767	3206	81%
Ibibo.com	1562	2960	89%
Yahoo!Buzz	542	1807	233%
Shtyle.fm	407	1550	281%

Source: comScore Media Metrix

Conclusion: The nature of news gathering is exposed like never before, placing notions of journalistic objectivity and impartiality, the 'holy grail' of professional journalism under scrutiny. The digital journalist is tune about peoples mind and therefore can be termed as an opinion moderator rather than an opinion generator. Digital medium is the one which is talking to people, not at them. In the present day, news organizations look for potential reporters who can go beyond merely "making phone calls, writing a story and going home," Lewis DVorkin, an expert in digital journalism and social media and a Forbes Media chief product officer, notes in an online article. Shayla Thiel-Stern, an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota's School of Journalism and Mass Communication, says journalists engage in social media to conduct research and develop story ideas. You can also use social media to promote your own articles, she says, but you should be cautious in doing so.

"There's often a negotiation happening when they do; if a story is not verified with reliable sources, should they break it on social media, for example?" Thiel-Stern says. "This is really a difficult question in cases where people on Twitter are spreading rumors about an event or occurrence but the journalist is unable to verify the story." Regardless, social media enables you to join the conversations that news stories generate. It's a way of delivering the news quickly and directly, facilitating the process by which you gather information about the world around you.

Journalists need to change, as well. Instead of thinking of themselves as only print journalists or broadcast journalists, they need to think of themselves as journalists, period. And they must be able to report the news in publication, online or in front of a microphone. But while the way journalists do their job is changing, the fundamentals remain the same and as pertinent as ever. Journalists today still need to be able to gather information and tell a story. Most importantly, they need to be able to think. A journalist's most important tool is not a notepad, tape recorder, digital camcorder, computer or even the ability to write a story, it is his or her brain. As a writer for the masses, journalists have to cut through the flab of all the information around. They need to question, question, and question. What happened? Who does this affect? Why is this important? Critical thinking precedes good writing. So, future journalists need to learn how to think. They also need to learn how to learn. The media the only thing isn't changing, the world of work also is.



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