Role of Freedom of Speech for Citizen Journalism in Indian Perspective

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Abstract

The research study highlights the power behind society's point of view in transferring information about social issues through citizen journalism in the digital era. This research study aims to understand society's point of view on citizen journalism. The rapid growth of information technology and digital media leads to tremendous change in the way people use their own social network. At first, digital media used to be a platform that worked like a personal diary, where people could share, comment and post contents of their choice. But in the contemporary world citizen journalism as a concept evolved and brought revolution in the social media. The research study is focused on whether Citizen Journalism is more popular than mainstream media, the positive impacts of Citizen Journalism on society, role of Citizen journalism in slum improvement, citizen Journalism's contribution in drawing society's attention towards India's forgotten issues and future of Citizen Journalism in Indian perspective. The research study is qualitative and explorative in nature. Secondary data will be used like the contents of social media platforms, for example YouTube, Facebook, etc. Content analysis of the social media platforms on Citizen Journalism will be done using coding and tabulation method.

INTRODUCTION

Citizen journalists could be activists challenging dominant tentative events or they could be independent social media channel producers, or they could be witnessing a certain event (Miller, 2019).

One of the problems with the citizen journalists is the lack of proper professional training which may restrict them from covering every possible event (Kabha, 2019). Citizen journalism is regarded as a radical challenge to the institutional practices of the mainstream media. Even when user-generated content is judged newsworthy, the professional news outlet frequently has complete control over it (Mahamed et al. 2021). Gatekeeping is still the province of the experts. As a result, a lot of citizen journalism content adopts the news media's narrative logic. Images created by citizens are frequently not credited or acknowledged (Luo & Harrison, 2019).

Scholars of communication and media use the phrase "citizens' media" to describe electronic media and ICTs that are used and controlled by citizens

and groups to suit their own informational and communicational requirements. Community media, alternative media, autonomous media, participatory media, and radical media are all included in it. A variety of media outlets, from locally owned radio and television stations to periodicals published by the homeless, engage in citizen journalism. Citizens are reduced to consultants when there are little opportunities for them to participate in production due to reliance on professionals. Software often enables consumers to create webpages and discussion groups with little technical knowledge. (Apeh & Didiugwu, 2017).

Samuel contends that certain CJs might serve as citizen observers, enabling voyeurism and the exploitation of other people's tragedies. A growing number of citizen journalists are violating the privacy of other people and even utilising the data they gather to threaten or harass others. The emerging journalistic genres of participatory journalism, networked journalism, hyperlocal journalism, crowdsourced journalism, and user created material are frequently grouped together with citizen journalism. Cottles contrasts this by describing UGC as a tactic used by the major media to undermine any potential threat from citizen journalism. Within several digitally native forms, the relationship between professional and citizen journalists is changing. The scope of citizen journalists' reporting is frequently constrained by their non-professional status. The form seems to work best when used to report on issues affecting the local community or to offer first-person accounts of significant events. Citizen journalists have limited access to elitist sources and institutions while covering breaking news.

Objective of the study

- To know whether citizen Journalism is more popular than mainstream media
- To study the Positive or negative impacts of Citizen Journalism on society
- Role of Citizen Journalism in slum improvement
- To find out citizen Journalism's contribution in bringing attention towards India's forgotten issues.
- To understand the future of Citizen Journalism in Indian perspective

Scope of the Study

The topic undertaken in the paper can act as a tool for a large number of social, political and economic issues of the county. As technology is evolving globally, citizen journalism is gaining popularity. In the era of social media, the participation in social media activism through citizen journalism has almost become a trend. In this study has a wide perspective and it is applicable globally.

Literature Review

Literature review has been done on the relevant topics related to the research study which was already done at national and international level.

History of Citizen Journalism

Cottles contrasts this by describing UGC (User Generated Content) as a tactic used by the major media to undermine any potential threat from citizen journalism. Within several digitally native forms, the relationship between professional and citizen journalists is changing. The scope of citizen journalists' reporting is frequently constrained by their non-professional status. The form seems to work best when used to report on issues affecting the local community or to offer first-person accounts of significant events. Citizen journalists have limited access to elitist sources and institutions while covering breaking news.

Citizen journalism, according to Ornebring, is news created by laypeople. Berger, on the other hand, claims that citizen journalism is carried out by individuals who do not have the status of employees of a media company.

Robinson and DeSShano define citizen journalists as anyone who reports and writes online about a locality without receiving compensation from a major news outlet.

Citizen journalism

Citizen journalism is how regular people in the public, rather than professional journalists, gather and disseminate information online. Citizen journalists can convey the voice of the common person by doing this.

There are two main ways that the general public can become citizen journalists.

1. Working by themselves
2. Working with media house

WORKING BY THEMSELVES

Traditional Media has no impact on it. Citizen journalists do not improve on previously published material. They are producing something independently.

There are two main ways that people can do this.

Through social media

A lot of individuals use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. The general population can assist in reporting what is happening in the world by submitting photos, offering comments, and sharing tales. When someone has strong feelings about a subject, they could start their own blog or website to express those feelings to others. This is a chance for someone to write more or to keep writing about the same subject throughout time.

Through Blogs and websites

A website allows citizen journalists to spread their message using a variety of media. Independent social media producers are a different category of citizen journalism. They assemble evidence of wrongdoing or give an alternate perspective on an issue or event by drawing on a variety of informational sources in addition to curating and critiquing reporting done by others, particularly by mainstream news media. The independents occasionally also generate original reporting.

WORKING WITH MEDIA HOUSE

Some citizen journalists work with the existing media companies or media houses. There are three main ways to do this.

Commenting on articles

Commenting on articles is the practice of readers leaving feedback on internet news stories. You are welcome to remark on the article itself or the subject at hand. You can reply to comments made by other readers and the author of the original article.

Crowdsourcing

Utilizing a crowd, or many people, to work on a project is known as crowdsourcing. In journalism, it refers to requesting more information from the general public in order to finish a story. When a task is exceedingly large and requires many people, journalists typically do this. A newspaper can ask its readers to each read a portion of a lengthy document that has been made public, for instance, in order to verify the facts or hunt for specifics.

Live Blogging

When anything is happening live, as at a concert, a political rally, a sporting event, or a severe weather event like a snowfall, it is known as live blogging. Take a snowstorm as an example. Online newspapers will urge readers to submit photos of the snow, along with anecdotes about how long it has affected them. Another type of citizen journalism is called "witnessing," and it involves people who are there for abrupt, dramatic events and who document what they are seeing and hearing. When a witness captures moments from the "right place at the right time," they frequently produce fragments or snatches of unintentional journalism. Professional outlets' live blogs require quick, ongoing material updates.

Research Questions

The study sought to address these main questions:

- Which media is more popular, citizen journalism or mainstream media?
- What is the positive or negative impact of citizen journalism on society?
- What is the role of citizen journalism in slum improvement?
- How citizen journalism brings attention towards India's forgotten issues?
- What is the future of citizen journalism in India?

Research Methodology

The research is explorative and qualitative in nature.

The research study is based on Secondary data.

Content Analysis of two News Portal has been done which publishes news stories reported by Citizen Journalists. The two News portal in context are NBT (Navbharat Times) and The Quint.

The news stories are selected on the basis of the popularity of the News stories and the kind of issues the stories are focusing.

The collected data are tabulated and coded. Analysis has been done to come to a conclusion as

per the objectives of the research study.

Online media has been used as the main source of data in the research study.

Two Months News Stories of NBT (Navbharat Times) and The Quint has been thoroughly analyzed.

50 News stories has been referred and studied thoroughly. The news stories are on health and hygiene, infrastructural problems, women centric issues, poverty, illiteracy, domestic violence, etc.

Findings and Analysis

The findings and analysis of the research study are based on the data collected through secondary data based on the content analysis of two news portals, namely, NBT (Navbharat Times) and The Quint.

Mainstream Media and Citizen Journalism

The mainstream media included Television, radio, newspaper (either print or e-paper) and magazines. Mainstream media has many layers before publishing or broadcasting the story in front of people. Here, layer means the team of editors and gatekeepers where the editor decides what should be published. Mainstream media comprises of organizations like The Times of India group, India today network, Republic media etc. These are reputable businesses with a bigger investor base. It could be a corporate investment or a political investment. They are referred regarded as being mostly profit-oriented because of their larger investment. They have a broad base of influence. The mainstream media is regarded as the most popular media because of their enormous popularity with the general public.

On the other hand, Citizen Journalism can be practiced through social media platforms like - Facebook, twitter, YouTube or blogs and websites. As the current age is internet driven where the users of internet and social media are increasing. Social media is not confined to many rules and regulations. It is a platform where the general masses accessibility and expression are easier than in the mainstream media. Here anyone can put their points without any certification. But citizen journalists do not have direct funding. They are either funded by the donors or run by the individual person as per their individual capacity. Citizen Journalists are courageous and bold as they have no fear of government and corporate. They can easily put their message across.

Impacts of Citizen journalism on Indian society

In areas where mainstream media is biased or manipulated due to the government or the ruling party, citizen journalism acts as a street to avoid the propaganda of country - controlled conventional media and make certain that many voices are heard. It can be stated that citizen journalism has its high-quality characteristics and roles in the society, such as informing or educating the public, it contributes to a more energetic democracy and brings positive wave to the society and provides greater transparency. Professional journalists may benefit from hearing from the general population

Table 1: Comparison of Mainstream Media and Citizen Journalism

S/No.	Mainstream Media	Citizen Journalism
1.	Works on formalized structure	No formal newsroom structure
2.	Gatekeeper and regulatory body exist	No filtering, gatekeeping and regulatory body
3.	Are generally paid for their work	Generally, not getting paid for their work
4.	Specifically trained in the practice of journalism	Have no specific training

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Table 2: Positive and Negative Impacts of Citizen Journalism

S/No.	Positive impact	Negative impact
1.	It contributes to democracy	Possibilities of getting things wrong
2.	Expose corruption	Fear from political and business interests
3.	Provides a public speech	Threat of personal security
4.	Reveals truth	Lack of financial support

Source: Author's Own Compilation

about what's going on in a specific location. Because of the value it provides, even in the most isolated parts of society, it may be preferred for the media to cover that event live.

Role of Citizen Journalism in Slum improvement

Citizen Journalists has taken issues of the society which citizens generally face like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, health and hygiene, etc. which are stated in the above table. Social media is a powerful platform which has brought a revolutionary change in the society; it has changed the way of socializing, it has helped in engaging in political affairs, it gives insights into the areas that have been significantly affected in our society. In fact, citizen journalism can increase local residents' interest in topics that have a positive impact on their lives. It is always free speech in action whether we share a news piece on social media, participate in a protest, or contact a local legislator about an issue we care about.

Citizens willing to bring change in the Society by Contributing as a Citizen Journalists can use the Available Websites

There are some official websites that help the citizen journalist and bring social issues to the masses through their articles, videos, photographs and audios on issues which needed to be highlighted and mainstream media ignores.

The concept of citizen journalism initiatives has given a platform to citizens to amplify their problems and bring a wave of change to the society.

For example

Navbharat Times (NBT) and The Quint

According to a report on The Quint, " On 7 February, a citizen journalist reported on The Quint about the problems being faced by women in accessing toilets on the other side of the barricades. Barely three days after the report, Basic Shit, an NGO that provides sanitation solutions, reached out to The Quint and offered help. As of 14 February, a new toilet has been set up for women at the Singhu border."

Deplorable condition of streets can be seen in the photograph**.** This accident can happen at any time.

Table 3: Issues Citizen Journalists Focuses

S/No.	Issues Citizen Journalists Focuses
1.	Infrastructural Development
2.	Sanitation
3.	Cleanliness
4.	Food and Nutrition
5.	Health and Hygiene
6.	Literacy (Adult Education & Free Basic Education)
7.	Women Empowerment
8.	Housing
9.	Employment
10.	Solution to Poverty
11.	Welfare Activities for Senior Citizens

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Note: Navbharat times Portal for Citizen Journalists which publish reports of Citizen Journalists. From "NBT Citizen Reporter", by Times Internet Limited. 2022. https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nbtcr&hl=en_IN&gl=US Copyright 2022 by NBT Citizen Reporter. Navbharat times Citizen Journalists publishing reports of Citizen Journalists.

Note: This is a News Portal for Citizen Journalist. The Quint Publishes News Stories by Citizen Journalists. www.thequint.com/my-report/the-quint-my-report-citizen-journalist-impact-join-and-report#read-more Copyright 2022 by The Quint.

Note: The picture is in front of Raigad Niwas building on Dattaram Marg. Big potholes on the road can be seen. From "Accident can happen any time", by L. Jain, 7 July 2022. https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/citizen-reporter/mumbai. Copyright 2022 by Navbharat Times.

Before any accident happens, the administration is appealed to fill the pits.- Lakshya Jain, Citizen Reporter (NBT)"

Usually, these kinds of issues are neglected by mainstream media, but they create so many issues for the general public. In these kinds of examples citizen journalism helps in improving India and these platforms help citizens in voice their opinion on issues around them and share their story and concern in the society.

The above examples of Navbharat Times (NBT) and The Quint shows that in future more such platforms will come up which will courage huge number of Citizen Journalists to express their views on certain burning issues of the society. It will help in development of the country socially, politically and economically.

Study on Some examples of citizen journalism about real life issues from these portals which have impacted on society

Faulty wiring

"The wire is hanging under the Gandhi Market Bridge for several days. It can cause electrocution to people passing through the sidewalk. It can be more dangerous during rain. There is an appeal to the administration to pay attention to this." -Dr.

Govind Nirmal, Citizen Reporter. (Navbharat Times, 2022, July 7)

open gutter in dangerous condition

"Open manhole is in dangerous condition due to broken cover at the cross point of SL Road. Waterlogging due to rain can cause a major accident here. Therefore, the concerned administration is requested to pay attention to this and take necessary steps." -Citizen reporter Mahendra Kumar. (Navbharat Times. 2022, July 5)

Accident near school

"Outside Father Angel High School, where illegal parking of heavy vehicles like buses, trucks, big tempos etc., school children and parents have to go through difficulties in commuting. Being the busiest road, there is often a danger of accidents. Many a times children have also been stung by vehicles. Therefore, the concerned departmental officers are requested to pay attention to this and take necessary steps, so that the possibility of a major accident is removed." -Citizen reporter Krishna Waghmare. (Navbharat Times. 2022, June 21)

Problem due to overflow of sewer line

"In front of New Railway Road Dr Lal, the problem of sewer jam has been there for the last several days. Due to the filling of sewer water, foul smell is spread around, due to which customers have reduced coming here. People's shopping is getting affected." (Navbharat Times. 2022 June 20)

How citizens transformed Gurugram, the city without a green cover

"We believe that residents can reshape the areas they occupy in conjunction with local government, businesses, and the State as equal players in a city. Similar efforts have been made to restore the biodiversity of this concrete jungle, which was rapidly losing it due to urbanization. Deepthi Ramdas (The Quint. 2021. Feb 15)

As Jamia renovates hostel, Students struggling to find accommodation

"We don't have a hostel room; therefore, we are living in a rented apartment. Together with our classmates, we rent an apartment. It becomes challenging for us to find a rickshaw to take us home when we have to remain on campus until late at night to study in the library. We feel uneasy sharing the rickshaw with

the other people because it is dark outside, and we are afraid of them." – Ayesha, student. (The Quint. 2022, sept 29)

The reports which are mentioned above, these issues are not concerned by mainstream media, but they are highlighted by the citizen journalists to raise the voice and freedom of expression.

Citizen Journalism's contribution in bringing attention towards India's forgotten issues

The growth of citizen journalism has been significantly impacted by the rise of mobile technology, including smartphones, tablets, and other portable devices. Laypeople participate in citizen journalism activities, so they portray the facts and news from their own perspectives and from the viewpoint of the locals in that region or city. This aids in presenting various viewpoints to the general public and authorities. Additionally, it appeals to the masses of local viewers to influence society and government for the better. Everyone wants to live in a better society, but that can only happen if society supports and encourages freedom of expression.

The future of Citizen Journalism in Indian perspective

In order to practice citizen journalism, you must have the capacity to hear what others have to say as well as to express your own opinion. India and the rest of the globe are developing and recognizing citizen journalism as a means to use social media and new technology to spread awareness about vital topics. Anyone may now create news on their own channels and disseminate it to a larger audience thanks to contemporary technology. Nowadays, a lot of media sites incorporate user-generated information into official news pieces. In order for this kind of journalism to be successful, a connection between official media outlets and citizen journalists must be made. For higher quality news, citizen journalists need to be taught how to report appropriately, ethically, and professionally.

Conclusion

Citizen journalists are now playing a very important role in society by utilizing their freedom of expression.

The rapid increase of internet and social media has increased citizen journalism all over the world. In order to safeguard their freedom of expression, there should be laws in place which protect citizen journalists who are threatened for exposing corruption or unethical behavior. And media companies are also increasingly dependent on citizen journalists who provide cell phone videos and pictures as events unfold.

As it is very known to everyone that citizen journalism is employed by the grassroot active journalists to spread awareness and all the relevant information. Thus, it is impacting the citizen journalists and real-life extent too.

There are some situations where citizen journalist seems to be helpful for the slum areas by covering their social issues which are usually ignored by mainstream media due to less TRP or readership.

Work of media is always to be with time, but sometime important issues are lost with time which are continuously raised by citizen journalists, and they maintain the dignity of the issue which should remain highlight but forgotten.

In a country like India, Citizen Journalism has a vital scope for society. As the users and their engagement are increasing on social media & internet, citizen journalism is becoming more popular and known among us.

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