

EVOLUTION OF MEDIA; A SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years the media has evolved based on the way it influences their audiences through dimensions through which content is created, information distribution, and access. Internet access has also become a major factor that contributes to information access. In the 21st century, information access has become appreciated as a human right as it consistently and continuously becomes indispensable as a tool for information dissemination across societies and advocates for human rights such as freedoms of expression and speech. The United Nations office on the Promotion and Protection of Rights and Opinion of Expression indicates that human rights regulations are applicable to new communication technologies such as the internet, in consonance to article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

Freedom of expression imposes an obligation on state parties to promote universal access to technological innovation, including internet. Some governments already have put in place mechanisms to recognize access to internet as a core component of media freedom in the 21st century and as a human right (Church et al., p.266). Freedom of the media enables free movement of information and access to knowledge hence guaranteeing the strengthening of democracy and human rights. Free access to information on internet access networks enables populations' access.

The commonwealth inter-parliamentary coalition of independent states modeled a law on the

Principles of internet regulation which recognized the rights and freedoms of citizens including the right to internet access and use of information thereof. However, access to the internet access is not an end to itself as it offers many avenues of service delivery for communication, education, e-commerce, journalism and entertainment.

Social networks always craft new communication models which are not ordinarily possible. Innovation and technology apply already existing systems and features to create solutions which are informative and financially beneficial. Social handles like twitter and Facebook make it easy for information sharing and also serve to impart knowledge to participants as well as share ideas about development. The existence of bloggers and citizen journalism has expanded the media landscape into a whole new dimension.

Web based technologies that harness the use of the mobile communication (Bond p. 521) platforms for interaction form a group of applications that found the technologies that enable user generated content exchange and access to communication technologies that exploit social media for communication between organizations and communities using different forms such as internet blogs, wikis, forums, podcasts, video casting etc.

The distinction between social media and social networking is not precise as tools that serve personal and corporate communication are incorporated synchronously for information relay and research purposes (Moore, p.16).

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These networks which include popular brands such as Facebook, Google and twitter are effective for individual and corporate communication mostly serving the purpose of news distribution and research using crowd sourcing and other technology platforms.

Besides individual communication, social networks are used as tool for journalistic work. Through social media and existing networks, research, publication, distribution and collaboration of the media functions happens on social networks and people rely on the same networks to receive and relay news. This creates a multi dimensional application of shared media which eventually speaks to the expansion of freedom of the media as a human right. In either traditional media or any form of publicly distributed media, such as television, newspapers and the internet, there should not be discrimination of the subsets given that freedom of the media and freedom of expression are universally accepted regardless of whether they are online or offline, whether it is citizen or professional journalism, or whether it is social media or print media.

Media freedom includes the right to receive and seek for information regardless of the source. Social media and networks are protected by law and serve the sole purpose of producing news for consumption purposes (Moore p.24). Internet services are also protected through the freedom of expression and existing provisions on the freedom of expression of opinion on all platforms including social media and other platforms.

Traditional newspaper circulation continues to dwindle as social media and networks continue to flourish across the globe. Internet and mobile technologies have influenced to greater extent human interactions and relationships which have further impacted on the way people interact (Bond p.522). Social media news networks have flourished as they furnish consumers with news through their technologies.

In the developed world, use of internet technologies has surpassed traditional media as information platforms. For instance in America, the newspapers and television are rarely preferred as a source of information because almost sixty percent of Americans get their information from online sources. Most of the online news consumers receive their news through social networks and mobile phones. Tools such as Facebook, twitter, YouTube and MySpace lead in social media information platforms while phones and email follow closely. There is an increase in online news consumers who use social networks and many journalists as well have turned to social media as a platform to distribute or share their stories.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FAMILY

Communication plays a significant role in family relationships. A lack of household communication is detrimental on the family's interaction and cohesion and therefore it is important to create a good relationship. New media is essential in running of modern households and helps to influence household or family culture and interaction patterns. Information communications technology has changed family dynamics because the new media has been imbedded in the domestic routines becoming an intrinsic part of contemporary life (McGrath p.46). Adapting to new media technologies has a direct impact on contemporary life in a number of ways. Use of the internet in the home effectively impacts on family relationships. Digital media such as video and computer games have become a fundamental part and parcel of daily family lives as access is made easy.

Technology as a tool uses media largely to influence social relationships. Children growing up in homes which are technologically savvy have access to a mobile phone, a television that has interactive features, access to laptops and game consoles. To add on to that, they enjoy a wide variety of leisure technologies including DVD

players, MP3/4 players etc. as a result, technology has a direct influence in the way children are directed and forms a basis for future social behavior.

New media has caused a major shift in the way society interacts and individuals as well as households have adopted in a number of ways. Change brought about by this phenomenon is impactful on creating a digital divide. A digital divide is described as a generational gap between the people who use technology and those who do not (Aarsand 235). Basically this means that the difference between those who know how to act in a digital environment and those who do not know is the digital divide. It is conceived that children who use media technologies often have more knowledge on their usage and use this to their advantage (Aarsand 252) to influence activities which their elders who are not digitally affluent cannot decipher. Adults as well use this digital divide discourse to interact with their children in a bid to help nurture communication, although it is also likely to cause discord within the family. New media has facilitated social interaction and enhances social interaction, access to information and time allocation. Access to technology has created permeability between family and work time (Mesch 124).

CITIZENS AND MEDIA

Apart from getting information online, most internet users in the U.S play a part in creation of news items through active participation in commentaries, through social media platforms such as twitter and Facebook. They participate by either commenting on stories, posting links of stories on social media, tagging social media content, creating their own news content or tweet about news. A large percentage of online users get their news from social networks through sharing of links, blogging, video casting, and article sharing or syndicating content. Citizen journalism is revolutionary in the way it uses technology tools to create, check or augments

media independently or through collaboration (Venkatesh p.32).

Professional journalism holds the view that only trained journalists are able to go through the rigorous processes of ethical reporting. Conversely, there are many trained journalists who have embraced citizen journalism, through personal blogs and online commentaries, which is traditionally outside the conventional practice in journalism. Participatory journalism involves acts of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating information by individual citizens or in groups. The participation is meant to provide reliable, accurate and relevant information. In other words, in citizen journalism, the audience uses technology tools which are in their possession to collate and disseminate information for public use through a mass communication media and any individual who does this qualifies to be called a journalist.

There is a need for journalist protection in the face of growing use of the internet for mass communication. Other persons involved in information dissemination should also be covered under this protection. This is because the distinction between professional journalism and other forms of mass communication has become a challenge (Venkatesh p.36). Even more challenging are situations which involve wikis and sources of content. It is justified to look at content rather than the source for journalistic purposes. The right to privacy notwithstanding, data protection and confidentiality of communication should be guaranteed.

There is a lot of information from social platforms that forms credible stories for journalists and researchers. Normal citizens are able to cover events which ordinary journalists have limited access to. Technology tools are used for research and crowd sourcing to provide credible sources that guarantee reliability and accuracy in terms of information dissemination. Lack of fact finding is a major cause for journalistic malpractices and

calls for awareness creation for social media applications for journalists. On the part of professional collaboration and interaction, social media helps journalists to collaborate through wikis and other tools such as article commentaries and fact checking though in an ethical manner.

MEDIA REGULATION

The media continues to evolve into an internet based industry and governments who seek to have a foothold on illegal use of the internet by setting standards that regulate the industry. The fact that internet creates a global linkage for communication requires that universal regulations must be adopted to operate under the International Telecommunication Union which is domiciled at the United nations and oversees internet governance. It responds to issues that pertain to freedom of expression and governments who are unable to regulate internet technologies. The global body values the use of the internet as a unique tool for commerce such legislation requires input from civil society and other stakeholders who have contributed to its growth over time. ITU is deemed to expand internet access in developing countries and boost economic growth and human rights. There is hue and cry regarding large Corporates such as Facebook and Google whose mega profits from the use of the internet is a result of disproportionate use of the internet. Consumers in developing countries view these companies as preying on their consumerism.

Around the world there are several regulatory mechanisms which have been employed by various in different regions specifically China, Australia and the Gulf states of Saudi Arabia and UAE. Each of these mechanisms is unique but provide vital lesson for other countries which intend to adopt regulatory mechanisms to copy from (Silverman p.87). The Gulf States make use of firewalling software at the point of service provision for internet. The Smartfilter software

used prevents access to defined categories of content, including pornography, illegal drugs, religious fundamentalism and gambling. There are also provisions for blocking internet circumventing tools. The downside of this application is the blanket filtering is prone to curtail circulation of legal and acceptable content through the channels of communication such as research work because it contains some filtered words. The perception attached to this kind of software is always negative as it is viewed as a representation of oppression regimes. In Australia internet content is regulated through a public complaints process. The regulating body is not required to look for violators but it uses an administration scheme involving the public and the internet industry players. What happens is that the regulating body receives the complaints, it commences an investigation which looks at the content viability and if it is deemed prohibited, and the body liaises with the internet host provider to pull down the content. This is common on social media platforms like Facebook which have user guidelines and what portends on violation of the guidelines.

Restricted content in Australia is safeguarded by host providers but unfortunately in instances where host providers are located offshore, regulation becomes a challenge because perpetrators can easily penetrate the safeguards and relay illegal content to regions where there is little or no restriction. Countries have consequently developed codes of practice that are self regulatory and are enforceable among internet service providers. An interesting model is in China where extensive government mobilization and management. Any social media enterprise must be registered and given the necessary approvals from the government. The Chinese government has six regulatory bodies which oversee internet access and usage in the country. As a matter of policy, only government agencies are allowed to report news and only one agency is authorized to relay important

information and news (Silverman p.90). Social media is available to everyone who owns a mobile phone but under the watchful eye of the government. The patronage of social media in China makes it difficult for businesses which might otherwise have benefitted from the use of the internet. There is a slow uptake of technology entrepreneurs in China because of the prevailing restrictions and access regulations. This also raises questions of human rights violations as regards the freedoms, privacy and security. The government being the regulator in the Chinese context creates unnecessary bottlenecks for the Chinese population but what the people resort to do is design tool which are superior for penetration of government firewalls such as creating virtual private networks (VPN) to go online into social media platforms such as Facebook, which are banned in China.

The case for the United Kingdom is different because the regulatory framework is still developing. Regardless of this fact, there are notable weaknesses that require to be looked into. The current freedom of the media is under scrutiny because of recent events such as hacking of mobile phones, bribery for espionage and many other allegations. Media regulation is at a defining moment because of the technological and legislative shift which demands government intervention by instituting regulations. The communications data bill of 2012 expanded the space for online presence and defined the scope of how much personal data a service provider is required to store.

Data storage for government use is considered essential owing to increasing terrorist activities that use social media for interaction. Criminals often use cybercafés and proxy servers to gain access to people's personal data and different models of cyber regulation are under study since many countries have moved to adopt digital technologies making existing regulatory mechanisms out of date. Different countries have

varied situations for technology needs and therefore it is not possible to transplant a technology solution from one country and export it to another. There are regulatory principles that must be embraced in order to employ a regulatory mechanism anywhere. There should not be control of the press, which constitutes print and online media by a statute. The second principle regards freedom of expression. It is a fundamental human right which is necessary for socio economic development. Above all, freedom of speech should not be constrained (Silverman p.940). The internet offers the platform to enjoy these freedoms of choice, access and availability. Regulating agencies should be creative and engage policy makers in devising a palatable regulatory framework for internet.

Participants in the internet space must be protected and assured of reliability on content delivery and increase coherence in the approaches made towards digital media. As digital spaces continue to expand, services of the press are continuously under scrutiny and media regulation need to adopt basic guidelines such as putting public interest first, effective and reliable service that is able to sustain public trust, collaboration of both traditional and digital media, and enable businesses to compete, invest and innovate thereby strengthening the economy.

TECHNOLOGY MARKETS

There are a number of developments that are driven by technology. Digital environments like the U.K provide guidelines on regulatory models for other countries to duplicate. Communications laws, covers both consumers and technology vendors. All content require a regulating mechanism which protects users' illegal and harmful influence (Venkatesh p.44). The mechanisms of protecting audiences must now be emphasized because the content and applications are revolutionary.

Public expectations regarding internet freedom includes recognition of freedoms of the internet and understand the different media. Expectations are high concerning regulation of normal broadcasting but assurances must be made on content protection. Converged technology services are meant to be regulated and harmful content removed while increasing relay of content to viewers.

CONCLUSION

As is the case in many models that come with disruptive technology, knowledge of the past builds on to create the future. New media is at risk of uncertain ecosystems. It is important to understand media change and the kind of regulation that is desired by various interest groups. After taking note of this, the different types of media must conform to societal values that align with the regulations such as freedoms that are enjoyed over the internet. The approach to digital media needs to be coherent and non ambiguous because there are inconsistencies in press regulation with increased digital services as opposed to traditional media. So as to have effective and independent regulation, clear cut criteria must be adopted to bring localized regulation to international standards in order to create a level playing field for all media players. Eventually regulations must be clear and simple to harness fresh talent and bolster innovation and creativity. The systems built must ascribe to gain public trust, spur industrial growth and uphold the tenets of freedom of expression.

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