

# [Impact and challenges of citizen reporters](https://assignbuster.com/impact-and-challenges-of-citizen-reporters/)

Abstract

As the global affectation by voyeuristic media challenges the standardized impart of information, it is through the contiguity of citizen reporting that standards of exchange will be challenged and influenced towards a significantly positive outcome. The following dissertation represents an amalgamation of current arguments both for and against citizen reporters and their integration into mass media. The information presented will quickly acclimate the reader to the historical importance of this debate, and through representation of an objective viewpoint, conclusions will be drawn regarding the relative sustainability of this form of media integration. The establishment of a world body of reporter will be shown as necessitated by our expansion as a world of voyeurs, which aligns the inherent need for human contact with the decided assimilation of global information.

Research Questions

The following questions represent my interest in the topic of Citizen Reporters:

1. Who are the citizen reporters in today’s society and what effect do they have on the current media climate?
2. What does the future look like for citizen reporters and what challenges lay ahead for a free-form integration of their unique viewpoints on important global incidents?

Triangulation

The obvious utilization of multiple sources, expanded upon either side of the citizen reporter debate will enable my objective view of all arguments and discussion. Additionally, through research and identification of current sources of citizen reporters I will be able to determine the accurate analysis of these entities within outside research, as well as my own integration of their framework into my discussion.

Methodology

Due to the extremely modern relationship between the substantial integration of citizen reporters and current forms of media exploitation, the most important research of this topic was encountered in magazines and journal entries which represent subjective viewpoints on both sides of the debate. Additionally, discussion with editors of affluent news entities substantiated my research and offered a more immediate impression of the distinct challenges ahead of citizen reporter utilization.

Introduction

As the high swells battered the coast of New Orleans, a young woman stood on the balcony of her seventh floor apartment watching cars and mailboxes as they were swept away in the current. Her images appeared days later as eyewitness accounts of the terrible Hurricane Katrina disaster and offered the public a firsthand glimpse of terrible devastation. Across the globe, “ the potential value of citizen journalism first became glaring in 2005 when camera-phone images of the London Underground bombings…made front pages around the world.” [1] Regardless of incident, the power of the uniquely positioned citizen to provide the world with spectacular images of important global events has set precedence for the future of reporting. The debate rages, however, as to the efficacy of these first hand accounts, and the dilution of media with illegitimacy has further proffered doubt into the validity of citizen reporting.

Hypothesis

Ultimately, it will be through the efforts of a collaborative world media that barriers and boundaries to the freedom of information may be dismantled and dependent upon the prudent editorial mitigation of erroneous reports, the world will greatly benefit from incorporation of citizen accounts into their media diets.

Personal Affectation

The research herein details a highly introspective look into my own apprehensions regarding citizen reporting. In the end, through the acceptance of a world necessity for a decrease in censorship and an integration of a wide variety of sources, not just the current information monopoly, I determined that I accept and appreciate the utilization of citizen journalists. The information was readily available, yet distinguishing the more pertinent arguments from those that are simply jaded and encouraged by fear of change was a bit more difficult. In the end, personal discussions with publication editors, as well as a wide variety of material greatly assisted in my appreciation for this form of media.

Defining Citizen Reporting

In an effort to determine the actuation of citizen reporting, one may only need to turn to current events to spark acumen in the realization of this form of communication. The impact of images of Rodeny King in and the impactive racial slurs of Michael Richards in the US or the devastating destruction of the Underground Bombings in London, have all had an extremely provocative influence on citizen media dedication. In fact the illumination of a world of purported truths has only been affected as the local media conglomerates have begun to accept citizen participation as a necessity in the struggle for accurate and realistic information.

The import of reality television and online voyeur websites such as YouTube continue to affirm the power of viewership and the necessitated prioritization of information. In fact, it is through the socialization of news and first-hand integration of rapid iconography of media shakers that the revision of global media has become a perpetual debate. The citizen reporter can potentially evolve from anyone with a camera or even a mobile phone who is lucky enough to encounter a rare and important (and sometimes not so important) circumstance. The ensuing integration of this visual media into local news shows and global media behemoths alike sustains the necessity of in depth interaction with world events. The proliferation of such varied forms of transportable media continues to affirm a desire for interaction within a global community, and through the attraction of citizen reporters, information sharing continues to become far easier.

The Supporters—The World Media Conglomerate

As world media organizations struggle to identify the veracity within citizen journalists’ contributions, many are accepting their import as a necessitated integration into their future business plans. In fact, through the continued assimilation of the informal journalistic body, the more impactful events will become global focuses unlike ever before seen. “ The journalists’ role is now to concentrate harder on how, when and where we can add value through our strengths of analysis, context, background and range. But as we do this we must be open to what members of the public bring to our attention. When handled properly, it adds value and improves quality.” [2] The analytical comport of the true journalist will become the equivalent of intensive factions of editors who receive and re-interpret the findings of their citizen journalists in order to proliferate the desires of a well-informed society.

Several local citizen based websites and firms have taken this approach to the extreme, standardizing their workforce into the contributions of citizen journalists, many with no prior skill or training. Yet, their effectiveness is debatable, and as financial corporations, supporting their perpetuation does not yet seem to be the most prudent of financial decisions. “ Internet analyst Jay Park at Samsung Securities in Seoul argues that OhmyNews was successful because it was politically motivated, not business-oriented.” [3] The reality for countries such as Korea is that government regulation of media inhibits the ability to receive unbiased broadcasts important to political elections and the legislative power of the people. The fundamental necessity of free media continues to drive global interaction in regards to citizen reporting, oftentimes inspiring the camera toting voyeur to explore scenarios previously impenetrable to the traditional news reporter.

The redefinition of media will continue to include citizen reporting into its annuls, challenging journalists to significantly change tactics and seek more affluent and provocative stories in addition to daily occurrences as their focus shifts from subversive to immersive. ‘“ Traditional journalism is the outside looking in,’ Mitch Gelman, executive vice president of CNN. com, said. ‘ Citizen journalism is the inside looking out. In order to get the complete story, it helps to have both point of views.’” [4] Obviously, the ability to see all dimensions within a breaking news story becomes an integral part of the global assimilation of citizens into the scheme of media reporting.

Additionally, through a necessitated desire to affect change and political activism, the pertinent inclusion of a wide variety of media offers an escape from government regulated politicking. Whereas in the UK, the regulation of political campaigns means minimalizing mass media integration of television advertising, sourcing additional communicative avenues has become a significant priority. The Labour party, inspired by the power of YouTube took to advancing their cause through the well known presence of Tony Blair in an unprecedented inclusion of a major British political figure into a world formerly ruled by lonelygirl15, a once powerful yet innocuous YouTube force. It is integration of multiple media avenues which continues to afford a world media the opportunity to view uncensored information, and while political propaganda is undeniably susceptible to the affectation of the representative party, the viewers are now challenged to explore many avenues to effectively decipher their own pertinent information.

The Naysayers—The Struggle to Protect Media

Yet, the converse of the global citizen integration into mass media also poses significant concern and potential debilitating effects to this veracity based empire. So far, the most significant naysayers continue to be journalistic supporters who feel that the potential integration of citizen reporting poses significant problems for information exchange. Namely, the ability to regulate citizen content or invoke accountability protocol against those who misuse their powers and global affectation, signifies a dilution of world media which could negatively affect the transfer of important facts to the public. As governments refuse to regulate electronic content, namely publically shared information, “ such changes raise policy issues that disturb some colleagues. How can our journalistic reputation be protected when we are not fully in control of our content?” [5] Oftentimes subjected to the infiltration of a derisive surfer, web and media content must constantly be edited and investigated in order to assure the publication of truth in global broadcasting. “ Just as the printing press was disruptive in its time, the ubiquity of the Net and the cheap tools that give voice to anyone–whether talented or not–has kicked off a period of creative ferment.” [6] In fact there are significantly powerful web spiders or congregations of hackers and dissenters seek to flood virtuous areas of media with their own petulant inklings. Mitigation of these groups means constant warfare, and as vacillatory as the world public is, their accidental integration into global media could mean dissonance and refusal of participation in sites whose news publications incorporate citizen reporters.

A secondary opinion detailing concern within the integration of citizen reporting lies in the fact that trends and fads fade when public opinion becomes stagnant. “ Other industry watchers also express doubts that citizen journalism will turn out to be a going concern. Had it been an attractive global model, ‘ someone would have made lots of money by now.’” [7] And, regardless of whether someone has cornered the market on citizen journalism or not, the willingness of the public to accept its efficacy plays an integral role in its future success. While many companies are copying the model set up in South Korea, the perception is that their eventual disintegration will spell a reaffirmation of journalistic principles and affect a minimalization of citizen journalism.

The Future—Dog Walking Star Breaches Headlines

Currently, there are few websites completely devoted to the perpetuation of citizen journalism. In South Korea, “ OhmyNews, set up in 2000, now has about 90 full-time staffers — 65 of them journalists — and some 44, 000 citizen contributors. Together, they produce around 150 articles a day. This year, it expects revenues of about $6 million, 60% of which come from online ads and the rest from the sale of the company’s news product to Internet portals, and from miscellaneous services.” [8] The challenge of a completely integrated site such as this one is that online advertising, regardless of integration of unpaid citizen reporters into a news site is the influx of capital which assures perpetuation and expansion. Should this particular site not attract the investment capital needed, their failure is immanent.

Yet their power and assimilation of attentive citizens represents a significant advance at the forefront of global media. They have even branched out in order to attempt incorporation of global audiences into their media focus. “ OhmyNews’ English-language news division is produced by nearly 1, 500 citizen reporters from more than 100 countries, plus five professional editors based in the U. S. and Korea.” [9] Remarkably, the reliance on conventional media continues to minimize the effectiveness of online agencies such as this one, and in spite of potentially similar broadcasts with integrated content that might represent government censorship in their countries of origin, viewers and readers have not yet attached their interests to the facilities of global reportership.

Additional global journalism integrates the use of similar electronic voyeurism such as YouTube into more socially affirmative avenues such as Yahoo News. “ Users can visit the section of Yahoo News, dubbed You Witness News, to upload pictures and video that will then be uploaded to Flickr and related video sites. Yahoo and Reuters’ editors will then go through the material to determine if any of the content can accompany news articles.” [10] It is through the dedicated editorial departments of such online agencies that the perpetuation of public support for citizen journalism will predominate the views of naysayers. Without thorough source analysis and standardized operating procedures which will guarantee the clarity and veracity of reports, sites such as Yahoo and OhMy will continue to encounter significant resistance from a traditionalist mindset.

Where the romanticism of citizen journalism and the freedom of information exchange may capture the majority of the world’s nations with the novelty of more widespread and un-censored media coverage, in France, stringent legislation has now been enacted in order to ban this idea of free reporting and videography. “ The ostensible purpose of the ban is to curb ‘ happy slapping,’ the recording of assaults and other crimes by accomplices in order to post videos on the Internet as trophies…France is the first country to legislate against it… Quite apart from instances of official misconduct, however, the ban attempts to squelch the growing phenomenon of ‘ citizen journalism.” [11] This drastic measure has hardly been challenged by the French media organizations, as their government owned framework mitigates the exposure of the world to uncensored French news. Highly evident within this government influence is the limited media coverage of the 2005 urban riots during which the majority of informatory video came from citizen broadcasts. The resistance from the French regime to accept the global implications of incorporation of its citizens as news correspondents shows an ongoing manipulation of public media sources. The unfortunate fact of this censorship is that dissonance among citizens results in redistribution of French attention towards online media broadcasters regardless of government regulation. The right of humanity to remain informed is an accepted practice throughout the globe, yet political interference continues to hamper the advance of propaganda-free broadcasting.

Finally, asides to the mainstream influx of news sources continue to spring up throughout the global information deluge. “ The Center for Citizen Media, which launched a website last month, is setting out to encourage grassroots media, and especially citizen journalism. It’s one of the latest new media groups jumping into the movement to further citizen journalism online.” [12] Through encouragement and incremental journalistic education for citizens, the electronic media centers throughout the world will enforce a tactic of freedom of information, which enlivens a residual essence of historical significance: the right to know. Through dedication to human information involvement as well as integration of first-hand accounts into global events, the continuation of information sharing will stand resilient to selfish naysayers.

Issues of Confidentiality

One area which must be addressed within the scope of citizen journalism is the mitigation of privacy infringement. The idea that anyone with a camera or a pen could become a global media informant makes the lives of media makers much more susceptible to exposure. An individual’s scheme of recognition might include photographically accosting a famous icon with the expectation that through utilization of their image and a distorted narrative, that they could influence headlines worldwide. Throughout my research, the paparazzi played an important role already in this media manipulation, yet the integration of potentially millions of would-be journalists drastically increases the size of their information army. It will be extremely important for major media organizations to discourage their potential affect on the pervasive exploitation of media icons in order to continue to support privacy and fairness regardless of global integration.

Conclusion

It is not the quality of the reporting, nor is it the frequency, but it is the inherent freedom of citizen reporters which challenges the global media magnates to incorporate the influential view of its people into daily information sessions. Where news was once the ability of government bodies to communicate their policies, the integration of daily human interest stories reminds the global citizenship that it is the interest of humans which most drives effective media. Through perpetuation of the World Wide Web, the global community has shrunk the distance between continents, oftentimes finding as much brotherly interaction across borders as within. It is the unique ability to voyeuristically involve all world citizens in the occurrences which shape society and the environment with which it interacts that determines the approach taken towards future challenges. It is absolutely a necessity to mitigate the effect of journalistic elitists through citizen challenges of an information influx; in this way, the reeducation of a global community will be dependant on all unique perspectives, and not just those relative to the monopolistic media organization.

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### Footnotes

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