Citizen Journalism in Shaping Media Consumption

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MAY 2013

Abstract:

Citizen journalism has reconstructed traditional reporting practices by advocating public listening in news gathering, by producing purposeful news and encouraging public debate. News media technologies, such as social networking and media sharing websites in addition to increasing prevalence of cellular phones, have made citizen journalism more accessible to people worldwide.

Due to technology availability and proximity citizens often can report breaking news more quickly than traditional media reporters.

In citizen journalism, the people who are the main consumers of information are involved in the gathering and dissemination of news. It tends to bring journalism closer to people since news is about people and events. Citizen journalism brings out the perception that information is universal right therefore increases consumption of media.

Back Ground

Citizen journalism is relatively new phenomenon in the western and even in developing countries, where the term has come into use since the mid 20th century and adopted more in Africa in the recent past.

The term is frequently used to denote non-professional, amateur publication, the reporters are "incidental journalist" witnessing and capturing exceptional information due to proximity.

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to understand the various avenues that citizen journalism can and may be transmitted, as well as which tools will be adequate to capture such diverse information.

Several scholars have put together papers on citizen journalism and the various avenues it has been transmitted and its effects, however this articles are more slant towards the use of citizen journalism as an avenue where the citizenry get to raise their voice towards leadership.

The total body of research remains small, although useful Africa-specific normative frameworks for the analysis of citizen journalism are supplied by Goldstein & Rotich (2008), Banda (2010), and comprehensive literature review provided by Mutsvairo & Columbus (2012).

CITIZEN JOURNALISM by the various writers

Among the scholars; Benkler (2006) argues that citizen journalism is a phenomenon of the emergence of a "networked public sphere" based on digitally networked technologies such as the internet and mobile phones.

In the networked sphere, "commons-based peer production" (Crowd sourcing) of which citizen journalism is a form, is enabled by two shifts in communication technology, writes Benkler (p.212): The first element is the shift from hub-and –spoke architecture with unidirectional links to the end points in mass media, to distributed architecture with multidirectional connections among all nodes in the networked information environment. The second is the practical elimination of communication costs as a barrier to speaking across associational boundaries".

That is digitally networked technologies allow people to become their own broadcasters and to reach unprecedented audiences at low cost.

Banda's (2010) eponymous book on citizen journalism and democracy in Africa provides a first exploration of citizen journalism as a phenomenon that can be found across the continent. The author focuses mostly on institutionalized citizen journalism, i.e platforms provided by media companies or nongovernmental organizations. Drawing on case studies from South Africa, Eastern (Kenya and Uganda) and West Africa (Nigeria and Ghana) as well as Maghreb (Algeria), Banda examines the five questions related to citizen journalism in Africa: Its context, technological basis, uptake by conventional media, financial viability and democratic value.

He places citizen journalism in a context defined by the globalization of democratization and an increasing deregulated, over-commercialized media landscape, as well as the "rapid emergence and adoption" of novel ICT's (pp. 7-9)

Banda write, "citizen journalism thrives in a context of democratic pluralism," where freedom of expression and access to information are guaranteed; value that can be encoded in both legislative and technological architecture.

Mutsaviro and Columbus: Emerging patterns and trends in citizen journalism in Africa, a case of Zimbabwe; States that while generally it has been accepted that non-professional media actors empowered by novel digitally networked technologies are changing the media landscape in the West, it is less obvious in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent years however, has seen emergence of a diverse range of citizen media in Africa, enabled by technologies such as mobile phones, blogs, micro blogs, video sharing platforms and mapping.

In his study, he aims to identify emerging patterns and trends in Africa citizen journalism, paying particular attention to the Zimbabwe case.

Opportunity

With this much information being relayed across cross sectional media supported by the internet gives the researchers an opportunity to tap into the data source and feed various ends users with rich information on what is happening in the social sphere.

The paper intends to draw the various methods that can be put in place to package the content being circulated through citizen journalism. This will involve measuring the impact of citizen journalism on social, media or political spheres and profiling the demographics, geographical spread and content analysis of the conversation

Available statistics

According to the "CCK sector statistics report quarterly (Q2 2012/2013)" mobile penetration has risen to 30.7 million subscribers. Internet and data services recorded 9.49 million subscribers, with a significant control of this segment coming from mobile data/internet subscribers representing 99% of the subscription, others being satellite subscribers and fibre among other services(Terrestrial wireless, Fixed DSL, Fixed cable).

It is estimated that the number of internet users rose by 11.6% to reach 16 million individuals. This is attributed to the growing demand of internet and data services including use of social media especially among the youth.

Facebook penetration

FB users account for 1.11 billion active users as at the end of March 2013 (May 2011 – Consumer Report survey). 8.7 million Fake users, 7.5 million under the age of 13 years and 5 million under the age of 10 years.

Twitter penetration

Twitter has 500 million users as at end of 2012, generating over 340 million tweets daily and handling over 1.6 billion search queries.

Content of Tweets according to Pear Analytics
- ✓ News (3.6%)
- ✓ Spam (3.8%)
- ✓ Self-promotion (5.9%)
- ✓ Pointless babble (40.1%)
- ✓ Conversational (37.6%)
- ✓ Pass-along value (8.7%)

Methodology

The aim of this exploratory study is to analyse the nature of citizen journalism in shaping media consumption by identifying emerging trends applicable for research uptake and the tools available to capture such information and data as it picks momentum in Africa and the world at large.

Citizen journalism has taken a shift from being a tool for social strive to a powerful tool where the consumers of various goods and services have taken to channel their sentiments either positive or negative.

The citizen has various tools at his/her disposal to collect transmit information. With a smart phone in hand and the internet infrastructure relaying of information has been made swift and instantaneous. The internet is the backbone of this thriving new phenomenon. We intend to capture data from information shared by the citizenry on social media and other avenues such as.

- ➢ Face book
- ➢ Twitter
- ➢ Blogs
- ➢ You tube
- ➢ My space
- ➢ Message texting
- ➢ Group meetings
- ➢ Live journal
- ➢ Google +

From the information collected with the right tools at hand we can seek to answer the follow questions

- ➤ What is being talked about;
  - o Tracking what is being talked about:
  - o Create themes according to the issues being transmitted
  - o Categorize information.
- ➤ What time did the conversation happen
  - o Period
  - o Was there any catalytic event
- ➤ Number of feed back of a given topic
  - o How many individuals are comment on it
  - o Or is it a dormant comment
- ➤ Who are the influencers or movers of the topics
  - o Demographic profiles
- ➤ Are they positive or negative conversations
  - o Positive
  - o Neutral
  - o Negative

This gives the interested agents the opportunity to listen, measure, understand and engage with the various audiences as need be.

The methodology to be used will be both qualitative and quantitative;

This can be achieved through

- ➤ Media and social network Monitoring
  - o This will involve collection of data from online information sources
    - ▪ Site with frequent mention of a product or client mention
    - ▪ Inform how service or product is perceived by users

- ➤ Content analysis
  - o This is a quantitative method which provides systematic, objective analysis of message characteristics.
    - ▪ It eliminates subjectivity from summaries
    - ▪ Detects trends

- Text Analytics/Data mining
  - With text analytics you can automatically determines keywords and topics, categorizes content, manages semantic terms, unearths sentiment and puts things in context.
  - So you can interpret customers' opinions, improve products, optimize services, streamline processes and make proactive, fact-based decisions

- Crowd sourcing
  - This is the use of soliciting information through contribution from a large group of people especially an online community.

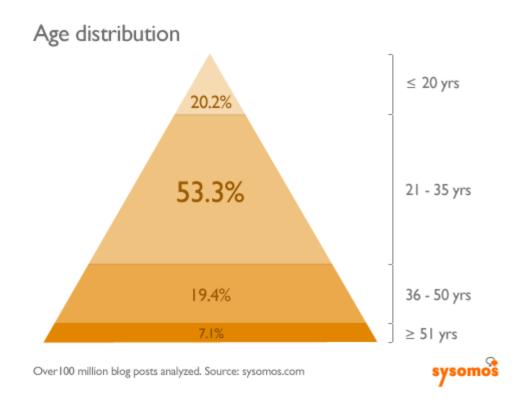The above will be aided with the use of several software's in the market such as;

- ✓ Bit torrent
- ✓ Nvivo
- ✓ Webinars/ Calais web
- ✓ Salience 4.0
- ✓ SAS Analytics
- ✓ SPSS text smart

Findings

Demographics profiling

The most active bloggers are younger people who have grown up during the blogging "revolution", which started about seven years ago. Bloggers in the 21-to-35 year-old demographic group account for 53.3% of the total blogging population.

This group is followed by the generation just behind them - people 20-years-old or under is 20.2% of the blogging landscape. This group is closely followed by 36-to-50 year-olds (19.4%), while bloggers who are 51-years-old and older only account for 7.1%.

Age distribution

20.2%	≤ 20 yrs
53.3%	21 - 35 yrs
19.4%	36 - 50 yrs
7.1%	≥ 51 yrs

Over100 million blog posts analyzed. Source: sysomos.com
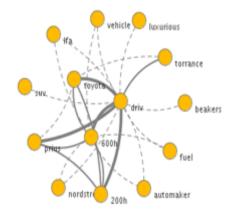
sysomos

Detailed demographics

With data from around the world, we can see where social media activity is happening by country, state/province and city. We can drill down to geographically filter social media participants - the conversations they're having, their age/gender, profession and language.

Text analytics

Events and themes driving key conversations – as well as how they relate to an individual or organization can be mined, product and brand. With a robust text analytics we can mine relevant conversations or branch out from existing discussions and topics, to discover new ones, and better understand the many factors that influence them.

Content Analysis

Table 13: Percentage coverage of thematic topics by geographical focus

Geographic Focus	Local/state/National		Regional - East Africa		Africa in general		International/world	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Politics/Governance/war	394	88.7%	19	4.3%	13	2.9%	18	4.1%
Police/crime/courts/legal	78	92.9%	1	1.2%	0	0.0%	5	6.0%
Natural disaster/accident	40	88.9%	2	4.4%	0	0.0%	3	6.7%
Business/economics/personal finance	169	95.5%	3	1.7%	2	1.1%	3	1.7%
Science and technology	6	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Health/fitness/medicine	58	86.6%	0	0%	0	0%	9	13.4%
Education	30	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

One-hundred percentage coverage of the Sexual Reproductive Health, social Health, Dental Health, Family Health, and Maternal Health were on local issues,

81.3% of the public health issues referred to the local area, and 18.8% are on international matters.

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