

Instagram and Twitter New Age News Disseminators: A Study

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Abstract

The emergence of Media Convergence and major elevations in the field of journalism, made the dissemination of the information wider and faster. The happenings do not reach us through news channels, newspapers or radio but it reached us via social networking sites also such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram.

Earlier, major sources of information were newspapers, news channels and radio but now, one can learn about the incidents through entertaining sites as well. Infotainment (which means providing information and entertainment) at the same time is something which has mitigated restrictions of informing audiences.

In the past time, one can see how these social sites have been chosen up not only for entertaining purpose but also, for informing masses. There are so many incidents which were highlighted through the social sites especially twitter. In fact, twitter is now a powerful tool to create news stories from the tweets of politicians or famous personalities.

This usage of social sites has popularized the concept of infotainment in the field of journalism and also, changed the presentation style of informing.

The study is all about knowing how information disseminated via social sites, got popularity among traditional media. Qualitative study has been done in order to evaluate and conclude the study. Interview method is chosen to explore the subject and it includes deeply analyzing the incidents which were brought up from social media to traditional media.

KEYWORDS: Information, Infotainment, News channels, Journalism, Traditional media, Social Sites, Twitter, Facebook, Entertainment.

Introduction

Communication is a process which is practiced by every living being. It is a way of conversing with oneself, group, crowd or masses. Even a picture communicates in its own language. It is almost impossible to imagine a world without communication.

Many authors created their own definitions of communication as per their understanding and perception. Communication is the transmission and interchange of facts, ideas, feelings or course of action.

Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is the process of imparting ideas and making oneself understood by others. Mass communication is a process in which we communicate with the masses or large

number of people at same time. Mass mediums help disseminating the information at the fastest level.

Mass mediums such as newspapers, radio, television and internet are the major forms which are helpful for the purpose. Not even a single day passes by without these mass mediums. However due to globalization of media and other impacts, many changes have encountered in the form of sources and of course, the presentation of information. One can observe the severe change in the way news stories are exposing and the way those stories are presented to the audience.

New media or social media has changed the way of taking up news in day to day life. It has opened up so many facilities such as getting updates and information via internet. One can be updated via social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The major change in today's time can be observed when information disseminates via social sites and the way journalists use such sites for their professional purposes. Earlier, people had to rely upon newspapers, news channels and radio for getting news updates and to keep themselves updates with the major happenings all around. But, in recent times it can be clearly said that reporters are no longer the only source to disseminate the information or news story among audience. There are many social applications and sites intended to be an entertaining source but, now proven to be as the powerful tools to crack and spread news stories. Social media's impact on journalism has become very powerful with times and it is reshaping the news criteria.

Social sites and applications like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are widely used among people for various purposes. One can connect to as number of persons as possible, share ideas, get feedback, promote businesses, and now, crack news information and attract good viewership or readership among media organizations. However, these social sites were intended for chatting and sharing ideas but now, the same social sites have become powerful tools for gathering information. Interestingly, not only audience gets to know about happenings all around but journalists also do get a lot of news material via social sites especially Twitter and Instagram.

There have been many surveys conducted which show that journalism and social media have entered same rooms. This change has two faces- one is that activism of social media in journalism is imposing a threat on the ethics of journalism and another is that it allows journalism to open up in the form of new voices, new topics and audience. Users prefer Twitter and other social networking sites for news and this usage portrays that social media satisfies the hunger of all kind of information due to which audience is more into gathering information via digital world.

There have been many reasons for journalists to gather news for their professional purpose and for using social media as their major medium. One of the reasons can be the speed of breaking news. In any happening, it becomes really important for the journalist to gather eye witnesses and evidences, so, respective to that Twitter helps in reaching those evidences in an effectual way. However, social networking sites are more in use when journalists have lesser time and sources to collect the facts by actually going there. If reporters are on the ground and have gathered every data on their own, then the use and dependency of these social sites become lesser.

Twitter

Twitter, a social networking site, is one of the actively used sites where people interact through messages known as tweets. Users can tweet about any random topic, comment on other's post and retweet on their account. This site allows people to share their opinions on any matter. Every celebrity, politician or famous personality prefers using Twitter as a source for disseminating information. In fact, many controversies started up with the tweets of celebrity. In this high usage of Twitter, journalists feel it easier to cook up a story from the tweets of famous personalities. Every day one can see at least one news story which includes tweets of personalities. So, therefore it can be said that tweets and activities of celebrities and politicians on Twitter are becoming news these day. Apart from this, Twitter has now become a major source where news stories can be created and then aired on Televisions widely. The verified accounts of celebrities and politicians allow the journalists to create authentic news. This paper discusses about the news stories started from Twitter and have got a lot of attention among the mass medium.

Instagram

Instagram is another social application allowing its users to share pictures and videos among the followers. This application came up in 2010 and now has followers across the world. Just like Twitter, Instagram is also actively used to share ideas, facts and opinions in the form of photos and videos. One can promote businesses also. But, these applications also promote the concept of "Infotainment." There have been many stories which successfully grabbed the attention and came up as news in the mass mediums. It is another social networking sites which now contributes in creating exclusive news stories and getting equally attention as news usually get via newspaper, news channels or radio. It is growing into a major news source in the form of photos. Journalists rely upon many photos and videos which can be shared as the major news stories. This development of news stories from applications like Instagram is reshaping the journalism drastically.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore social networking sites- Twitter and Instagram, as modern news sources.
2. To evaluate the credibility of these news sources.

Hypothesis

In this study, few hypothetical statements have been made by review of literature, talking to the target audience and personal observations and these are as follows:-

1. Twitter is more popular than Instagram.
2. Twitter is considered to be more credible source of information for news.

Research Methodology

Structured interview method has been selected to explore the study. This method can be defined as gathering data by asking questions to target audience, commonly known as sample. For this study, 20 journalists have been taken 5 each from radio, television, web and newspaper. Interviewees were asked 10 questions for the collection of data. The findings and results are in qualitative form.

In structured interview, researcher asks similar and defined questions to the interviewees and gets results, respective to the responses received while interviewing. It has been a useful method to get opinions from the experts of a particular field.

Data Interpretation

Since it is a structured interview, similar questions were asked to the respondents. Each question is individually interpreted as follows:-

Question 1: Which language do you work in?

Data Interpretation: Out of 20 respondents, maximum respondents work in Punjabi medium as interview has been taken in Punjab region.

Question 2: Which medium you're working in?

Data Interpretation: Sample of 20 respondents represents 5 journalists each from newspaper, radio, television and web.

Question 3: Are you active on Instagram and Twitter?

Data Interpretation: Responses show that the respondents are active users of social networking sites like Instagram and Twitter. Majority of interviewees show their interest in active usage of these sites.

Question 4: Which one of the following you use more frequently for professional purpose?

Data Interpretation: Since both the sites are providing information in their own ways but still, journalists prefer using Twitter for the most part purposely. In addition, Twitter provides more accurate information from verified accounts than Instagram.

Question5: What professional purpose you use Twitter for?

Data Interpretation: Twitter has been providing information and entertainment since a long time. Respondents show their interest in infotainment as tweets from celebrities and politicians are both informative and entertaining. However, journalists from radio and web responded that entertainment is the priority whereas, journalists from newspaper and televisions showed their interest in news. Also, journalists from newspaper and television use Twitter to share the news among audiences digitally. So, it can be said that Twitter is, for the most part, used for both entertainment and information among journalists, depending upon the medium they are working in.

Question 6: What professional purpose you use Instagram for?

Data Interpretation: Answers to this question show that journalists use Instagram for entertainment and photographs. Web journalists discussed about how photographs and videos from Instagram account of celebrities or politicians can help in references. One can use reference links of the same for more authenticity. Journalists from newspapers, television and radio respectively use Instagram for entertainment purpose only unless they get a major photograph to share as information.

Question 7: Do you post tweets?

Data Interpretation: Journalists from newspapers and televisions strongly agreed to it as they told that they post at least 3-4 tweets a day and that too, informative. However, journalists from web and radio responded that they post tweets randomly and occasionally.

Question 8: Do you post photographs on Instagram?

Data Interpretation: Responses from all the 20 journalists show that journalists post photographs randomly yet very often.

Question 9: Do you use Twitter and Instagram to publicize your journalistic work?

Data Interpretation: All the respondents agreed to this question to some extent. However, journalists from newspapers and televisions strongly said yes as they tweet and share posts of their media organizations in the form of links, videos and major happenings. So, through these responses it is clear that journalists use these social networking sites to display their own work as well among the target audience.

Question 10: Do you think these above discussed social sites are credible source of news?

Data Interpretation: Responses show that there isn't any next thought that these sites are now becoming a major news source for the journalists. But, when it comes to the credibility, not always these sites provide necessary and accurate information for journalists to share as news on their respective mediums. However, there has been much fruitful information received via these sites. In comparison to both, Twitter provides more authentic and credible information than Instagram.

Conclusion

Impact of social media is increasing drastically with the times and there is no doubt in saying that, this impact is reshaping the journalistic values. Earlier, journalists have to follow the proper channel but now, the dependency for news creation has been increased and many journalists are totally dependent upon Twitter and Instagram for the news stories. Twitter and Instagram are two major news sources which are mainly involved in providing information in the form of tweets, photos and videos respectively. While interviewing the target audience, it is clearly explored that the use of social networking sites is a threat to the journalistic values and ethics but at the same time it gives an open atmosphere for citizen journalism. Also, credibility of Twitter is more than that of Instagram as the information updated in the form of tweets is always passed from an official and verified account.

Through the responses received in interviewing 20 journalists from newspaper, radio, television and web, it can be undoubtedly said that social media is changing the shape of journalism in different ways. While interacting to the journalists, it is suggested that journalists are more active on social networking sites, for they may get a news story or important information anytime from social media like Twitter and Instagram. Responses show that the drastic involvement of digitalization is one main reason for this change in

journalistic point of view. Journalists especially of television and newspapers said that their dependency on social networking sites is increasing with times. However, asking the credibility of Twitter and Instagram, responses show that Twitter is more credible than Instagram and reason being is that, Twitter has officially verified accounts and the information in the form of tweets is updated by the officials only. Journalists from various newspapers even share tweets of celebrities and famous personalities in a column while, other journalists get major news stories from the official's accounts every now and then.

Instagram is also getting a lead in providing news sources to the journalists from web in the form of videos and photographs. Web channels or websites are now able to create a news story by gathering various pictures of the event being shared on Instagram. This creates an understanding that photos or videos can also be a good source of news but, simultaneously responses show that the authenticity of this news source is not always trusted. In fact, every reputed news organization is active on these social networking sites especially on Twitter for sharing the information amongst audience as soon as possible. Hypothesis of the study has been proved right as journalists claimed social sites like Twitter and Instagram as new news sources. In terms of credibility, journalists find that Twitter gives more credible and fruitful information than Instagram. The reliability of these social sites has proven that journalism is now entering a new world which can be called as digital journalism world.

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