

Citizen Journalism vs. Mainstream Journalism: A Study on Challenges Posed by Amateurs

*By Rabia Noor**

Citizen journalism is a rapidly evolving form of journalism, which has enabled ordinary people to report newsworthy situations around them. Nowadays mainstream media do not serve as the only source of news. The alternative news sources on the Internet, such as blogs, web portals and social networking sites give a good competition to mainstream media. The current study aims to assess how journalists perceive the impact of citizen journalism on mainstream journalism and their work. It endeavours to find out what challenges, if any, citizen journalism has posed to mainstream media and how does the latter respond to them. A survey was conducted among journalists working in Kashmir that helped to achieve the objectives of the study. The study found that citizen journalism does not pose any imminent threat to mainstream journalism since it is just in its formative years. In fact, citizen journalism holds potential benefits as a source of news. It proves to be useful to bring to fore the stories that are inaccessible to professional journalists.

Keywords: citizen journalism, ICT, mainstream journalism, new media, user-generated content

Introduction

Citizen journalism is a concept in media that refers to journalistic activities of ordinary people. It means citizens themselves report the issues confronting them. Citizen journalism has enabled people to raise their voice on what they feel need attention. These people are, thus, termed as citizen journalists. Duffy, Thorson and Jahng (2010) have defined "citizen journalist" as an individual, who is not a trained professional, but who nonetheless may report on his or her neighborhood or community. Citizen journalists or amateur reporters are none but the general audience, that is, viewers, readers and listeners of mainstream media. Referring to citizen journalists as "people formerly known as the audience," *PressThink* blogger Jay Rosen (2006) mentions that earlier they would be "on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly, while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another." He, however, argues that presently they are no more in a situation like that.

Citizen journalism is also known as participatory and democratic journalism (Baase, 2008). There are various other synonyms used for citizen journalism - "public journalism," "civic journalism," "stand-alone journalism," "networked journalism," "open source journalism," "crowd-sourced journalism," "collaborative journalism," "grassroots journalism," "community journalism," "bridge media" and so on. These forms of journalism are related to "citizen journalism", but each is a unique species that has evolved out of a larger family of social media. All these terms refer to different acts (Cohn, 2007).

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