Citizen Journalism and Democracy in India

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Abstract. This paper seeks to engage with the idea of 'citizen journalism' in the changing landscape of news in India. Citizen journalism has a purchase provided it is articulated with its tropes within the context of journalism *per se* and its linkages within the changing forms of relationships between citizen and democracy. Methodologically, this paper analyses existing literature in the form of journals, books and e-resources to explore the processes of interaction between journalism and audiences. It seeks to answer: how citizen journalism augments the democratisation of media; what are the inter-linkages between the notions of citizen, citizenship and journalism; how has social media had its impact on journalism. The findings reveal that citizen journalism usually is found deficient of objectivity and cannot produce quality content. The findings further suggest that professional journalists support the ideals of citizen journalism, which is a positive sign towards securing the democratic values.

Introduction

Citizen journalism has gained popularity in media and journalism studies in the recent past, sparked due to the technological developments in the post-liberalisation period. The technological abundance and the coming of new media made information easily accessible to masses. The advent of Android phones, iPhones, digital photography devices, internet, blogs, etc. enabled citizens to contribute to the information dissemination globally (Noor, 2012). Contrary to professional journalism, citizen journalism does not demand a certain level of education attainment or some sort of professional training; rather such practices are carried out by the general public independent of the mainstream media. General public are non-professional citizens[2] of a nation-state who play an active and an overall role in

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[2] While citizen journalism is mostly performed by non-professional citizens however they can sometimes be performed by professional journalists also. The latter is a recent trend among professional journalists who shun the path of professional journalism thus dissociating themselves from the biased, unethical and unreliable practices they are forced to perform within the mainstream media.

"procedural journalistic activities"[3]. However the question that needs to be raised at such juncture is how the general public turns towards an active citizen journalistic environment and engage in the procedural construction of news contents in this modern technological age and in a 'networked society' (Castells, 1996)?

The post-liberalisation phase saw a transition from authoritarianism to liberalism with the public becoming aware about the ideals of democracy. Simultaneously, the media saw a transition through two waves of democracy. The first wave can be traced from the struggle for independence from the colonial rulers to promote democracy. However, this wave could last only till India gained independence in 1947 thus marking the start of the second wave. Post-liberalisation (or the second liberalisation) emphasised the betrayal from the colonial rulers during independence but it also incited aspirations for democratic revival not only in India but globally. The globalisation of the idea of democracy highly influenced citizens across countries to partake in journalistic activities through the use of various internet-based platforms. Not only this, the implications can also be traced through investigating how traditional media represents people from different sections of the society through "democratic representation" principle (Urbinati & Warren, 2008, p.388); and also through the democratisation of journalistic activities in conventional media to ensure and encourage citizen participation in opinion formations.

The institutional structure sets the base for democratisation through providing a platform to citizens to express their opinions. Citizens frequently write about daily affairs but in fragmented descriptions and cordial ideals rather than philosophical or theoretical explanations. The vernacular illustrations of daily affairs are a means for the politicians to communicate with citizens. Institutions also need to hold debates and discussions on the idea of democracy to sustain/justify its credibility which is another precondition for democracy. Public-institution interaction ensures the participation of citizens, the former offering their opinions. However what is of importance at this stance is the fact that there has to be a causal relationship between the input and the output in terms of citizens as the source of information and their opinions being heard by larger society. This sort of communicative connection prevailed during the 20th century wherein information was disseminated to the public through radio, television and print media. There was however free flow of information following the coming of the internet, 'free flow of information' being an element of democracy. But mere free flow does not suffice, in the first place, for democratic functioning. Rather democracy requires other shades of interaction, which can be envisaged through listening to the opinions and ideas of common masses, which marks a significant contribution to the citizen-citizen and citizen-media interactions.

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[3] By procedural journalistic activities, I mean all the stages of content production, from the supply of information to analysis and other stages of the content production until the information is disseminated to the audiences in the form of news items.

Transformations in media functioning and journalism in the post liberalisation period such as privatisation and commercialisation resulted in the growth of media as a business sector and infused the idea of pluralism in media. The idea of plurality in media theoretically provided citizens with opportunities to experiment communicating through journalistic activities. This consequently resulted in competition among media professionals to select citizens as information sources. The underlying notion of pluralism is envisaged through involving citizens from marginalised communities in journalistic practices. Subsequently, the rapid growth of media industries and the emergence of community media ensured citizens to engage in localised journalistic practices. The democratisation of community media is necessitated through collective journalistic activities which further created a sense of community among the users as well. This type of participation in journalism has a tremendous impact on the schema of news media thus posing an unswerving challenge to both commercial as well as state controlled media. Scholars argue that journalism by citizens is turning out to be a frontline for journalistic communication (see: Omari, 2017). But who qualifies to be a citizen and what conditions make up a fit for citizenship? These questions will be answered in the latter sections.

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper analyses secondary data in the form of reference books, journal articles and online literature to offer analytical insights about the processes of communication and the patterns of interaction between journalism and audiences as well as journalism and citizens. The paper is a qualitative one and the techniques used to collect data include document reviews, examination, interpretation and analysis of the relevant literature facilitated by pre-conceived research questions and the emerging themes. The literature so collected has been analysed using content analysis to dig out the different shades of citizen and citizenship; journalism and professionalism and also citizen journalism. In doing so, country-based research has been considered for analysis; however studies from other countries are also examined to conceptualise and contextualise the notions of citizen, citizenship and democracy vis-a-vis journalism.

Research questions

In the backdrop of the methodological considerations, this paper seeks an answer to the following questions:

What are the inter-linkages between the notions of citizen,
citizenship and journalism and the dividing factors between the
general public and the politically interlinked public?
How citizen journalism augments the democratisation of media?
How and in what manner democratic values of citizen journalism

Inter-linkages between citizen, citizenship and journalism

In social and political science discourses, the concept of citizenship has emerged as a fundamental one during the last quarter of 1980. The renewed concept of the term is remarkable for researchers and political philosophers alike because after World War-2, the idea of citizenship disappeared from socio-political research or it was ignored completely. However the concept regained a central position following its implementation during the 1990s in the West. But what constitutes a citizen in a democratic country like India? Citizenship is an elegant and a widely disputed concept (Marshall 1950; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Schudson, 2006). Social science scholars claim that citizenship is a sociological as well as a political concept. Both these perspectives of understanding citizenship inform that the meaning of citizenship can itself be derived from how citizenship is conceived by people who belong to any socio-cultural or socio-political community.

Two dimensions of the inter-linkages between these can be mentioned here: one involves the formal status of people defined within the purview of constitutional framework binding citizens together through rights and duties. Secondly, there is a linkage between citizenship and the production and reproduction of socio-political and cultural identities of citizens within a bounded territory. Citizenship, according to these two dimensions, can be considered as a legal institution, which legitimises it in a democratic nation most often through prescribing rights and duties.

Historically speaking, citizens in the West were considered as free individuals governed by Athenian culture, which is characterised by "subordination of private life", "dedication to public affairs" and "common good" (Held, 1996, p.14). In India, culture had no connection to the public realm in republican terminology, but it was more connected to the ideas of commitment and subordination according to religion. However, the modern conception of citizens in a democratic country can be understood through three ways: the legal-judicial conception of citizenship, the political conception of citizenship and the affective citizenship (See: Coleman & Blumer, 2009). The first legal-judicial way binds a citizen to a particular political community in which the citizen is bound to abide by the norms of the community such as the laws. In this sense, a citizen who is attached to some political sphere such as a nation-state has to be in possession of some 'state-subject', which guarantees their right to citizenship. This demarcates citizens from the foreigners both legally as well as ideologically. The nation-state exists for a kind of citizenry which identifies itself with some community. Thus for a person to be called a citizen, is to be within a community rather than in isolation of the community; a citizen has to be under an obligation to abide by its laws, and other socio-legal responsibilities such as tax-paying, voting, maintaining constitutional ambience of living in tranquillity and so on (See Heater,

2004). The second is political citizenship, which is at par with the legal-judicial conception of citizenship to some extent, but goes beyond its regulatory nature. The citizen in this case is recognised as an active member of the political group, competent enough to persuade other citizens and influence the nation state on the political front, and not merely a member of some community as in legal-judicial citizenry form.

Political citizenship involves participation of citizens at three different levels such as collection of political information from diverse sources in order to have a balanced account of political state of affairs; deliberations involving political discourses with other citizens especially questioning in an honest manner; and activism involving strenuous efforts[4] directed to influence the matters of governance. The third is the affective citizenship which nurtures the citizens' sense of belonging towards a nation and brings in cohesiveness. This way of conceptualisation of the term 'citizen' entails attachment among the citizens and contributes significantly to the idea of citizenship. The elusiveness of affective citizenship contributes to its strength for it borrows affective energies from citizens and incorporates them into the life-world (See Silverstone, 2007).

This three way conceptualisation of the term citizenship has its roots in the way the term has been understood by scholars since the past, which depends significantly on the models of democracy of that era[5]. Scholars such as Bennett (2007) also compared between two forms of citizenship derived from the above three dimensions. These two aspects include the obligatory and actual citizens, the latter involving a moderate sense of obligation; but affective attachment among peer networks than among the customary connections are existent since the very beginning. These are more willing, than the obligatory citizens, to enter into their self-constructed political spaces oriented towards self-governing practices for the elimination of odds from the society (See Coleman, 2007).

From the above debate on what constitutes a citizen in a nation and on the idea of citizenship, what seems challenging is the adeptness to dig the linkages between citizenship and citizen journalism. As Safran (2005) argues, "we're all citizens, but not all of us are journalists" (p. 2). I use this statement as the starting point to understand the interrelationship between the two. Two possibilities of the interrelationship between them can be mentioned, that is, journalism as citizenship and journalism for citizenship. The latter is a classical model which lays emphasis on the performance of journalists rather than on citizens (Matheson, 2009). This model is least practiced by professional journalists and is so under-researched that Gans (2003) offers four theoretical postures of this model.

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[4] These strenuous efforts take the form of street demonstrations, posters, protesting against excessive laws and so on to influence the existing codes and policies which consequently result in the enforcement of fresh policies, or amendments to the existing ones.

[5] Under the democratic principles of that era, citizenship is primarily conceived as state-subject and therefore there is always a linkage between the citizen and the state.

First component stresses on the role of journalist within a nation state, in terms of keeping the citizens informed about the daily state of affairs within the nation; second component puts journalists under an obligation of keeping the citizens informed provided that the citizens are regularly consuming the local, national and international news supplied to them; third component, which is important to democracy, stresses that only the informed citizens can participate politically in democratic debates; fourth component emphasises that democracy of a state depends upon how informed citizens are who participate in the democratic debates (Gans, 2003). Though scholars (such as Eveland, 2004; Graber, 2004; Porto, 2007 and Allan, 2013) proposed other varied models as alternative to this conception of citizenship vis-à-vis journalism, however few of them disagreed with the notion that citizen's role is linked to their activities which has its base on the journalistic supplies. Stuart Allan (2013), for example, stressed more on the citizen's role with regard to information as the citizen spectator, which "signals a meaningful psychological involvement in current affairs, but not one that translates into active participation in political life" (p.33). He also stressed about the witnessing of journalistic supply as another dimension to the problem, wherein he recognised the role of citizens as the "whistle-blower", which he claims is a "progressive form of civic engagement" (Allan, 2013, p.152).

Analogous to Allan's idea of 'whistle-blower' is Schudson's concept of "monitorial citizen" (1998, p. 310), which suggests that citizens are more strategic and apposite to select what they want to pay attention to rather than their active engagement with different kinds of information such as civic and political. Graber, however, contradicts with Schudson's conception of 'monitorial citizen' and suggests that "monitorial citizens need not stay fully informed about political developments at all times" (2004, p.562).

Other criticisms of the monitorial citizen model are related to whether the selective engagement of monitorial citizens helps sustain democracy. However, there is a need to differentiate and comprehend those differences that lie at the bottom of the debate between various kinds of citizens such as those desirous and having capacity to be informed and to engage when they decide and those who are unwilling and unable to participate. Schudson's (1998) 'monitorial citizen model' is a persuasive one but it has remained under-developed. It is yet essentially seen as a reactive model in which citizens engage and act upon the information to confirm their citizenship, where information production cannot be understood as a citizenship act rather it is a journalistic act; and "engaging in any journalism requires activity not passivity" (Berger, 2011, p. 712). Journalists may or may not be the citizens however their professionalism is what binds them with active journalism unlike non-professional citizen journalism. While interrogating the citizen dimension of citizen journalism, Berger argues that "objectively, a particular individual may be a non-citizen in legal terms" (Berger, 2011, p. 712). He further argues: "to be a 'citizen' in terms of consciousness can be analysed in terms of the status of an individual as an active agent and a

producer of citizenship" and this is achievable only when an individual is a "reactive spectator and consumer of citizenship" (Berger, 2011, p.712). Journalists have responsibilities as citizens to keep our fellow citizens informed about the nature of threats which they need to be conscious about (Whittle, 2005). This understanding of citizenship is at par with the critique of citizen journalism offered by Berger and indicates that journalists can also see themselves as citizens because employment in media sector does not liberate them from their consciousness about citizenship (Berger, 2011).

This takes us to another possibility of trying to trace the interrelationship between citizen and journalism, that is, 'journalism as citizenship'. This sort of theorisation of the concept of citizenship vis-à-vis citizen journalism focuses on diverse elements of citizen identity. This conception addresses the difficulties in the informed and/or monitorial citizen types; however they are beset with certain inherent problems such as the idea of citizenship within citizen journalism. Such a theoretical base views citizen journalism as constituting citizenship rather than as a resource for citizenship.

The classical model, discussed earlier, acts as a substitutive approach to understand citizenship and citizen-participation linkage through actions such as voting and news investigation. These traditional practices are carried out by citizens as the obligatory actions; and the citizens performing these actions are called "dutiful" citizens. This is in contrast to the contemporary modes of citizenship involving political consumerism and citizens falling under this model are termed as "actualising" citizens (See: Bennett et al., 2009). The distinguishing factor among the two models is the way citizens prod-use information. The actualising citizens are much less likely to use traditional sources of information. They rely more on social media and the internet as the sources of information, and participate actively in debates and discussions happening on social media (Bennett et al., 2012). For actualising citizens, citizen journalism then becomes an important source of providing and producing information. The complexities in conceptualising citizen journalism according to the normative media theory are interlinked with a large number of individuals with different backgrounds, multiple experiences and differing interests. These different and differing individuals form a blend called 'public' which creates doubt about the ways in which conventional media undertakes the issues of multiple aspects of citizenry. Dissatisfaction over the institutional aspects of media forced their proponents to inquire about the role of media because the challenges of the solidification of institutions such as mass media occupy a central place in citizen journalism; and in doing so, it is important to think about how institutionalisation of mass media takes place?

In response to the question raised above, I intend to take into consideration the organisational framework of citizen journalism exclusively rather than engaging with the different shades of journalism. Under the organisational framework, two facets of citizen journalism can be identified: institutional and non-institutional. The institutional aspect in

terms of the organisational structure of citizen journalism stresses upon an individual to practice journalism and in doing so enter into a dialogue with the recipients over the contents produced. Strategically, institutional citizen journalism, through the practices of non-institutional citizen journalism, gives direction to the professional media to occupy a position in such a way that one can witness its tendency of chasing its own benefits by infusing its professional traits and journalistic practices into it. A common example of this sort is that BBC motivates its personnel to turn to citizen journalism in order to engage the public in a non-institutional journalistic atmosphere.

Non-institutional citizen journalism, in contrast, considers individuals as the foundation of journalism and also the cause of building varieties of social networking, thus employing and enabling the public to use media platforms for content production and its wide circulation. To exemplify the non-institutional aspect of citizen journalism, an attempt is made to explore how engaging the public in the practice helps citizen journalism to prosper, in the absence of any organisational structure. However, such an engagement of the public into the journalistic practices is beset with the problems of exercising moral conduct and ethical restraint. This tangential nature of citizen journalism excludes citizens from being under any obligation. Instead citizen journalists more so are answerable to self-conscience and to the public consuming their contents. This suggests a significantly individuated nature of non-institutional form of self-regulated citizen journalism. There can be other contours of the debate on self-regulation vis-a-vis social forms, such as a forum, members of which carry out journalistic activities regulated by the guidelines of the forum. Such social forms exist in the form of semi-institutions.

The question then arises: what has gone wrong with the professional journalism that forces or pushes citizens into unprofessional journalistic practices, most often termed as citizen journalism? The democratic theory proposes that journalism is vital for society since it acts as a watchdog and can dig out truth from the lies of the powerful. But how can a media system of this sort be constructed which is analogous to the democratic patterns, is challenging for a free society where the flow of information is often steered according to the interests of those in power? To accomplish this, there is a need to have a media system which operates on democratic patterns, and subtly calls for a change in the existing regulatory system and policies that makes the journalistic profession a realistic one.

The challenges to journalistic professionalism
The common argument and a general perception among media scholars is the fact that the services of journalists in terms of informing citizens is biased and corrupt, often influenced by the power of ruling parties, and this puts journalistic professionalism at the risk of damaging fanaticism. At such a juncture, the debates on the inter-relationship between professionalism and what constitutes ethics in journalism or between the unethical and

often biased practices in professional journalism is the political economy; but political economy can be considered as one way to analyse and explain professional journalism. Political economy otherwise has significance in any kind of analysis. Clutching on the genesis and the quality of professional journalism holds significance for its critical analysis in present times. Media organisations have witnessed tremendous criticism from the public for promoting the interests of its sponsors especially the advertisers and more often the owners. These practices are the reasons for the media's lack of credibility.

Coupled with such practices is the issue of commercialisation, considered by many as a threat to democracy. Other critiques include journalists' desired intentions of making more profit through their incredibly deceptive two-way practices – one tampering with the 'true' stories to generate revenue; and two disseminating false (political) information to the public so as to promote the powerful stakeholders.

Disseminating false and propagandistic contents to the public may risk the credibility of the media. If one intends to respond to the questions as to why media covers a certain specific story and the way it is covered by the media, one may be tempted to analyse the source of that news (the supplier). While scholars argue that media must rely on legitimate news providers, however, the point in question here is not concerned with news coverage but it is a question about the level of consumption by the audiences.

The sources often tend to be constrained to the powerful ones which metaphorically transforms a journalist into a mere stenographer. This sort of journalism is commonly found in undemocratic societies where the media has little or no freedom at all. Consequently, citizens indulge in organised journalistic activities to control and question professionalism in journalism. To recount yet another challenge facing professional journalism is the fact that it lacks or offers a diminutive contextualisation. Also to ensure that news segments are not driven by certain specific and selective ideology, there has to be some sort of fact-checking of news to validate and rationalise a certain specific news segment. This will give a democratic turn to the journalistic profession, which has received a petite engagement in academia despite the fact that democracy is a key to the functioning of journalism.

To add to this aspect of journalism is the idea that citizenry and journalism go hand in hand. Since citizenry entails and ensures that the citizens rely on journalistic contents and filter these contents so as to actively engage in political discourses, this forces journalists not to lose its bearings and ensures quality and politically motivated dissemination of information. Lack of citizenry in journalism may create an unresponsive political system but it may also promote corruption practices. However, to sustain democracy within journalism is to rely on alternative modes of journalism such as unprofessional journalism.

The democratic aspect of journalism involves discourses entered on the role of journalists involving the political, social and cultural aspects. Several media scholars (such as Glaser, 2012) consider journalists as the promoters of democracy who keep supplying

audiences with the information, and also critical viewpoints which transform them into informed citizens. These informed citizens utilise those information in their public life. This, therefore, calls for the preservation of media freedom through its detachment from political, economic and governmental pressures.

But there are other scholars such as McNaire (1998) who assert that journalists are part of the larger professional value and therefore are subject to competition among various forces such as social, economic, political and cultural. He argues that journalism cannot be considered as being independent of these forces. The underlying idea of journalism is to offer reliable, accurate, different and relevant information (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Journalism paves way for the retrospection of a community vis-a-vis democracy (Carey, 2000). In contrast, there are a varied number of political and non-political reasons for people to be citizen journalists. They keep persuading sources to invest time and supply information with no benefits to it. For instance, publicists cooperate considering this as their responsibility; academicians engage in citizen journalism for the sake of their career; activists see a cause in it, and there are others who consider citizen journalism as civic duty or see it as self gratifying to engage in journalistic activities. Mobile phone, in modern technologically advanced era, filled with images significantly contributes to citizen journalism; network went 4G and beyond, camera quality gone better, web became more visual, raw footage started pouring in, reporting is less scripted, awareness about things as they happen are shared by citizen producers and supplemented by consumers alike. While these instances point to the idea of consumerism in citizen journalism however I do not intend to dig deep into it to demarcate from the objectives of this paper.

Why citizen journalism?

Many countries across the globe, particularly Asia, impose certain restrictions on the practices of journalism. While journalists in India enjoy freedom in its various forms under Article 19 of its Constitution, there are simultaneously certain restrictions that undermine the idea of 'freedom' in journalism. For example, as Vincent and Grenadines (2014) argues, journalists [in India] have the freedom of press but this freedom must not be exercised against the existing government. In this backdrop, citizen journalism is looked upon as an alternative platform to publish facts which professional media intends to hide from its audiences (Campbella, 2014). To add to it, intervention in the dissemination of information by the owners of media outlets results in public/audiences being misled and misinformed and this hampers the opinion formation process.

However, there can be a stoppage to the intervention by owners but journalism in India is beset with a major problem in terms of lack of funds. To overcome this and to ensure that the highest journalistic standards are in place, media companies rely heavily on advertising, a major source of revenue; but it affects editorial decisions in the sense that the

contents disseminated to audiences conform to the ideologies of advertisers who are the source of economy for media outlets. In this sort of negotiation between advertisers and media professionals, advertisers control media contents to a great deal.

Contrary to downsizing journalism as a semi-profession, professional journalists most often consider themselves as expanding and promoting the role citizens play in democracy. At the same time, freelancers also reflect their ideals of journalistic profession; however they simultaneously keep citizens informed about their democratic roles through their journalistic practices. Journalists generally are professionals who work primarily for commercial news media intended to supply the kind of content to the audiences that is acceptable to them and for which they get paid. Two kinds of audiences consume news from certain specific news media. One includes those who consume news for the sake of being informed and thus are more interested in keeping up with the news. The other includes politically involved audiences who consume news in order to be politically informed about the political state of affairs. These two kinds of audiences hinder the pursuit of ideals by professional journalism, witnessed through a decline in the consumption of contents produced by professional journalists. The causal effect of this decline is the role played by citizen journalism by supplying more concrete facts to the public unlike professional media. Part of the reason for this decline is the fact that people usually prefer local/regional news rather than national because of ethnic attachment.

Professional journalists usually do not argue with citizens who are critical of their performances. However, they sometimes resort to self-criticism themselves. Thus the presumption that most of the media critique comes from public stands diluted as journalists have equally contributed to media critics and thus fall under the elite stratum of journalism. What has been the take of other stakeholders, like academia and other governmental and non-governmental organisations on journalism needs to be explored. However, a sketchy idea of how journalists react to the problems facing journalism would entail the disempowerment of journalists and professional journalism in three different ways such as reduced audiences, disapproval of content, criticism by fellow professionals and declinism.

Reduced audiences

Audiences who consume news sometimes disappear from the viewership list of news media once they find that a particular news media is biased or its viewership is witnessing a declining trend. This loss of viewership affects the economy of media organisations and consequently downsizes media staff. However, the same news media may sometimes regain the lost number of audiences depending upon the kind of news being circulated/broadcast, especially when some important news is being broadcasted/disseminated which is of national interest. Indian television, as it existed before the 1980s, had Doordarshan as the only television network; and therefore it had a tremendous number of audiences and very

high viewership rate as compared to other foreign channels. However, the post-liberalisation period saw the coming of new channels and the bifurcation of Doordarshan into various regional channels and programme oriented channels; the National channel of Doordarshan subsequently lost its audiences to other sister channels.

There were channels such as DD-Metro, DD-I, DD-II, DD-III and so on. The other example of this sort is the coming of the internet and technological advancement. There are various platforms available to log in to in order to get news – regional or national or even international. Mobile phones, podcasts, pagers, and other similar devices have become a major source of browsing the internet and searching for various genres of news. Similarly, there are various social media networks for the dissemination of information. This has significantly reduced viewership of various news channels in India.

Disapproval of contents

There is yet another tremble for journalists, that is, media credibility. The lack of consumers' confidence in news supplied by journalists and the manner in which news is constructed has weakened the interest of audiences in news media. While researchers who engaged in exploring how credible media is, have more so focussed on the sources of news rather than the news itself. Hovland & Weiss (1951) targeted two chief components of source credibility in three forms of media – television, radio and newspapers; and these two chief components include journalists' 'expertise' and 'trustworthiness'.

During the late 60s and through 70s, researchers could not move beyond these two components to measure the source credibility. Later during the late 80s, scholars such as Gaziano & McGrath (1986) presumed the two-component measuring strategy of Hovland & Weiss (1951) excluded other important elements of measure; and thus they stretched their studies to include other variables as a measure for news media credibility. They identified various other elements such as fair, unbiased, completeness, accuracy, considering people's privacy, interests, community wellbeing, multiple opinions, trustworthy, trained reporters, public interest, factual reporting, and so on. Allied to news credibility are other factors on the part of audiences which contribute to the dissatisfaction of audiences towards journalism as a profession such as inaccuracy, failure to consider the audience issues, political biases, and so on. While the fact remains that journalists are completely aware of the partiality and biased practices, sometimes unethical practices also, little do they admit and accept the criticism from audiences.

Criticism of fellow professionals and declinism

Another reaction to the problems journalism is facing comes for status and power vested in journalism and the criticism is intended towards fellow journalists for their excessive greed which consequently alters the patterns of relationship between journalists and audiences, built over a period of time since the beginning. The corporatisation of the media industry

has led to the acceptance of huge honoraria from industry and other corporate sectors, and journalists in return address their issues in news reporting. This class of journalists, commonly termed as celebrity journalists, are the ones criticised the most and any kind of reportage from them is deemed biased. The criticism of celebrity journalists comes from two paths: the first criticism comes from audiences who believe that journalists had primarily come from a working class who were not so rich; the second criticism comes from media professionals itself who believe that after coming into the journalistic profession, journalists become famous and subsequently rich due to unfair means. This, they believe, has created a gap between journalists and citizens. This can partly be a reason for the audiences showing disinterest in certain news media outlets owned or run by such journalists. The argument though is hypothetical and needs to be explored.

Coupled with the criticism from media professionals is the issue of declinism. Media witnessed its declining trend in terms of the reduction in the audiences, the budgets and so on; these signs imply the gloomy future of journalism. The fourth-estate idealisation of journalism is also in decline; though in the past, journalists' status and the credibility of the journalistic profession was very high in almost all forms of news media. In fact, to acquire the conventional status and zeal in news media, one hour prime time on Indian news television emerged as a way to refurbish the journalistic credibility but succumbed to the competition for higher TRPs. The process of increase in audience number started gaining importance and depended largely on the news anchors.

Despite this, it could not appeal to conventional journalism to regain its position in the media world. The future of journalism is thus envisaged through the coming of the internet, the only hope for the profession to reconstruct its past and accomplish pending objectives. Whether the internet would guarantee news credibility is a question that needs to be answered. Web news is emerging as a good sign for the revival of journalism in India. However, given the fact that socio-cultural and economic innovations brought about by the new technology do not materialise, it can be argued that technology is not the only factor to craft the alluring future for professional journalism.

Journalists in India have since independence been holding a potent position, having monopoly over access to information and its dissemination. Communication theorists such as Baker (2009) explored how professional journalism, through the practices of journalists, affect and shape society by arguing that journalists are influential and dominating. The information that journalists supply to audiences shapes their assumptions about the facts and therefore affects their "decision-making" ability on various fronts such as voting, choices, behaviour patterns and lifestyles, and so on (Baker, 2009, p.127) thus keeps them informed, uninformed or misinformed. Because of the power so vested in journalism, journalists are always held answerable for the information they disseminate. As a result of this, they are always under an obligation to abide by the ethics and the codes of respective

organisations and also seek and share facts while reporting. The reportage by the professional journalists is not disseminated as covered; it rather goes through the editors' checks before being aired/broadcast (Brown, 2005). In contrast to this, citizen journalists are free from the editorial checks without even facing the issues of credibility. Such overlooking of how significant it is for citizen journalists to check the facts is one of the fundamental concerns of professional journalists and audiences equally, which has increased the risk of being at a receiving end to the news (inaccurate and prejudiced) created by citizen journalists. Another issue facing professional journalism is that of ethics fostered through two pillars – "truth and objectivity" (Ward, 2009, p.71). Ward remarked that the core value that covers the idea of traditional objectivity is that journalists must 'stick to the facts' without any kind of partiality (Ward, 2009, p.73). Others claim that transparency, which is vital for a fair and unbiased reportage, demands that journalists involve citizens in journalistic practices (Craft & Heim, 2009). While there has been a trend to call citizens for debate on news media, especially television news, however journalists tend to be more selective in inviting citizens for such debates and discussions over certain issues. Despite journalists being selective in their invitations to citizens, this does not avert the voices of citizens from being heard through citizen journalism practices. The preconceived authenticity of communication by citizen journalists towards the public advocates the return of a period where public opinion is believed to contribute to the quest for truth. Truth, which is vital for traditional journalism, is also a chief constituent of journalistic credibility.

Internet based social media allows its users to create their own fact-based contents and make them public on social media (Kaplam & Haenlein, 2010). This understanding is common among media scholars; however for communication theorists, social media is an "alternative platform" particularly for communicating with the public (Poell & Borra, 2011, p.696). Such a process of content production and communication involves users building their own platforms for communication, the source of communication being blogs, YouTube, podcasts, and so on and is termed as "mass self-communication" (Castells, 2009, p.4); and this has highly influenced journalism as a profession (Poell & Borra, 2011).

There is no denial to the claim that social media has emerged as a form of broadcast news in contemporary times possibly due to the technological advancement easily accessible to users for application (Poell & Borra, 2011) and thus is a modern means of communication among them (Kaplam & Haenlein, 2012). What is appealing about social media is the way it has affected traditional means of communication–a rather more accommodating way to broadcast news. For instance, professional news media most often now use social media (such as Twitter) contents of users as the references in their content production process. In fact, newspapers also encourage its readers to comment on news segments either through mails or through social media channels on some selected topics to generate ideas and opinion formation, and also to produce newer contents on these issues.

The e-version of the news stories carried out by various media channels also contain links which enables the public to share their stories/opinions about a particular segment. They also provide space in the form of 'comment box' where people in hundreds and thousands comment about a particular news story and most of these comments appear as a 'continuing news story' for the next published paper.

Following such a debate, the definition, provided earlier, of social media comprising various platforms can be bifurcated into various projects if one intends to have an in-depth understanding of it. These are basically the collaborative projects that constitute social media such as content creating communities (YouTube), social networking sites (Facebook & Twitter), blogs, and so on (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012) and are in essence the platforms that allow its users to share contents produced by them.

The coming of social media, theorists believe, marked a shift from news segments serving to provide information and keeping netizens informed, to ensuring that everyone is entitled to put forth his/her comments or give feedback on news. In fact, some theorists argue that journalism, as understood till date, is on the verge of losing its vigour and is witnessing a declining trend (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012).

Journalism, professionalism and citizen journalism

There are always certain obligations binding upon the journalists while they practice journalism in a professional manner. At the same time, there are certain prescriptions in the form of rules that constitute and contribute to an important area in the journalistic profession and these rules are central to the success of journalists. One such obligation is to write about the facts – the objective truth – which is maintained predominantly through using qualitative matters, a mark of respect for the audience to be well informed about the facts. Analogous to the obligations of journalists are their inherent journalistic rights, like right to collect information, freedom of speech and expression, and so on, while disseminating information to audiences, be it critical, informative or of sports and so on.

The relationship patterns in journalism and among various journalists with audiences can differ to a great extent. This argument is supported by an ethnographic work conducted by Robinson (2010) on policies regarding the feedback and commenting on news on the online news platforms. Robinson (2010) identified two important viewpoints on the commenting practices: the first is "traditionalists" and the other is "convergers" (p.126). The former includes those who support and promote the existence of hierarchy in a relationship between the journalist and the news consumers. On the other hand, convergers are those who support and believe that the only way forward to have more commenting practices in online news journalism is to increase the readership.

Habermassian work "The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere" published in 1989 criticises the media for just promoting a unidirectional communication system through

constructing messages without the involvement of the consumers of news. This is evident from the topics lacking any kind of political affiliation and also the opportunities for citizens to express discomfort and dissatisfaction. Such an idea of reconnecting with audiences through communicating with them in order to take into account their feedback over certain topics can be identified through an ideological movement called 'civic journalism' which grew-up during the 1990s (Rosen 1992, Charity 1995, Merritt 1998). The present day participatory journalism is a transformation of civic journalism that promotes the interaction between media and its audiences (Bowman & Wills, 2003).

News credibility is the causal effect of participatory journalism ascertained through the engagement of journalists and public via online platforms. Participatory journalism through social media has become an order for professional journalism, especially newspapers and television news channels, with professional journalists initiating interactive sessions with the public. This sort of journalism promotes a communication model which involves feedback from audiences also. Considered as the modern journalistic practice, it gives space and encourages readers to engage in the process of news production and also to comment and react to news segments of any sort and in any way, which is directly shared with the respective writers. Thus there are choices for audiences to interact with writers and be selective in choosing their favourite news genres through links provided for each segment and this is ensured in the online version of various news media industries. And therefore, the open communication facility between content users and content writers many times allows audiences for live feedback.

The existing method of communication, especially the one which existed in traditional journalism and which is a one-way process to communicate, is transformed into collaborative journalism and it has gained momentum in the recent past. The coming of the internet has reduced the gap between professional and citizen journalists to such a great deal that even the practice of journalism is delivering mutual benefits to both. There has emerged a new kind of journalism based on the interactive relationship between the audiences and the content users in which content users are granted space in the public sphere. As a result of this, they contribute to the production and publishing of news across multiple online platforms. This sort of participatory journalism initiated by media organisations encourages and promotes the interaction between the producers of news and the consumers of news – a developmental initiative that acts as gate-keeping and evaluates journalistic professionalism (Deuze et al., 2007; Chung, 2007). This shifting of traditional journalism towards a more citizen/user oriented practice has been termed the 'reformation moment'–a process by which the power of journalists is superseded (Reich, 2008).

Thus, to call journalism a profession is a dispute among many media scholars (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; McQuail, 2000) who consider it as a semi-profession due to the involvement of non-professionals in the journalistic practices. There can also be many routes

to the practices of journalism that make it difficult to be termed as a professional one. However there has been a complete demarcation of professionalism and unprofessionalism in terms of the development of an ideology among the professionals which hardly exists among participant journalists. A common example of this sort involves the consideration of certain notions in journalistic practices such as public service, ethics, objectivity, quality and so on which are a precondition for professional journalism (See: Tumber & Prentoulis, 2005) but rarely practiced by non-professionals.

Though the debates about journalistic professionalism started long back, scholars did not explore what constitutes professionalisation of journalism until the 1960s. During the late 1960s, researchers who intended to explore professionalism in journalism came across a major hurdle throughout the process. The hurdle can be counted on the academic front since literature on journalistic professionalism was borrowed from sociologists rather than journalists, especially for the reason that sociologists questioned whether journalism can be considered as a profession. Marron (1996), however, remarked that since there was a limited research on professionalism conducted by sociologists, therefore it can be assumed that journalism can both be a profession or it cannot be a profession.

The little research done by sociologists so far informs an important rational phase to ascertain what attributes qualify a profession and hence the question whether or not journalism qualifies as a profession. The results derived from how sociologists understood journalistic profession and professionalism, traverses through the expansion of traits-method as a primary way of studying journalistic professionalism. Conversely, the contestation over journalistic professionalism in contemporary scholarship swings from 'journalism being considered as a profession' to concerns about the 'right to be a journalist', the latter again pointing to the traits of professional journalism.

However scholars argue that there exist no legitimate traits that would determine the capability of a person to be a journalist. There is, however, a power approach to professionalism in journalism which is quite at a distance from traits approach to determine professionalism in terms of the characteristics of power approach aimed primarily at securing power, prestige and privileges (Quinn, 2018). This shift in understanding professionalism among journalists is vital to the virtual urge of journalism (Klegon, 1978). For instance, in times of demand for manpower in journalism, the journalists are likely to be termed as professionals and the institution as a highly valuable one; there is therefore a tendency that professionals will make efforts to control the work they do (Birkhead, 1982), thus monopolising their profession (Larson, 1977). Regardless of their critical assessment of the traits approach, the advocates of power approach still show signs of interest in traits as they believe that traits play a significant role in acquiring professional status; however the status so acquired is used to control the occupational relationships.

Conclusion

In distinguishing between the two conceptions of the term citizen, that is, as a source and as a journalist, one can cultivate a critical conception of citizen journalism. Like citizens as journalists, citizens as source had also existed since long and played a significant role in journalism (Carlson & Franklin, 2011; Glaser, 2012). The origin of both these conceptions can be traced from the ideas of ordinary citizens. A person can act as both a source and a journalist in any kind of situation, but whether a person can simultaneously act as a source and journalist is debatable.

Primarily, the present study intended to inflate the existing literature on citizen journalism. Professional journalism, per se, is regarded as the foundation of democracy; however, this is no new given the fact that the digital world offers more conducive platforms for audiences to produce their own news. News production by audiences/citizens (or citizen journalism) is a trend in the modern digital world, as it offers a space to everyone to voice their concerns. Citizen journalists have taken over the traditional/professional media through the former losing their monopoly over the production of news. Various means have come into play to disseminate information to the public such as Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc. Citizens, now, have the power to produce their own news and publish it on social media enabled through the internet. Every citizen with access to the internet and social media has become a citizen journalist, however, they are hardly trained in this field in terms of their knowledge about the ethical standards adopted by conventional journalists.

There are also certain challenges facing citizen journalism in terms of credibility and reliability. Even conventional journalism is beset with such problems. To overcome them, both citizen journalists and conventional media houses require collaborative efforts to form a synergy; this will be useful in addressing the problems in conventional media and demand accountability in its reporting. It will also force conventional media to promote content diversity and cater to the needs of diverse sections of society, especially those overlooked for long in the race of TRPs. Another significant consideration in citizen journalism is that people are willing to participate and engage in journalistic activities.

However, willingness and engagement does not suffice for democracy; the need is to consider citizens as stakeholders rather than the contributors or producers of contents, which constitutes an important element of democracy.

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