

The Journalistic Code of Ethics and Public Representation in Web Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examined the situation of linkage between Traditional journalism (conventional Media) with Web Journalism (New Media) with the perception of working journalists which are the main stack holders of the meditational relationship of traditional and digitalized information world. The study analyzed the situation rather the web journalism is enhancing the public representation or not. The study also checked the implication of journalistic ethical values in web journalism. The scenario of acceptance of web journalism at public level also examined. The results of the study showed that the situation of linkage of traditional media with news media is not unstable and web journalism will enhanced in future. The study also presents a scenario of need for the New Digitalized Media in context working journalists and journalistic ethical grounds. The study is outcome of a survey done with the working journalists and in-depth interviews of two senior media professionals.

Key words: Conventional Media, Traditional Journalism, New Media, Web Journalism, Digitalized Media, Satellite world, meditational relationship

Introduction

Media is the essential part of the democratic societies. Traditionally the print media (newspapers, magazines, journals) was the main source of information and it was called the journalism. With the time are being electronic media (TV and Radio) become the part of the news media (journalism). Now the new media (internet base news sources) has come into front to become a part of journalism. The print journalism was a booming media before the internet era. Print media ruled over the journalistic world for decades. "The situation of print media in Pakistan is still not bad as there are more than eleven thousand newspapers are published from various cities of the country with more than 500 million circulation"(JDHR, 2017).

Web Journalism

New Media is not defined as a single element just print media but also defined as a mixed format of various mediums just like electronic media. Ravi (2011) explained this phenomenon as “New Media is basically a merger of different mediums which already exists in world. It’s a thriving example of democratic process in the society. An asset of New Media is its stored record which is very easy and consistent accessible for every one might be with some security measures sometimes”. It is a common consideration that digital media give more promotion than the traditional media. The huge magnitude of digital world especially social network sites has opened the new horizons for meditational relationship. It is interpreted by social scholars as “It is therefore expected that information posted on social media will become increasingly important to consumers in the future. This shift means that organizations will feel the need to invest more and more in new media in the near future” (Rajendran &Thesinghraja, 2014).

The digital media including (Social media and News media) has become essential part of contemporary societies. The existence of The New Media and Social Networking Sites has become a big challenge for conventional media especially newspaper. Digital world has changed the readership habits of people. The masses have turned towards internet reading instead of printed papers due to easy and moveable access. The web journalism (New Media) has become an alternative source of information and news. With users’ perspective, the New Media is not only free but also faster than printing source. Moreover, sufficient volume of information providing by internet sources that is also updated with every passing minute cannot be expected from printed papers which is published once after 24 hours. The Internet could be used at anytime and anywhere without taking long time to search for a piece of Information.

As Ahmed (2017) describes that “in the present age journalists and media workers are facing innumerable challenges. The society and media outlets have expectations that media personals work with conventional journalistic standards of fairness, impartiality and accuracy but same time fulfill the needs of rapidly growing advanced approach of media (digital media). They have to fulfill ethical canons and also have achieved technological milestones within the limited time period. The media credibility issues, audience estrangement, biasness in content phenomenon are also in favor of media professionals”.

Journalistic Ethics

The Media is a key player to informing the masses about realities. The journalists amass, amend and broadcast the information to public as a key function of Media all over the world. The Truth always remains a demand from society to the media. The society seeks out balance, fairness, truthfulness, accuracy and impartiality which have been considered the basic values for journalists to sustain the honor and integrity of news content. As Arshad (2015) describes that “ethical debates must be with theoretical or practicalaspects. As the phenomenon of media ethics, it is the kind of practicaland functional principles. The media

ethics mainly is focused with implication of relevant philosophical consideration in news content. These are the guidelines for journalists to be responsible for their conduct in front of society”.

Literature Review

Ward (2011) explore about ethical issue in media and said that “ethical discussions may be about philosophical or applied ethics. Theorizing in philosophical ethics is concerned about purpose, history, theory or nature of ethical concepts and ethical statements. While in applied ethics, it is more concerned about the criteria of right or wrong, and the specific principles about a domain of the society or a profession. Media ethics is a type of applied ethics. In media ethics discussion, main focus is the analysis and application of relevant ethical principles to the practice of news media. More specifically, media ethics studies the principles that guide the journalists to keep responsible conduct among each other and with the society. Media ethics is concerned about both freedom and independence of media, on one hand, and using this freedom and independence responsibly, on the other hand. In this sense, media ethics stress journalists to use their freedom responsibly and make them accountable for the consequences of their actions on others”. He further said that “despite long research on media ethics, there is no consensus among media scholars on widely accepted set of media ethics. However, some researchers have endeavored to understand the basic ethical principles that can be considered inherent to journalism. Common subject-matters of these discussions are truthfulness and objectivity of information, neutrality of journalists, privacy of the news source and the public, and a commitment to avoid unjustifiable harm to others, among others”.

Ravi (2011) said that New Media is basically a merger of different mediums which already exists in world. It’s a thriving example of democratic process in the society. An asset of New Media is its stored record which is very easy and consistent accessible for every one might be with some security measures sometimes. Though it is old information that the seeker avails, it gives a sense to every user that the media is of his/her own time, thus asynchronous nature vanishes. It’s a fact that new media is extremely cooperative medium. The New Media can also be good arbitrator between media outlets, authorities and masses. The biases in content, especially paid news, damaged the credibility of conventional media at large. Whereas, the trust level and acceptance of web journalism rising day by day.

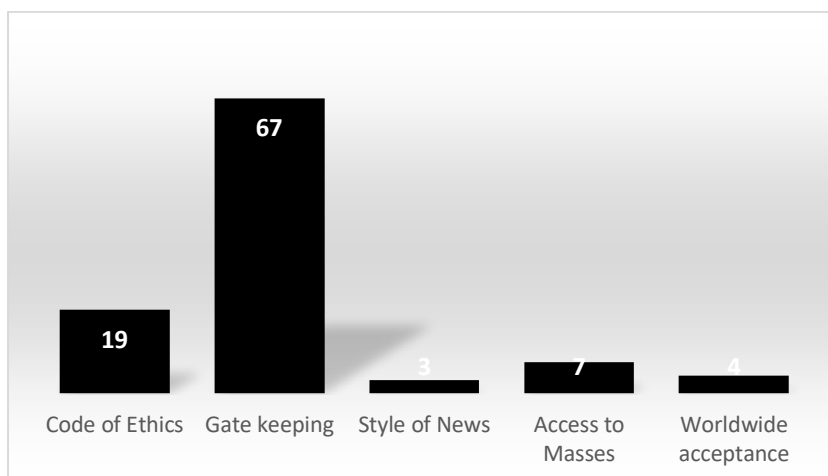
Methodology

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the picture rather the web journalism is enhancing the public representation or not. The study also tests out the implication of journalistic ethical values in the content of web news outlets. The scenario of acceptance of web journalism at public level also examined. In this study qualitative in-depth interviews and quantitative survey techniques were employed to confirm the hypotheses and research questions. The survey was conducted from 200 journalists representing different media outlets. Two senior journalists (One from Print journalism and one from digital journalism)

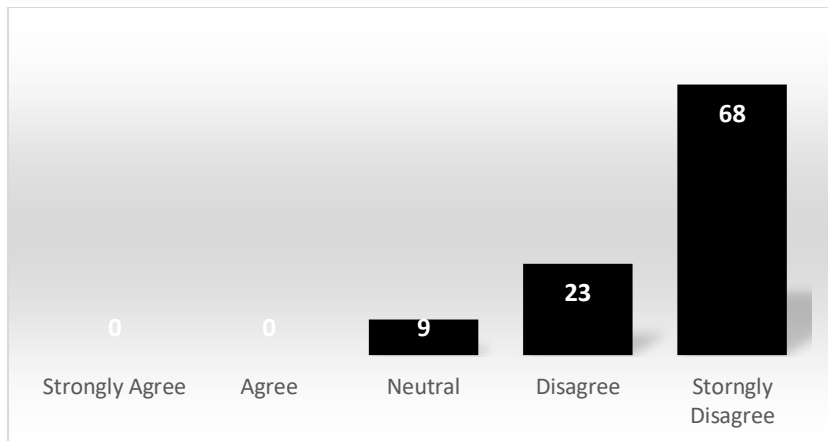
were interviewed for in-depth qualitative study. The professionals who were interviewed are: Shamsul Islam Naz editor Daily 92 News Faisalabad and Former Secretary General Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists PFUJ (having 44 years work experience), Hamid Yaseen Editor NEWS Line and former Assistant Secretary General PFUJ (22 years work experience). The basic purpose of the interviews and survey was to gather the opinion of the media professionals on mediational relationship of print journalism and web journalism and to evaluate appropriation scenario of journalistic ethical values in web journalism. The questions asked in in-depth interviews and survey were composed with the factors, difference between social media and web journalism, affects of web journalism on journalistic ethical values, implication position of journalistic code of ethics in web journalism, the public and local content representation in web news outlets.

Results and Discussion

The results clearly giving a view that journalists consider the gate-keeping process as a major difference between web journalism outlets and social media networking sites instead of code of ethics, news writing style, access to masses and worldwide Acceptance. Another aspect of this phenomenon is that social media networking sites like FaceBook, Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp are not the means of New Media (web journalism). Journalists deem that social networking sites might be associating the people but there is a full amount liberty for all the participants of the Social networking sites to put and share the content which they want. There is no any check and balance on content writing with ethical aspects and news writing styles. Although the social networking sites have a huge acceptance and these might be more famous in masses but the “gate-keeping process” give differentiate the position of internet journalism and internet based social networking sites.

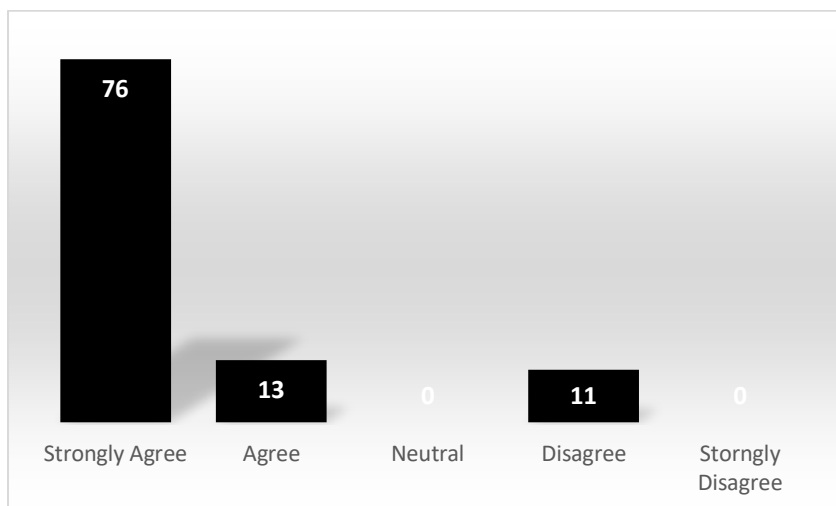


Difference between New Media and Social Media

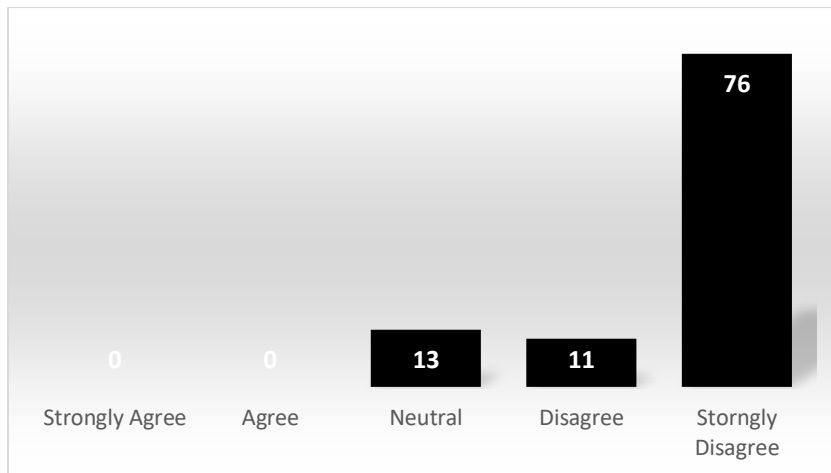


FaceBook, Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp, is the “means” of New Media

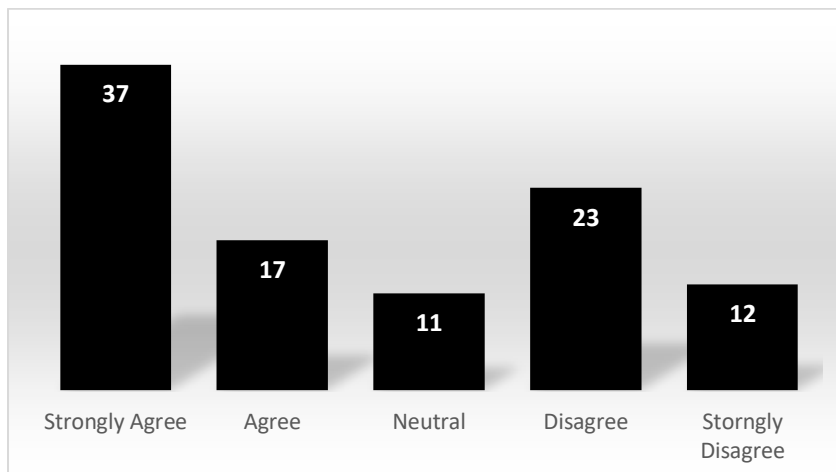
The results also showing that the vast majority journalists believe that the code of ethics for journalists is implacable in web journalism but as far as social media the journalistic ethics would not be applicable. Internet based journalism which is running as a news organization might be able to implement the code of ethics but the social media has different perspectives and ethical codes might not be implacable in social media. The divert opinion of journalists gave another angle phenomenon that web journalism opened new horizons for ethical considerations. The vast majority of the journalists stated that journalistic ethics are appropriate for web journalism and can be applied, but they believe that code of ethics is not applicable on social networking sites (social media). Meanwhile, the respondents gave opinion that internet based journalism is affecting the journalistic ethical grounds but the same time it is giving some new standards of morality and values too.



Code of Ethics for journalists is applicable in New Media



Code of Ethics for journalists is applicable in Social media



New Media is affecting the Journalistic ethical values

The journalists have another consideration that the web journalism is an extension of traditional printed shape journalistic reportage although there is bitter difference in the writing-style of both the mediums. There is another aspect differentiated in both mediums that local content of public representation is missed in web based journalism which was a key part of the printed journalism. The journalists expressed that it might be due to world-wide magnitude of web-journalism.

Conventional Media (Print and Electronic Media) was at booming position before the internet era. Now the time is in favor of Digital Media. Online journalism is spreading all around. A large number of the newspapers and TV channel outlets have made their websites and provide the information minute by minute. A huge number of newspapers in Pakistan (Daily Jang, Daily Express, Daily Dunya, Daily Kabrain: Daily Dawn, Daily Pakistan, Daily 92 News, etc.) has uploaded their newspaper on websites with complete publishing look and decreasing their printing circulation. Digital world is giving them new areas of viewership. Society is giving response to the digitalized newspapers much more than non-digitalized media outlets. The collaborating web journalism favoring the ethical aspect in internet based

news providing outlets. The scenario shows new field of opportunities and challenges side by side for journalism.

Conclusion:

The Conventional Media, especially print media, has a set of ethical values. These ethics developed with the passage of time in decades. There are some codes of ethical values in traditional journalism all around the world. Online media got a boost with social networking sites. But the Social networking sites has no ethical code especially gate keeping process is not applied in this medium which is essential part of Conventional Media. The media professionals consider the new media different mode rather than social media. They have the perception that the new media has a gate keeping process and its working is also under ethical values. Conventional Media and New Media collaboration is also important in this sense especially in Pakistan. The newspapers are uploaded on internet sources with its traditional shape which is not as it is except sub-continent. Ethical values are also important for media outlets. If the New Media (Digital news sources) have no code of ethics, just like social media networking site, it will become a big problematic issue in near future. There is also a consideration regarding mixed version of social networking sites and New Media. The majority of the journalists have reservations regarding this mixed version. Journalists want to apply code of ethics on New Media and to differentiate the social networking sites and New Media clearly.

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