



# Social Media and the Changing Face of Journalism

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## Abstract

With the rapidly increasing developments in Information Technology, social media has become a very popular communication tool, especially in the 21st Century. While Social Media is very useful in various areas of daily life, the impact of social media in the area of Journalism was examined in this piece of writing. The data was garnered through the analysis of grey literature. The impact of social media in relation to Journalism was examined in the following ways: a) The effect of Social Media on the Professionalism of Journalism b) The effect of Social Media on the editorial process c) The effect of Social Media on the Media economy d) The effect of Social Media on reader-newspaper relations e) The effect of Social Media on Reader-Journalist relations It was concluded that indeed Social Media has overhauled the face of Journalism.

**Keywords:** Social Media; Media Economy; Professionalism

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## Introduction

Many definitions have been fronted for defining Social Media. However Kaplan and Haenlein's definition of Social Media will be adopted in this text. They define Social Media as "A group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and Technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content [1]." Examples of Social Media include Facebook; Twitter; YouTube; Blogging, Tik Tok and many others.

Social Media has created a typical revolution in the area of Journalism from the point of view of news sharing, participation in the news creation process as well as socialization between the key players in the media sector, as elaborated below:

### Social media and the professionalism of journalism

Social Media has created a change in the approaches used in training future Journalist in the area of professional skills. For example, some universities like Harvard, Columbia, to mention but a few, have introduced "Best Social Media Practices" classes in a bid to prepare their students for possible careers as digital strategists [2]. One can rightly say therefore, that a new

dimension of Journalists' skills is being demanded in the wake of new technology. And those who can meet these skills are being accommodated in the area of Journalism. Such skills for example include computer and on-line skills, multi-media and reduction knowledge, information production approaches, and many others. The image of Professional Journalism has been transformed to an advanced level whereby, Social Media has brought "life" into the Journalism profession, thereby creating a connection between traditional media, advertising, and relations with the public. For instance in news bulletins, Journalists' photos and videos can be relayed to the news viewers. This is for example evident on many media institutions' social media pages, like "The New York Times" Facebook page; "Al Jazeera", "Türk Haber" to mention but a few. This audio-visual context of news telecasting has made news more believable, and easier to follow and therefore interpret by the audiences (in this case the news viewers). An important observation in relation to this development is the fact that social media users access a different type of news from that availed by print newspapers. In the same vein online Journalism has amalgamated newspapers, television, radio, and news archives in one place. This has given rise to a completely new type of Journalism. In other words not only can readers access current news via social media, but they can also gain access to on-line media archives so as to catch up with the stories that they missed

[3]. Presently thanks to Social media, the Professionalism of the Journalism area is expanding to cover professional and social problems among others. In other words, specialization is creeping in to enable Journalism to spread to much wider areas of daily life. Environmental Journalism is for example a relatively new area of Journalism which has been enhanced by social media with topics like global warming being accorded a lot of importance among the social media platform discussions. In the era of increased social media use in the Journalism profession, the electronic news format is gaining prominence over the print news format. Presently as mentioned briefly above, most media institutions have social media sites through which they convey "more user-friendly" news to their audiences. This has consequently led to a decline in print media activities, such as employment levels and an obvious reduction of revenue earned from such media format (from a media economy point of view [4], mentions that there is a growing preference among readers for a paperless electronic environment, that the digital media will soon render the paper media extinct. An observable change in the information society is the shift from text-dominated information, to more audio-visual content [5] mentions the change in the newspapers way of relaying information in order to embrace the changing lifestyle, whereby more coverage was accorded to entertainment, adverts, and retailers' needs were also taken into consideration. It can therefore be concluded that the Journalism way of information presentation in the era of social media is more appealing to the targeted audiences, the majority being the youth. Due to social media incorporation into Journalism, a sense of urgency has penetrated the field of Journalism, whereby news can be quickly gathered, shared, debated or analyzed and can be continuously up-dated. For example "the BBC" has a 24 hourly active news reception virtual room. While traditional broadcast media has stuck to its hourly news broadcasts some of which contain the same news from hour to hour, social media is beating that trend with instant news updates.

### Social media and the editorial process

Technologically up-to-date media organizations are constantly up-dating their editorial processes by providing 24 hourly editorial services and newsrooms [6]. For example via social media like Face book, the CNN international page constantly relays current news to its audience. As a student while constantly reading in the night, I have adopted the habit of "patrolling" social media sites and thanks to technology; current news is always available on various media organizations' social media pages. A good editorial process is backed by intensive reflective skills. This process has however been made difficult by the internet [7]. In other words, social media is eroding the capacity for concentration and contemplation, due to convenience needs. In line with this therefore, there is a possibility for social media users to over-react towards a particular story or news event, through their interpretation of that news story. The editorial process has also received a positive face-lift from social media, by enabling journalists to use their preferred writing styles [8]. For instance any topic can be covered in blogs; many photographs can be incorporated for deeper analysis and therefore understanding; and last but not least, reader participation enhances the editorial process, through correction of any cited mistakes. This is because

social media can be altered almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

### Social media and the media economy

Media organizations' income bases have widened as more readers and advertisers are being accessed via social media, in addition to the formerly existing news distribution avenues. Also notable though is the continuously decreasing income from the printed news sources like newspapers. Of recent the media economy has been liberalized, since the formerly existing monopoly has been encroached upon by allowing more actors in the media sector such as government organs, various organizations, and individuals. For instance blogs reduced political and economic dominance in the commercialized communication area by giving lee-way to a number of interested users [9]. Social media have created stiff competition between modern news distribution approaches, and traditional news distribution approaches. This is attributed to the fact that unlike traditional; media forms like newspapers, television, and film, social media are by way of comparison inexpensive and accessible. For example, a blog post may be accessed by millions of people. Media firms are partnering so as to benefit from the digital era. This for instance takes the form of sub-contracting services [10]. For example the BBC does allow some media companies to use its logo when publishing news on-line.

### Social media and reader-newspaper relations

News writing and accessing is a much more participatory process than before, thanks to social media. For example Face book, X, Tik Tok and Blog writing enable both Journalists and their audiences to share news articles, and comment on other peoples' posts. This has therefore encouraged immediate feedback in the area of Journalism. In Uganda for example, various media houses have social media pages via which they seek feedback from their audiences in the form of comments and interpretations. For example one television station called WBS normally seeks for the audiences' input to its news bulletins, via its facebook page [11]. Further comment on this state of affairs when they say that, the relationship between the blog writer and the reader is an active one compared to that in traditional Journalism in which the reader is normally passive. This they say is achieved by the readers' citing of missing issues and contributing to their rectification. Since adverts are continuously displayed on social media, a long-lasting relationship has been established between readers and advertisers, thanks to social media. Advertisers intend to reach large audiences, and are therefore willing to pay for these huge advertising expenses [12]. On the negative side though, there is a digital divide between the information haves and have-nots. This is on one hand linked to income disparities for instance in developing countries, whereby the internet and therefore social media is mostly used and afforded by the middle class. It is also related to technological skills, whereby those without the knowledge of information technology use will be left out as far social media benefits are concerned. Some readers have misused the freedom accorded to them by social media whereby they resort to cyber-bullying of the Journalists. This is especially evident in blog journalism [13].

### Social media and reader-Journalist relations

A sincere relationship is established between readers and Journalists through social media, since there are both able to express each other freely in the form of comments and interpretations. Journalists who would ordinarily not face their readers are given the chance to do so by social media. For example in blog Journalism, nervous Journalists can also express themselves.

In conclusion, it can be said that the field of Journalism has taken a new turn in the face of constantly changing Information Technology, social media being a very important area of its manifestation in terms of news production, news sharing and socialization, as elaborated above, and it can be said that more developments are yet to be seen as technological changes are increasingly penetrating the media arena.

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