

We, the Citizens... We, the Journalists
Examining Citizen Journalism



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We, the Citizens... We, the Journalists

Examining Citizen Journalism

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Preface

'There goes the neighbourhood', was one tweet. The "most feared" Osama bin Laden (OBL) was dead and it did not happen in some remote cave in the tribal belt, but in the heart of Abbotabad, Pakistan. For many it had finally happened. 'The day is saved, thanks to of course not the power puff girls' but to those who came hovering at night and left without a clue. Within minutes of the incident and before any official news of the incident, bloggers and social media enthusiasts started spreading unofficial versions of the incident. So well before sunrise on 2 May 2011 many of us already knew that OBL was dead.

A number of those who belong to the mainstream journalistic community might not totally agree with what is happening on the social media these days. They might call it unprofessional but the truth is these untrained journalists as called by some have without any ambiguity, changed the landscape of journalism through their unique ways of reporting. The problem is that while there are some who root for this opportunity to augment journalism, others fear that this new phenomenon is being given too much importance and is actually maligning ethical values and, eventually, hurting professional journalism. Citizen Journalism has and continues to play an important role in strengthening democracies globally, Pakistan being no exception. Social media has definitely boosted democracy in Pakistan by giving citizens the space to write about topics that were not being covered in conventional media. Moreover, it has also compelled the traditional media to deviate from the old school unidirectional reporting.

However, one of the biggest drawbacks of Citizen Journalism is those individuals or groups who are using it to spread hatred. Just recently, a malicious video titled "Innocence of Muslims" insulting the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was produced and uploaded on the social networking website YouTube by an individual hailing from the United States of America (USA) that caused massive uproar among Muslims. Muslims in different Islamic states protested against this video. However, the impact created by this video on the global level varied from country to country. The Pakistani



Government also took a drastic step and banned access to YouTube. But people including Muslims are still using proxy servers to access not only this video, but other things on the website. This action on the part of citizens speaks out the truth that a number of citizens need to access the website on daily basis, and so banning the whole website was perhaps not the best of steps taken by the government.

This publication is an effort to highlight and discuss different aspects of Citizen Journalism. We have tried to recapture the latest debate on Citizen Journalism, its various types and its rise during last few years, the opportunities for a more democratic practice of journalism, its part in international news, the role of Citizen Journalism in Pakistan and tools of Citizen Journalism. There is a special emphasis on the potential of Citizen Journalism to enhance and strengthen democratic space in society, spaces where people can express themselves without fear of censorship or reprisal.

Background

There were times when information or more accurately selective information was passed on to citizens in an effort to keep them informed. This left to right or right to left cycle of communication was initially dependent on newspapers or other similar publications, widely known as print media. This was followed by radio and finally TV or electronic media. Then innovations kept on improving these media until the world got to the point where it could very easily access information simply by tapping their fingers. Well, it is easier said than done. Scientists went through painstaking efforts and invented all the gadgets that are making lives much easier for us these days. Similarly, there are individuals that have taken information sharing to the next level. This information sharing is neither selective nor has to go through filters. It is instant, free and most importantly easily accessible. Yes! We are talking about internet and all the latest technology that has made it easier for people to share information, virtually without restrictions.

The number of internet subscribers throughout the world is already high and continues to grow at an exponential rate. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), “the number of broadband internet

subscribers in Pakistan alone rose from 26,611 in 2005 to 1,656,800 in September 2011; an increase of 1.5 million subscribers. It is also estimated that as of 2011, Pakistan's population stands at approximately 187 million; of this, the internet penetration is estimated at over 20 million. With this internet usage on the rise, Pakistanis have turned to the blogosphere and Citizen Journalism to share their opinions"¹ The fact that English is the principal language on the Internet, the educated class in Pakistan is benefiting the most from this communication tool as, they can communicate easily in the English language. According to a recent research that was carried out to analyse the use social media in Pakistan, "the most popular social media website in Pakistan is Facebook, which has 6.4 million users in the country out of a global total of close to 900 million. Twitter and LinkedIn have 1.9 million and 1.2 million users in Pakistan respectively. Google Plus and Pinterest appear to have far fewer users in Pakistan, at approximately 64,000 and 115,000 respectively"². The popularity of social media among journalists and general public is not only altering journalism methods but also defying the government's exclusive control over the information, thus providing new avenues for individual freedom.³

Printed newspapers are still an important source of information for Pakistanis. However given the fact that a large number of households now own a computer and have access to internet, the usage of online news for gathering information has increased massively. The general public can now easily unearth what is going on in the news with the help of these resources. Even journalists are taking the route of social networking sites to provide news updates.⁴ According to a global survey that was held in Chicago in 2010, "89 percent of journalists said they turned to blogs for story research, 65 percent to social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and 52 percent to micro-blogging services such as Twitter. The same survey also found that 61 percent used Wikipedia, the popular online encyclopaedia.⁵

¹ Rahman, Sonya, 8th February 2012, *Citizen Journalism Grows in Pakistan*, <http://www.audiencescapes.org/crowd-sourced-Hosh-Media-citizen-journalism-pakistan>.

² Tirmizi, Farooq Young, *urban, affluent: a profile of the average social media user* <http://tribune.com.pk/story/441325/young-urban-affluent-a-profile-of-the-average-social-media-user/>.

³ Arif, Rauf *The Rise of Social Media: A Hope or a Hoax for Individuals' Freedom in Pakistan?* (Written exclusively for this publication).

⁴ *CitizenJournalism vs. Traditional-journalism*. 20 April 2012. <http://annabelsworld.wordpress.com/2012/04/20/citizen-journalism-vs-traditional-journalism/>.

⁵ http://us.cision.com/news_room/press_releases/2010/2010-1-20_gwu_survey.asp.

Journalism has entered a new age of technology and modernised ways of communication.

This is summarised beautifully in *We Media*, by Chris Willis and Shayne Bowman, thus:

“The venerable profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but, potentially, by the audience it serves. Armed with easy-to-use Web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information. And it’s doing just that on the Internet.”⁶



Source: Cybersoc.com⁷

Developments such as 9/11 and the Egypt uprisings have seen an incredible ascend in Citizen Journalism globally. However, in Pakistan rise in Citizen Journalism can be attributed to the catastrophic earthquake of 8 October 2005. Mobile phone footage and blogging both were used by citizens to

⁶Bowman, Shayne, Willis, Chris, *We Media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information.*, The Media Center at the American Press Institute 2003.

⁷ Sambrook, Richard. *CitizenJournalism*. Cybersoc.com: research/management/law.21 March2006. Accessed online from: http://www.cybersoc.com/2006/03/guest_blogger_r.html. Date of Access: 24October 2012.



communicate this event live across the world. Even mainstream news organisations picked these videos and data from bloggers and used them. Since then, Citizen Journalists are actively participating to uncover news that sometimes escapes the eyes of many a mainstream or traditional journalists.

Role of Social Media in unveiling Saleem Shahzad's case

How far-reaching the social media can be judged through the murder case of a renowned Pakistani journalist Saleem Shahzad. According to Director Human Rights Watch Pakistan Ali Dayan Hassan, Saleem's case was initially highlighted first by Social Media.

He reiterated that the tweets about Shahzad Saleem enabled the Pakistani media to discuss the issue. "Because they could cite Human Rights Watch, it made it easier for them to bring it into the public domain," he said. "The purpose was for the man to emerge alive and tragically he did not. As a result, the story became even bigger."

Issues of Authenticity

Despite the fact that citizen produced content is becoming more and more popular through the use of social media and modern media technologies such as mobile phones, it has been assumed that the information delivered and uploaded by citizens may not always adhere to the standards that a trained journalist might keep to. Citizens may be only giving their side of the argument and not all aspects of the story. Then, the real question is whether or not the information being uploaded is in fact true or not? For instance, just recently, an interesting article was published in Express Tribune with the title *Social Media is lying to you about Burma's Muslim cleansing*⁸ in which the author has criticized the social media in Pakistan for misleading the readers and viewers by uploading pictures with wrong captions, to create chaos in the society.

⁸Ahmad, Faraz. *Social media is lying to you about Burma's Muslim 'cleansing'* <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/12867/social-media-is-lying-to-you-about-burmas-muslim-cleansing/>.

What is Citizen Journalism

What is 'Citizen Journalism'?

"Citizen Journalism is news stories created by amateur reporters or citizens who may not have any professional training in journalism. These amateur reporters or citizens are the audience, viewers or readers who too want to share their stories. Citizen Journalism facilitates participation of the public in the media. Citizen Journalism is also known as participatory journalism, street reporting, amateur videos and User-Generated-Content (UGC)."⁹ The examples of Citizen Journalism may include the recent Arab Spring revolution in the Middle East and the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the United States when people uploaded their amateur coverage of protests on social media websites and surprised the world for the quality of their content.¹⁰ A strong Pakistani example of Citizen Journalism includes the alleged 'flogging video' of a girl being flogged by bearded men that one assumed to be Taliban. Later singled out by the electronic and print media, the video played a crucial part in changing the public opinion against the radicals and in favour of army action against them.¹¹

In the United States, the Hudson River plane crash is also an example of Citizen Journalism when a passenger on board had tweeted about his plane crash in New York. The tweet was followed and picked up by CNN and became a lead story of the day.¹² While the West is using Citizen Journalism to influence events more at community level using Social Media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, the developing world has learned to use it on macro scale. For example: The Arab Spring 2010/11 can only be seen and understood in the context of Social Media and youth. Youth in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and some other parts of the Muslim world, for the very first time in history, overturned the age-old tyrannical regimes by using Social Media platforms. It was not until the whole world watched live images of self-immolation of a Tunisian young man on Facebook, Twitter, and other Social Media platforms that triggered massive protests across the country. Almost every other print and broadcast media organisation in Tunisia, Egypt

⁹ www.ignou.ac.in/upload/menuupload/citizenjournalism.coc.

¹⁰ Arif, Rauf *The Rise of Social Media: A Hope or a Hoax for Individuals' Freedom in Pakistan?* Written exclusively for this publication by the author.

¹¹ Mumtaz, Hajra, *The pitfalls of citizens' journalism* <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/156001>.

¹² Arif, Rauf *The Rise of Social Media*.



and Libya tried to block these images, but they failed to realize the power of social media that had already multiplied and disseminated these horrifying images to the rest of the world with the speed of light. The Tunisian man Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation against police corruption and torture played the role of a catalyst for revolution on social media platforms, which eventually triggered down to the streets of Egypt and Libya¹³

"Citizen Journalism should be confused with neither community journalism nor civic journalism, which is practiced by professional journalists, nor collaborative journalism, which is practiced by professional and non-professional journalists working together."¹⁴ Another important thing is that one should not think that all those who write on Internet are citizen journalists, reason being that professional journalists often use the help of Internet to publish stories that cannot be carried in the traditional media. Prominent Pakistani writer and editor Shaheen Sehbai's former South Asian News Tribune, a complete online paper, which he launched after he was fired by the Jang Group on orders of the military dictator for publication of libellous matter, is an example of professional journalists using the internet to express themselves. The idea behind Citizen Journalism is that citizens without any journalism background can exercise the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to improve or verify the factual accuracy of media.¹⁵

For instance, you might write about a meeting between a leader of the opposition and a leader of the ruling party on your blog. Or you could highlight a newspaper story from the mainstream media and point out the glitches and factual mistakes. For instance, the following image describes the reprinting of a letter to editor for two consecutive days in The News:

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ http://www.freebase.com/view/en/citizen_journalism.

¹⁵ CitizenJournalism: Can you Believe Everything you See in the News? 18 October 2011

<http://abegibbonsbarcafc.wordpress.com/2011/10/18/citizen-journalism-can-you-believe-everything-you-see-in-the-news/>.

INTERNATIONAL
THE NEWS

Monday, August 6, 2012

OPINION 7

No 'trainers', please

It is hoped that in the process of re-defining relations with the US, our government does not succumb to American pressure to re-induct US 'trainers' into our military units. Such 'trainers' are nothing but CIA and Pentagon agents and kicking them out was a good decision on our part.

Our military does not need any training from the US and, in fact, can instead teach the defeated US military a thing or two about fighting a battle.

Amin Jan Nain
Islamabad

INTERNATIONAL
THE NEWS

Tuesday, August 7, 2012

OPINION 7

No 'trainers', please

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So, a citizen journalist can highlight such an intentional or unintentional mistake committed by the newspaper on his/her blog. Similarly, there are many other issues that can be highlighted by citizen journalists to initiate discussions or to simply inform the reader.

According to CitizenJournalismAfrica.org, a site mutually sponsored by a range of civil society organisations in Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, Citizen Journalism may be explained thus:

“Citizen Journalism is community news and information shared online and/or in print. The content is generated by users and readers. It can be text/blogs, digital storytelling, images, audio file, podcasting, or video. Feedback and discussion on issues raised is received in the same way. Citizen Journalism [allows individuals to] write and or comment on issues they feel are left out of the mainstream media. Blogging has become a powerful and non-expensive tool for non-journalists to share their stories and views.

A number of news websites are encouraging people to comment on issues raised in their stories. Many people have chosen to use blogging as a way of expressing themselves. This also allows them to raise issues without the fear of being ‘cut short’ by the editor. Some journalists have their own blog spots where they receive feedback on their articles. More and more civil society organisations are using this form of communication to talk to their communities. They also raise areas of concern and encourage participation.”¹⁶

According to We Media, a Web site hosted by The Media Center at The American Press Institute, “participatory journalism” its term for “Citizen Journalism” may be expressed as follows:

“As new forms of participation have emerged through new technologies, many have struggled to name them. As a default, the name is usually borrowed from the enabling technology (i.e., weblogging, forums, and usenets).

The term we use—participatory journalism—is meant to describe the content and the intent of online communication that often occurs in

¹⁶*Citizen Journalism in Africa, “What is CitizenJournalism?”* <http://www.citizenjournalismfrica.org/what-is-citizenjournalism>.

collaborative and social media. The working definition that we have adopted: The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.

As Bowman and Willis note,

Participatory journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic workflow dictating the decisions of a staff. Instead, it is the result of many simultaneous, distributed conversations that either blossom or quickly atrophy in the Web's social network.¹⁷

According to the Director Research Media and Communications, Intermedia Pakistan, Ms Sadaf Baig

"Apart from the invent of internet, the event of 9/11 played an important part in the rise of CJ as lot of raw pictures and videos taken from the mobile phones from citizens were taken and sent to international websites. CJ is a growing phenomenon throughout the globe but it still does not pose any threat to the traditional journalism. Citizen Journalism is actually a blessing in disguise for traditional journalism as it can help the professional journalists in gathering data for their reports. The only drawback of the CJ is the authenticity of the content and unfortunately, a code of conduct cannot be developed for citizen journalists. However this is also the beauty of CJ. In developed countries, states are taking measures to promote Citizen Journalism. For example, CNN recently developed a new section, ICNN (where citizen journalists can upload videos, stories) and one with the best story also gets an accolade. In Pakistan, CJ is an active practice as well. Interestingly, Political parties here are also using it to increase their outreach and to enhance their image."¹⁸

¹⁷Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis, "We Media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information," The Media Center at the American Press Institute, September 3, 2003, <http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/weblog.php?id=P36>.

¹⁸ Baig, Sadaf, During an exclusive interview with Individualland Pakistan's team.

The Beginnings

Before the discovery of the Internet, the involvement in the media by the general public was very restricted and comprised of practices like writing “letters to the editor”. However, the combination of Web 2.0 and digital technology (digital cameras or video camcorders and camera enabled mobile phones) made it easier to collect video and photographs and post them online.¹⁹

The rise of Citizen Journalism is linked to the increase of interactivity on the Web. The World’s first website <http://info.cern.ch/> that was launched by a renowned physicist Tim Berners-Lee in 1991 offered the audience very minimal interactivity. However in the following years modern technology offering a variety of new features and functions made it easier for the audience to interact with others or even with the publishers.

The actual change came in 2004 when the so-called Web 2.0 features started emerging on websites. These new features allowed the users to publish their own websites or weblogs, or supply content into the conventional media. For instance, Word Press and BlogSpot were some of the earliest programmes that let ordinary people publish their thoughts on the web.²⁰

¹⁹ *Citizen Journalism: A primer on the definition, risks and benefits and main debates in media communications research*, http://www.theopennewsroom.com/documents/Citizen_per_cent20journalism_phenomenon.pdf.

²⁰ *ibid*, http://www.theopennewsroom.com/documents/Citizen_per_cent20journalism_phenomenon.pdf *accessing dates missing*

Independent and Semi-independent Citizen Journalism

Citizen Journalism can take many forms. However, researchers and analysts have divided it into two types:

Semi-Independent Citizen Journalism

- This involves contributions from the populace in different forms. For instance, <http://citizensfordemocracy.wordpress.com/>
- Readers writing their comments along with stories done by professional writers. Nowadays, every Pakistani and international online newspapers have comments section on each article , ``share-able” options and now with some papers you can only recommend/like if you do not want to share.
- Readers giving their input to articles done by trained journalists. For instance, a reporter may do an article about differences in Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) prices around town. When the story is uploaded on the internet, readers can post information about CNG prices in areas not covered by the original story, and even suggest to people where to buy inexpensive CNG.
- Readers working in partnership with the professional reporters and developing a story. A journalist might contact the readers with know-how in a specific area, then send him or her information on that subject. That information is then incorporated into the final story. E-g, CNN I report which is made with the help of raw data from the citizen journalist.
- Reader blogs that are integrated into professional news websites. That can consist of blogs in which readers, for example, analyse how the news organisation is performing?²¹ Such blogs are rare though.

²¹ Rogers, Tony, *What is Citizen Journalism?*, *accessing dates missing* <http://journalism.about.com/od/citizenjournalism/a/whatiscitizen.htm>.

Independent Citizen Journalism

The phenomena in which citizen journalists operate independently.

- Websites operated by a single person or a group of people that report on news events in the local community. Some have editors as well.
- Blogs in which individuals can report local events or give comments on the developments of the day.²²

Is Citizen Journalism a threat to Traditional Journalism?

Social Media is progressively becoming more of an instrument for journalism, in the similar manner the DVD became more popular than the VCR. Conventional journalism is finding itself in a very uncomfortable position. Now, we use social media to give out any information ranging from news to daily experiences and the reliance on newspapers for information has decreased significantly. However, it could be possible that these new tools, such as social media and Citizen Journalism are in fact a blessing in disguise for traditional journalism.²³

Citizen Journalism can, unarguably, contribute to journalism through the contribution of the fastest news emergence. For instance, the US strikes on Osama bin Ladin was first noticed by an Abbottabad local Sohaib Athar. He was the one who tweeted the development adding, "a loud bang rattled my windows. I hope it's not the start of something nasty." Athar's tweets, initially peppered with jokes ("Uh oh, there goes the neighbourhood") gradually turned irritating as his email inbox, Skype and Twitter accounts were flooded with messages by those trying to reach him. Many prominent journalists worldwide then contacted him later for building their reports on this development.

Citizen Journalism can provide precious details for trustworthy news agencies in voicing the feelings and views of the general public. Based on that information, news agencies can easily spot the news and the content

²² *ibid.*

²³ Annabel, 20 April, 2012 *Citizen Journalism Vs Traditional Journalism* <http://annabelsworld.wordpress.com/2012/04/20/citizen-journalism-vs-traditional-journalism/>.



that the people are interested in. Moreover, citizen journalists also can help the news agency by supplying them with “on-the-spot” information. The probability of journalists to be present at the site where a development is going to happen is very low. But compared to the likelihood of any citizen journalists being on the scene where news occur, the chances are certainly greater. For example, the recent catastrophic development of Bhoja airline crash. It was ordinary people that tweeted first eye witness accounts, which the media caught and then interviewed them. Hence, Citizen Journalism played an important part in bringing this sad event to the notice of media²⁴

Those who fear that traditional journalism is on the verge of extinction should not worry at all because it will never fade. Even though Citizen Journalism continues to gain popularity and impetus, there are still millions of readers who prefer conventional news sources to online news. However, in order to blend in with the journalism today and to take the journalism industry to the greater heights, there is a need for traditional journalism to work hand-in-hand with the Citizen Journalism. In this way both types of journalism can attain the best out of each other and in the same time, provide the best information for the public (which is the main responsibility of journalism).²⁵ The nexus between journalists and bloggers is more important for a country like Pakistan that is plagued with conflict as in order to move beyond conflict, strengthening of democracy is important and bloggers (Social Media) are a voice calling for accountability.

²⁴ 30 September 2011, *Citizen Journalism vs. Traditional Journalism* <http://limsuwern-uow.blogspot.com/2011/10/citizen-journalism-vs-traditional.html>.

²⁵ *ibid.*

Tools for Citizen Journalist

Tools for Citizen Journalist

As a citizen journalist, you may have great ideas and intellect. But the challenge is to put across your messages to the audience. As Citizen Journalism seems to narrow the gap between the professional journalists and the audience, the cardinal principle which any journalist must keep in mind is 'reader comes first'.

There are different tools that can be used by a citizen journalist. For instance:

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are the conventional and oldest type of citizen input into journalism. Almost every newspaper and magazine has this section, which enables the ordinary citizen to respond or give feedback to any news, editorial, or article, which might have appeared in the newspaper. Many citizens who write letters to the editor can develop into actual citizen journalists.²⁶



The Express Tribune²⁷

²⁶CitizenJournalism – Letter to the editor, accessed from <http://mnjaycees.org/files/2010/03/Citizen-Journalism-Tips.pdf>, accessed 22 June 2012.

²⁷ Woes of DHA Residents: *The Express Tribune*. Accessed online from: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/396039/woes-of-dha-residents/>. Date of Access: 31 October 2012.



Blogs

Blogs are websites or parts of a website written by an individual. Commentaries are updated regularly. Blogs are more informal compared to a news report. Anyone can create a blog. There is equal opportunity to be a citizen journalist with the use of a blog. With blogs in particular but especially video blogs (Vblogs) and podcasts, the ability of the public to express opinion has blossomed. They no longer need to be “hosted” by broadcaster. This explosion of opinion in the public space has had a number of effects. It has put pressure on the traditional framework of neutrality and objectivity for some news organisations. It has undermined the value of the columnist or op-ed writer – there is excellent commentary available for free on the web. But it has also provided a challenge (and therefore an opportunity) for news organisations to integrate the opinions of their readers, listeners and viewers in new ways. A blog is a personal webpage or an online journal, easily updated by an author, which links outward material on the web and presents original content. The quantity of views, and the means by which they are expressed, have grown hugely. So, have the benefits of being seen to embrace and support public discussion.²⁸

For Citizen Journalists, blogs are important tools to write on the issues they want to write. Blogs can be part of websites or are a type of websites. Individuals maintain mostly blogs. There can be regular entries, commentaries on any issue, descriptions of events, materials such as graphics or video. Entries in a blog are displayed in reverse chronological order.

An important advantage of such stand-alone Citizen Journalism sites is that there are spaces for citizens to write about issues, which the local mainstream media would ignore. For instance, cultural taboos may not be openly debated in the mainstream media.²⁹

²⁸ Julie, Fanselow. *The new wave of Citizen Journalism*. Accessed from <http://www.ncl.org/publications/ncr/97-4/01.08Fanselow.pdf>, accessed on 22 June, 2012.

²⁹ Zafar, Rafay. *Punish the eunuchs, because they are vulgar*. Accessed from <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/12197/punish-the-eunuchs-because-they-are-vulgar/>, accessed on 22 June, 2012.

5 Steps - How to create a Blog

Looking to create an efficient, low maintenance, easily updated blog website? Is this your first time starting a blog? In a few minutes you can have a blog up and running. These steps will help you to create a blog³⁰:

Choose a Subject

Always take time before selecting a good a topic for your blog. Decide what it is that you want to blog about. It is important that a blogger is involved in exhaustive research. Research your facts, be sure about your information, and share your opinions, giving real content to your readers. Track down keywords³¹ and topic themes on various search engines related to you chosen blog article topic. To create impressive blog articles, you should be ready to accept that writing an article is more about planning, learning, and researching rather than writing the article itself.

Title

Come up with a title that is catchy, entertaining and easy for people to remember. Make your blog title catchy and interesting if you want it to attract readers.

Pick a platform

Taking into consideration that both your needs and your budget when you think about blogging platforms. There are many blogging platforms available online, an excellent blogging platform is WordPress³², which is free and easy to use.

Web host and domain name

Choose a domain name which is simple, short and relevant to your content. Remember, domain name should be very exclusive and it should not match

³⁰ Accessed from <http://www.blogtrafficexchange.com/10-steps-to-start-a-blog/>

³¹ Presented by Abe Oleanders on 18-30 March 2012, at International Academy for Leadership (IAF)

³² <http://wordpress.com/>

other domain names. If you are targeting audience from everywhere then go for .com, .net or .org.

Web hosting account is very important for blog or website and that should be reliable. Some of the popular webs hosting providers recommended by bloggers are as below:

Dream host

Hostmonster

Bluehost

Use any of them to host your blog contents and always keep in mind to take backup of your content on daily basis.

Promote your blog

A blogger can promote his/her blog on various social networks. A blog can receive a positive feedback in the form of Facebook likes, twitter sharing or encouraging people to comment on your blog.



Source: edublogs³³

³³Edublogs. ALJ301: Multimedia Journalism: User-generated content. 6 August 2010. Accessed online from: <http://maggietian.edublogs.org/2010/08/06/user-generated-content/>. Date of Access: 25 October 2012.

In more recent years, blogs have become popular in Pakistan. Ammar Yasir, a Pakistani blogger has started compiling a complete Pakistani blog directory – an effort which has grown to a remarkable 1850 bloggers registered as of June 2010 and 900 more pending for approval. Ammar stated that he has witnessed 60 percent growth rate in blogs in the recent years.

Google Pakistan and CIO Pakistan (Business Technology Leadership) together held the first ever blog awards on 28 May 28 2010 with awards being handed out in categories ranging from humour to technology.³⁴ The second annual blog awards were held on 2 December 22 2011. The enthusiasm of the audience at the awards, just as much as that of the bloggers, makes one realise just how much the Pakistan Blog Awards are appreciated, and just how necessary it is for us to acknowledge and recognize the bloggers and social media enthusiasts in the country. CNN officially embraced Citizen Journalism since 2006 with CNN iReport³⁵, which encourages users around the world to share news, opinions, images and video on a wide range of topics. The second annual iReport Awards this year honoured an iReporter's eyewitness footage of the 2011 Indiana State Fair stage collapse, among other video clips.

Similarly, *The Express Tribune*³⁶ and *Dawn*³⁷ have transformed newspapers in Pakistan. These two newspapers are the trendsetters as far as introducing blog section in the newspapers are concerned. Other newspapers are also following suit. *Dawn* was the very first newspaper in Pakistan that initiated a blog section on their website. Blogs importance can be gauged from the fact that almost every news organisation's website has a blog section. According to Masood Ashraf Raja, a blogger and owner of www.pakistaaniat.net³⁸ "blogging has now become and will continue to be the most important challenge to entrenched interests of the mainstream media." Similarly, a website known as www.pakistanibloggers.net is dedicated to blogs. This website caters to different bloggers who can

³⁴Fatima, Fiza. *Blogging in Pakistan*. 1 September 2010. Accessed from http://ciopakistan.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Thesis_Final.pdf.

³⁵<http://ireport.cnn.com/blogs/ireport-blog>.

³⁶<http://tribune.com.pk/>.

³⁷<http://dawn.com/>.

³⁸<http://pakistaaniat.net>



contribute in different categories such as business, current affairs, food, music and personal blogs. Naseeb Networks CEO Monis Rehman said that blogs provided a platform for quick dissemination of information. Rehman runs the job site *Rozee.pk*, which was launched four years ago. Rehman said the significance of blogs was evident from the number of newspapers who now have a blog section on their websites.³⁹

Adnan Rasool, who has a blog '*Seedhi Baat*', said bloggers had an edge over traditional media outlets because they could explore things in more detail and according to him "that is what attracts readers to blogs".⁴⁰

"Internet usage is converging in Pakistan, which is helping new and social media," said Badar Khushnood, Google Pakistan's country consultant. He further added "there is always a certain level of noise and hype, but in my belief, blogs have done a lot of good to Citizen Journalism."⁴¹

³⁹ Shaukat, Aroosa. "Number of blogs rose by 70per cent in 8 months" accessed from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/316042/blogocracy-tri-city-unconference-camp-held-in-lahore/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Moiz, Sidra. "Internet advocacy: blogs in Pakistan – no more a silent revolution" accessed from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/311277/internet-advocacy-blogs-in-pakistan--no-more-a-silent-revolution/>.

Multimedia

In today's media landscape you are your own media. Citizen journalists' images are valuable to the public because they provide a unique perspective. There are several television channels like *CNN-IBN*⁴² and *Dawn News*⁴³ which has Citizen Journalism shows. Dawn News has initiated a citizen journalist show, known as "Main Hoon Dawn". In these cases a citizen journalist who has a public interest story can contact the channel. The channel then sends a camera team to cover the story, which will be reported by the citizen journalist. Also, especially during some action or emergencies, a citizen journalist may shoot a video and simply send it to the channel. Dawn News invites citizen journalists to share their stories via pictures or videos with a brief description and they could appear online or on screen.



Source: Social Connect: Blue Print⁴⁴

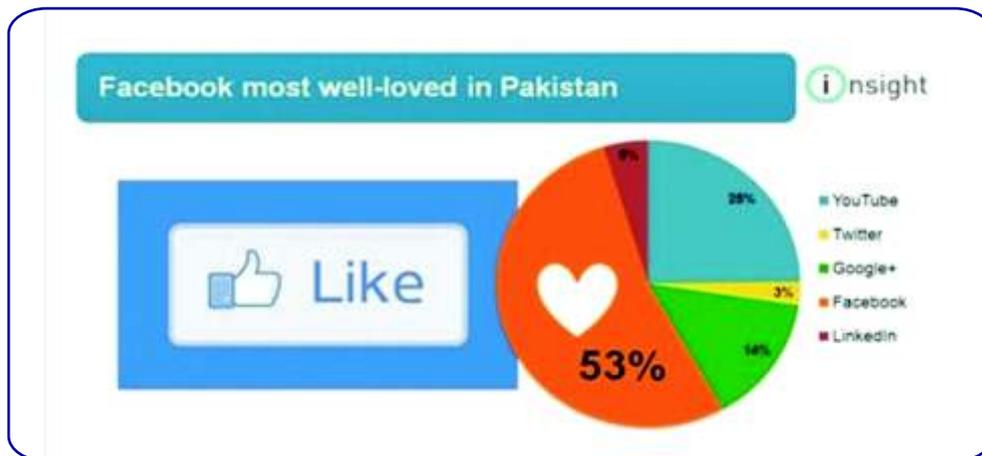
Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have changed the global trend and share many of the attributes of Citizen Journalism. Facebook has been termed the most popular and regularly used social

⁴²<http://cj.ibnlive.in.com/>.

⁴³<http://dawnnews.tv/citizen-journalists>.

⁴⁴ Social Connect: Blue Print. Accessed online from: <http://www.socialconnectblueprint.com/wp-content/uploads/crazy-dude-cartoon.jpg>. Date of Access: October 25, 2012.

network website among Pakistanis in a research by *Effective Measure*⁴⁵. The report reveals that Facebook, Google+ and YouTube are most favourite online social channels for Pakistani internet users. Facebook is said to have 53 percent popularity amongst Pakistani users, followed by YouTube at 25 percent, with Google+ at 14 percent.⁴⁶



Source: The Express Tribune⁴⁷

News Websites

Formal online news sources understand the value of Citizen Journalism. Newspapers online include blogs, comment boxes, and other contributions from non-reporters. Currently the importance of Citizen Journalism has been realised by Pakistani newspaper groups. Apart from publishing newspapers and launching television channels, Media groups such as The Express Tribune, Jang News Network and Dawn are also trying to make their presence felt through online medium. Most websites that run citizen journalist content now offer prescriptive guidelines on not only how to submit or upload content, but also on also how to compile a report. The risk

⁴⁵<http://www.effectivemeasure.com/>.

⁴⁶Atta, Aamir. Pakistani Users' Behavior on Social Networking Websites Revealed. Accessed from <http://propakistani.pk/2012/07/17/pakistani-users-behavior-on-social-networking-websites-revealed/>

⁴⁷ Facebook most popular social network in Pakistan: The Express Tribune. 17 July 2012. Accessed online from: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/409511/facebook-most-popular-social-network-in-pakistan-report/>. Date of Access: 25 October 2012.



and dangers of using news websites is the interconnectedness of the Internet which means that unchecked false reports can be fed into the media, on a blog for instance and be picked up by many more websites and within minutes circulate throughout the world.⁴⁸ CBS created Eye mobile for Citizen Journalism. Other online news sources are exclusively for citizen journalists such as the Drudge Report⁴⁹.

The overall benefit however is that the citizen journalist can help keep news current by publishing news as it happens. This can enrich mainstream media. With time, most Citizen Journalists will be clued in on the Do's and Don'ts of journalism and this can reduce the potential risk posed by Citizen Journalism to both the citizen journalist and the publisher.

Podcasts

Citizen journalists have a voice in the course of written media, but with podcasting, the audience can actually hear their voices. A podcast is an audio broadcast accessible for free downloads on the Internet. With this technology, citizen journalists are able to generate their work into an audio experience to reach listeners and engage their interests.

Podcasts are accessible for free. Also there is free of charge software available to create a podcast. So, it is easy for any citizen journalist to produce a podcast. With this technology, citizen journalists are able to create their work into an audio experience to reach listeners and engage their interests.

Media organisations, as well as non-profit organisations and individuals are using podcasts to disseminate their messages to a wider global audience. There are several indigenous examples that highlight the growing use of podcasts in Pakistan.

Recently, Geo Television Network⁵⁰ and Radio Pakistan⁵¹ introduced podcasts on their respective websites. Geo Television Network offers its

⁴⁸ News reporting and writing, accessed from <http://journalistjan.wordpress.com/page/7/> accessed on 26 June, 2012.

⁴⁹ <http://www.drudgereport.com/>

⁵⁰ Geo News Podcasts feed. Accessed online from: <http://www.geo.tv/podcast/>. Date of Access: 6 August 2012.

⁵¹ Podcasting. Radio Pakistan. Accessed online from: <http://www.radio.gov.pk/podCasting>. Date of Access: 6 August 2012.



headlines, bulletin, world news, business and sports news as podcasts to its users. The website also offers links to free podcasting software, which are used to access podcasts available on the website. Similarly, Radio Pakistan also offers podcasts as direct download and as streamed webcasting to its users.

A non-profit organisation dedicated to Cultural and Historic preservation known as The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP) has several podcasts available on their website⁵². CAP aims at educating the community in order to foster an awareness of nation's history and instil pride in Pakistani citizens about their heritage.⁵³ Citizen journalists are also utilising this tool to disseminate their messages to a wider audience.

Impact and Outreach

Osama Manzar⁵⁴ argues that

Increasingly, citizens are being credited with breaking stories, instantaneously at the time an event takes place. More importantly, now the traditional media regularly tracks online citizen networks to connect with the pulse of people during conflicts, controversies and on-going debates. Often, the media depends on live reporting by citizens, especially during critical events such as natural disasters. Mainstream media is discovering alternative ways to deal with controversies by using and leveraging social media. Once sensitive information is made available in the public domain, as in WikiLeaks, and then mainstream media picks it up, as it can no longer avoid it.⁵⁵

⁵² <http://citizensarchive.org/podcasts.php>.

⁵³ The Citizens Archive of Pakistan. Accessed online from: <http://citizensarchive.org/aboutus.php>. Date of Access: 6 August 2012.

⁵⁴ Osama Manzar is founder-director of Digital Empowerment Foundation and curator of the Billionth Awards.

⁵⁵ Manzar, Osama. Connecting India, Pakistan, Afghanistan through Social Media. [livemint.com](http://www.livemint.com). May 28, 2012. Accessed online from: <http://www.livemint.com/2012/05/27212837/Connecting-India-Pakistan-Af.html>. Date of Access: 2 July 2012.

Stacey Robert⁵⁶ says that

one of the most fascinating aspects of the Citizen Journalism surge and the technology explosion is the continued emergence of new and an innovative ways to use the tools that already exist—not by professional developers—but by creative dabblers and lobbyists who think outside the proverbial box.

In October, 2005, when a massive earthquake hit Pakistan, the traditional media could not figure out the scale of damage initially. However, a citizen journalist shot with a cell phone the first video of an apartment building collapsing in the capital city of Islamabad, also aired on mainstream TV channels. Similarly, more videos started pouring in with the passage of time.

In August 2010, two brothers in Sialkot were publicly assaulted by a mob and were killed. Police present on the scene did not do anything to stop the mob. Even after the boys were dead, their dead bodies were mishandled. A video footage of this incident also first appeared on the social media websites and was later aired on the mainstream TV channels. Following this, an inquiry was initiated into the incident as a result of which seven people were sentenced to death and the policemen present on the scene were also arrested and convicted.

Pakistanis also witnessed host of a very famous religious programme using foul language with the guests. This video was also published on social media websites. However, the host kept on arguing that the video was altered and it was not he using the foul language. Resultantly, this show's ratings dropped tremendously.

A recent case of TV show hosts involved in presenting a planted program, apparently to defame the judiciary, was also brought into the lime light on social media websites. The video struck the social media like fever and people on micro blogging sites started sharing unedited video and created

⁵⁶Rebbert, A. Stacey. CitizenJournalism and New Media. Colloquium in Contemporary Communications. November, 2008. P.14. Accessed online from: <http://gator.ndm.edu/~ccprogram/RebbertCapstone2008.pdf>. Date of Access: 2July2012.



trends on Twitter like #Bahriagate, #Mediagate, #Anchorgate, #Familygate, #Malikgate, #Arsalangate and #Mehrangate and #Luqmangate etc. The leaked video of planted interview of Malik Riaz, the real estate tycoon, with Pakistan's prominent journalists Mehar Bukhar and Mubashir Lucman on Dunya News got over 117,500 hits in less than 24 hours.

"Media tools that were once exclusively held by big companies have evolved over the Web and are now part of what the public owns," says New York University Journalism Professor, Jay Rosen. "That's new and different. It's a very democratic development." It is this "democratizing" of the media that has many of the supporters so excited.⁵⁷

Deendayal Vaidya, sub-editor for the Sakaal Group of Newspapers, Pune, India is of the view that "People want positive news and positive things to read about. They are already mired in their own lives and crisis. They want to be inspired." He further adds that nearly a thousand people have written for the supplement.⁵⁸

Not only can Citizen Journalism act as an incentive for the mainstream media to improve, it can also re-engage members of the public who no longer tune in to the mainstream media and are disconnected from society. According to Brian Reich, "People like to hear from voices they recognize," and therefore engaging the community in creating news may be a way to reconnect people and reinvigorate interest in what is going on around them. This potential to re-engage citizens no doubt is consequential for Citizen Journalism's democratic potential too.⁵⁹

The Egyptian uprising of 2011 was characterised by the instrumental use of social media, especially Facebook, as well as Twitter, YouTube and text messaging by protesters. Facebook, in particular, was hailed as a key mobilising tool for the protest movement, spurring the mass demonstrations of young protesters converging on Cairo's Tahrir Square during the uprising. Of the Facebook pages that gained popularity in the Egyptian online

⁵⁷ Rebbert, A. Stacey. Citizen Journalism and New Media. Colloquium in Contemporary Communications. November, 2008. Pp.51-52. Accessed online from: <http://gator.ndm.edu/~ccprogram/RebbertCapstone2008.pdf>. Date of Access: 2 July 2012.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Goh, Rachele. Mainstream media meets Citizen Journalism: in search of a new model. CMS senior Thesis. April, 2007. Pp. 39-40. Accessed online from: <http://www.mediagiraffe.org/tufts-thesis/tufts-thesis.pdf>. Date of Access: 2 July 2012.

community, one page in particular, 'We Are All Khaled Said', was credited with mobilising and organising the largest number of protesters.⁶⁰

Government and social media

Social media has become a crucial part of how we interact with our friends, community and even run our cities. Governments are starting to take serious notice and have started to incorporate social media into their own day-to-day actions.

Governments may not be early adopters but the proliferation of social in national media has ramped up its importance for governments around the world. While this initial stance kept politicians on the defensive, enough time has passed that individual politicians and even entire governments are starting to use social media to connect with their communities in new, open ways. Governments and social media have reached a tentative partnership.¹

Media is often referred as the fourth pillar of the state. However, the coverage of state media clearly differs from the coverage of private media channels. The state media tends to oversee the weaknesses of the serving government and doesn't fulfill its role. However, the gap is filled by the coverage of private news channels, most of which are focused on fulfilling their role as watchdogs, in order to hold the government accountable for its misdoings.

Governments can use social media very effectively to interact with potential voters and constituents - for instance, there are now a number of Parliamentarians from Pakistan on Twitter and Facebook. Instead of expecting to just be adored, they should engage with citizens to find out what the needs of the citizens are and even ask for potential workable solutions.

⁶⁰ Khamis, Sahar., Katherine, Vaughn. 'We are all Khalid Said': The potentials and limitations of cyber-activism in triggering public mobilization and promoting political change. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research, Volume 4, Numbers 2-3*, 20 March 2012. Pp. 145-163. Accessed online from: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/jammr/2012/00000004/F0020002/art00003>. Date of Access: 2 July 2012.

Politics and Social Media

Politics and Social Media

Call it the 'Twitterization' of politics. Candidates who had not heard of Twitter four years ago now consider it, along with Facebook and other social-media tools, a campaign must-have that can speed their message to voters faster than ever before.

Social media is emerging as a critical factor in politics while online activism helps to address certain specific issues of people like civic facilities, it has limits to tackle the chronic problems of corruption and poverty. In Pakistan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has used social media tools and has a strong presence on social media. PTI is extensively using social media since it is popular among youth of urban centres. PTI social team has recently started using Citizen Journalism (known as ireport) tool as well.





The above photograph is taken from 6 August 2012 edition of Dawn⁶¹. The banner in the background shows the official website address, Facebook page and SMS details of the Pakistan Muslim League (N). Previously, political parties used to provide addresses of their party offices on their banners. However, the trend is changing and political parties have now started realising the importance of online and social media.

Journalistic Standard

“In a world of new journalism, where we shift from a lecture to much more of a conversation, ethical journalism depends less on codes of ethics than the values and principles that are a foundation for honourable journalism. There are pillars of good journalism: thoroughness, accuracy, fairness, transparency and independence. The lines separating them are not always clear. They are open to wide interpretation, and are therefore loaded with nuance in themselves. But I think they are a useful way to approach ethical journalism, and they are notably easier to achieve in an online setting.”⁶² This is what Dan Gillmor, the author of a handbook on ethics for bloggers, has to say.

⁶¹ Dawn. 6 August 2012. P.2.

⁶² Gillmor, Dan. *What ethics should bloggers have? Handbook for bloggers and cyber-dissidents*. Reporters without borders. 2008. Accessed online from: http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/handbook_bloggers_cyberdissidents-GB.pdf. Date of Access: 9 July 2012.



Citizen Journalism is mostly criticised for its lack of credibility. However, once a piece of information is shared on the internet, hundreds, thousands and sometimes millions of users view the content and present their points of view. This leads to further discussion and as a result, errors are gradually rectified. This is also one of the distinguishing feature and competitive edge of Citizen Journalism over traditional journalism.

Traditional journalism only involves the consumers passively i.e. after the news is printed or telecasted. On the other hand, Citizen Journalism allows citizens to actively participate in news gathering and formation.

According to a report of The Media Center, "*We Media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information*" there are several qualities of participatory/citizen based journalism tools that promote trust and credibility:

Egalitarianism: They are egalitarian, as for example, Wiki use open editing rules and version history to promote trust. An environment of mutual trust is created when readers are allowed to edit their articles.

Intimacy: The intimate nature of discussions breeds authenticity. When users share intimate details with virtual strangers, it promotes an environment of mutual trust.

Passion: According to *Time* magazine columnist James Poniewozik, the problem with mainstream media today is a passion deficit. However, online participatory journalism is run by people who are passionate about their work. Passion makes the experience not only compelling and memorable but also credible.

Speed of communication: Steve Haeckel, director of strategic studies at IBM's Advanced Business Institute. "Response time is one indicator of the degree of trustworthiness of the individual."

Free market of media: There are three basic rules of behaviour that are tied directly to the intrinsic nature of the Internet, according to Doctor Searls and David Weinberger: "No one owns it. Everyone can use it. Anyone can improve it." When the audience owns the medium, and owns the power to



equitably compete in the same space, the medium and its forms carry a level of trust not found in any other media to date.

Globally and Locally: the practice of Citizen Journalism

Democracies around the world supposedly allow their citizens to voice their concerns and have access to information. Similarly, the practice of Citizen Journalism is more vibrant in democracies. However, it is not easier for citizens of those countries, which are ruled by dictators or military regimes or even by monarchs. Tools of Citizen Journalism have already been described in the beginning. Social media websites like YouTube, FaceBook, Twitter and a lot more surfaced and created a media revolution. Citizens around the globe not only have access to information but can also share information with others. Many small and large Citizen Journalism initiatives are now working around the globe, and are allowing citizens to participate and contribute.

Most of the authoritarian regimes are also trying to what users of online media do and read. Every authoritarian regime has come up with its own list of objectionable information that it tends to censor. China tops the list and has deployed huge human and financial resources to crack down on websites. China systematically cracks down on bloggers and has put 48 bloggers behind bars so far.⁶³

Similarly, the government of President Ahmadinejad in Iran is also playing an ever increasing role in crackdowns on online users. Since 2006, all websites have to be registered with the authorities and access providers have to assure that “banned” content is not published by their servers.⁶⁴

In Zimbabwe, censorship is carried out by state owned telecommunication company, which is closely controlled by the government of President Robert Mugabe.

⁶³ Clothile Le Coz. *The 2008 Golden scissors of cyber-championship. Handbook for bloggers and cyber-dissidents. Reporters without borders. 2008.* Pp. 75-78. Accessed online from: http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/handbook_bloggers_cyberdissidents-GB.pdf. Date of Access: 9 July 2012.

⁶⁴ Ibid.



In Burma, the two internet access providers closed down their internet connections on the orders of the military junta.⁶⁵ Similarly, the governments of Saudi Arabia and Vietnam are well known for their censorship policies.

In Pakistan, the online media is not subjected to wide scale censorship. However, certain social media websites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been subjected to bans in the recent past.

Given the proliferation of internet usage in Pakistan, local CitizenJournalism portals have also seen a rise in popularity. *SeenReport, Gawaahi, Maati TV*, and other blogs and websites initiated by local media outlets and independent journalists/bloggers have given Pakistanis with access to the internet the chance to have their voices heard.⁶⁶

Initiatives like DawnBlog, ExpressTribune Blog and blogs on the mainstream media websites invite hundreds and thousands of citizens on daily basis. Similarly millions of users in Pakistan are active on FaceBook, YouTube and Twitter etc and present their content on daily basis.

Pakistan has also been through a many military dictatorships, and media (both print and electronic) was put under heavy censorship. During Zia's regime, newspapers were printed with black columns, which meant that the particular news story has been censored by the government. However, things took a turn with the dawn of the twenty-first century. Media laws were liberalised and private channels were allowed to operate. Presently, Pakistan has one of the most vibrant media in the region.

From the examples presented above, countries such as China, Burma, Zimbabwe, Iran and Saudi Arabia etc, which are mostly under dictatorships, tend to censor even the social media. This is representative of the fact that democracies tend to give more freedom to their citizens. However it is hoped that with the passage of time, the countries that still censor social media will slowly liberalise their laws, as it is a revolution that is hard to curtail.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Rehman, Sonya. *Citizen Journalism grows in Pakistan. Audiencescapes: The Intermedia knowledge center*. accessed from: <http://www.audiencescapes.org/crowd-sourced-Hosh-Media-citizen-journalism-pakistan>. Date of Access: 2 July 2012.

How to become a Citizen Journalist?

How to become a citizen Journalist?

Inspired?

Want to know how to become a citizen journalist?

It is quite simple. All you need is an internet connection, a video camera or a mobile phone. Get either of the tools and start practicing citizen journalism today. Here are six basic steps that you need to take.

- Generate your email account on Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo etc.
- Make a Facebook account.
- Set up a twitter account.
- Create a blog.
- Connect your accounts for instance each post on your blog should be shareable on Facebook.
- Post a Blog, Twitter, and Facebook.

Moreover, follow the points below to ensure your work is effective and creates maximum impact.

Acquire the means you require

To be a citizen journalist, you would need to have the tools for better results and hence better work. For instance, if you are a photo blogger, you will need a camera. For podcast, you will require a sound recorder of good quality. If you are aiming to post interviews, you will need a video camera. Last but not the least you need to have a computer. Let's not forget, the least expensive phone these days also has a camera so there is no need to buy an expensive phone for this purpose.

Spot a proper channel

Doesn't matter what type of citizen journalist (blogger, news articles writer, photo blogger) you aim to become, the most important thing is to locate a proper outlet where you can publish your work. For instance a blogging website such as wordpress.com.



Developing your own outlet

If you are unable to locate an outlet that is relevant to your work, create your own. Construct a webpage, a blog or a podcast where you can express yourself freely. Though generating your own outlet would mean more work, but the probability is that it will make your experience of work more interesting.⁶⁷

Make yourself heard

Here are some ways using which you can draw attention of people on internet to your work:

- Be an active blogger. Blog very often, comment on other blogs as this produces leads to attention.
- Get to know about other bloggers on the internet and praise their work often.
- Request other bloggers to share your work on their outlets.
- Avoid repetition of stories. Try to come up with something new all the time to keep others interested in your work.⁶⁸
- Back up your argument by giving relevant information. Do not post fake stories as it can be hazardous for your image.
- Don't forget to link. Linking has a number of advantages including but not restricted to (a) increasing your blog's ranking in the search results (b) generating more traffic for your blog and of course making your content more widely known.

⁶⁷ Rogers, Tony, *Five Steps For Getting Started in Citizen Journalism*
<http://journalism.about.com/od/citizenjournalism/tp/citizenjournalismsteps.htm>

⁶⁸ Franklyn Stephen, *Ten steps to citizen journalism online*
<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/UserFiles/Ten%20steps%20to%20citizen%20journalism%20online.pdf>

Tips for citizen journalists shooting photos

Here are some tips for our fellow citizen journalists who want to take snapshots on their mobile phones⁶⁹:

1. Memory and Power

Make sure you have enough battery power and storage place in your mobile phones.

2. Fill the frame

Capture the incident in the foreground. Look out for the background as well. Make sure they improve the image, not distract. You need to decide that what you want to include or exclude in the picture.

3. Zoom lens

A citizen journalist should learn what the zoom lens can do. For portraits a citizen journalist should use medium zoom.

4. Focus

Push button half way and lock the focus on the object you want. You can change the composition once you lock the focus.

5. Natural light

Avoid using flash, flash usually looks unnatural. In most cases avoid photographing with the sun behind you or directly in front of you.

6. Practice

Take plenty of pictures, experiment and learn to edit tightly. Be familiar with your equipment so you can work confidently. Fumbling with your camera will cause you to miss the moment and gives the impression you are not professional.

⁶⁹ <http://ijnet.org/stories/11-tips-citizen-journalists-shooting-photos>

Being an effective Citizen Journalist for elections:

Elections are coming up, which is quite exciting as we are going to elect a new government after five years. You can also play a part in becoming an effective citizen journalist in the coming elections. If you want to become an effective citizen journalist, we have got some ideas for you. If you see that there is some problem at the polling station in this age of technology you can capture a video or a picture from your cell phone and send it to different media centres, blogs, election observing agency websites, Facebook pages etc. For example:

- Talat Hussain's facebook page
- Najam Sethi's facebook page
- Youtube
- Dawn news channel facebook page
- US Embassy's facebook page
- Email to Press Clubs of Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Islamabad
- European Union Observer's website
- Commonwealth Group website
- Twitter accounts of famous media personnel
- Cafepyala blog
- Emailing on Geo news channel page Geo dost by typing city and name@geodost.tv

Conclusion

Citizen Journalism has opened up new possibilities for traditional journalism to collect and publish information, as well as given rise to completely new forms of information flow involving not just professionals, but also potentially any connected citizen. However, the freedom allowed by social media also entails a number of risks. The anonymity of being is still the biggest risk posed by social media and so by Citizen Journalism. It has become easier for individuals to generate rumours and misinformation, which can be disastrous at times. Unless or until a piece of information shared by a citizen journalist is backed by true facts and figures and sufficient proof, its authenticity remains doubtful.

This handbook is an effort to acquaint Pakistani journalists with the evolving phenomenon of Citizen Journalism in the country. It not only includes important case studies from Pakistan, but also touches upon famous Citizen Journalism stories from around the globe.

Social media, particularly Citizen Journalism has opened news avenues not only for journalists, but also for citizens who care for the environment they live in and want to highlight little things that go unnoticed in the mainstream media reporting. The most extraordinary fact about Citizen Journalism is that anyone with a basic knowledge of internet and social media can share information with the rest of the world and become a citizen journalist.

Most importantly, Citizen Journalism is an excellent tool for students of media, minority groups and survivors of abuse, torture and other ill behaviours. In a society like ours, talking to and helping an abuse survivor is considered taboo. So, these survivors can make good use of this tool for getting their voice heard around the globe. It can also be a source for the mainstream media reporting, if used properly i.e. supported by facts and figures.

Citizen Journalism is growing with time and will keep on growing, particularly in open societies. However, the only way forward can be achieved if the



principles of Freedom, Independence and Responsibility are given due importance by independent citizen journalists.

Annexure- A

List of top 20 Blogs on Politics

1. Siasat.Pk
2. The Pakistani Spectator
3. The News Blog
4. Mosharraf Zaidi
5. Critical PPP
6. Dawn Blog
7. Pak Tea House
8. The Opinion Factor
9. Pakistaniaat
10. The Pakistan Policy Blog
11. The News Tribe Blogs
12. Tribune Blogs
13. Watan Dost
14. Pakistan: Now or Never? Perspectives on Pakistan
15. Chowrangi
16. Raza Rumi's Blog
17. Pakistan Paindabad
18. Changing Up Pakistan'
19. One Pakistan
20. Pakistan Affairs



List of Top Media Facebook Pages

1. Jang Group
2. Express Media Group
3. Dawn Media Group
4. Samaa TV
5. Aaj TV
6. Dunya TV
7. Pakistan Today
8. The Nation
9. Business Recorder

List of Top Pakistanis on Twitter

1. Imran Khan
2. Shehbaz Sharif
3. Mushahid Hussain
4. Nusrat Javed
5. Najam Sethi
6. Sherry Rehman
7. Hussain Haqqani
8. Sharmila Farooqui

Individualland creates choices! As an innovative research-based consultancy and advocacy group we open up space for the individual. Our focus is the role of the media and to generate a peaceful discourse in society. We are working to increase the number of responsible journalists, media-literacy among citizens and a greater acceptance for different ways to live.