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MCM 302

Online Journalism



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Miva Open University

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Course Introduction

This course, online journalism, is a two-credit course for undergraduate students of mass communication. This material is written in line with the Nigerian University's Commission course content monitoring and accreditation system guidelines for mass communication.

Course Contents

The course will focus on the emerging waves of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.; the impact of social networking sites on news gathering and reportage; issues about social media and the potential for peddling harmful information; social media and the citizenship power; and connectivity and access.

Course Aims

1. **Provide a comprehensive understanding** of new and social media platforms, their evolution, and their foundational role in modern online journalism.
2. **Examine the impact** of real-time reporting, social networking, and crowdsourcing on contemporary news gathering and dissemination.
3. **Analyse the ethical, legal, and credibility challenges** in digital journalism, including fake news, copyright issues, invasion of privacy, and online defamation.
4. **Explore the influence** of social media on civic engagement, political discourse, community building, and digital identity formation.

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5. **Develop practical proficiency** in creating, editing, and publishing digital journalism content using modern content management systems and multimedia tools.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. **Analyse** the characteristics, evolution, and challenges of new and social media platforms in relation to contemporary news gathering and reportage.
2. **Evaluate** digital content and online sources using established fact-checking techniques to identify fake news and misinformation.
3. **Assess** the impact of social media on civic engagement, political discourse, cultural dynamics, and online personal branding for journalists.
4. **Formulate** digital publishing strategies using search engine optimisation (SEO), audience engagement metrics, and scheduling tools.
5. **Create** engageable multimedia news content (including short-form videos and shareable graphics) and publish it through a Content Management System (CMS).

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Study Session One:

Introduction To New And Social Media

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Introduction

Study Session One introduces the foundational concepts of new and social media, marking the paradigm shift from traditional mass communication to interactive, digitised content delivery. Historically, traditional journalism operated under a linear, one-to-many model where established media organisations controlled information flow as exclusive gatekeepers. The emergence of the internet, alongside rapid advancements in digital communication technologies, transformed this landscape into a multi-directional, participatory ecosystem. New media encompasses all digital, interactive forms of communication—including websites, blogs, podcasts, and online news portals—where content is created, distributed, and consumed electronically. Within this ecosystem, social media functions as a distinct, highly interactive sub-category focused on user-generated content, virtual community building, and real-time social networking.

Understanding this distinction is critical for contemporary journalists. While all social media platforms are forms of new media, not all new media platforms rely on social networking mechanics. This study session traces the historical development of online news platforms from early teletext and proprietary networks to modern multimedia environments. It details the structural features of new media—such as interactivity, hypertextuality, digital encoding, and asynchronous communication—while examining how these elements alter newsgathering, story structure, and audience engagement. Finally, the session explores the key structural, operational, and financial challenges confronting

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modern online newsrooms, including digital divide barriers, source verification difficulties, monetisation struggles, and information overload.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session One

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1.1. Discuss social media as a type of new media.

1.2. Trace the origin of online journalism.

1.3. Analyse the different types of the new media

1.4. Identify the possible challenges of using the new media to package and distribute media content

1.5. Propose practical solutions to mitigate operational and technological challenges faced by online journalists.

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1.1 Definition of New and Social Media

Social media is a platform for networking, photo-sharing, instant messaging and video sharing made possible through the internet. Social media, as an internet-based form of communication, makes it easy for people to communicate both on a professional and non-professional basis. Talking about the new media, it is imperative to clear the air around the word 'new' attached to the media. New in this context is the use of micro-electronics, telecommunications and even the computer to enhance what was previously obtainable using the core traditional media of communication (Agboola, 2004). So when we use the word new media in this study material, we make reference to the initiation of both the digital media, social media and even the remodelling of the core traditional media (radio, television and print) to fit into the same experience obtainable with the new media. In essence, the new media will incorporate every form of electronic communication, utilising tools with an internet base to engage the audience in terms of content distribution and sourcing for information. The idea of the new media came with the birth of the World Wide Web after 2004. A major good of the new media is the ability of people to send and receive messages in real time and also be accessible from any electronic and internet-powered device. The new media came with better ways to send and distribute messages through highly powered digital devices using the hypertextual outlook, the world wide web, podcasts, CDs and others, making the word 'distance' dead in communication (Giwa, 2012).

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In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 1: What is social media?

ITA 1: They are user-interactive platforms powered by the internet; for sending, receiving and sharing of messages.

1.2 Evolution Of Online Journalism

Like we have tried to establish in the sub-session above, the online journalism came to be following the advent of the new media, and so it is imperative to trace the historical antecedents heralding what we have as the new media. According to Friedman & Friedman 2008:

- **1988** – Internet Relay Chat
- **1991**- WWWW
- **1993**- Mosaic is the first browser.
- **1994**- The web crawler (being the first web browser)
- **1995 & 1996** – AOL, CompuServe and VOIP, leading to free instant messaging
- **1999**-Napster, Google and iPod
- **2001 & 2002 –** Wikipedia, Friendster and others.
- **2003**- My space, Skype and others.
- **2004**- Facebook
- **2005**-Youtube

The dates above paved the way for journalists to find the need to utilise the internet powered technology to carry out their duties. These earliest forms

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began with the Poynter Institute website, owned by N&O, being the first professional news site featured on the World Wide Web around the early 90's. After the launch of the World Wide Web, one of the realst approaches very close to what has evolved as online journalism was the publication of a series on the use of cocaine in Southern California online. This was followed by the Dallas Morning News, the first of its type online (Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll, 2005). Gradually, online infographics became common, and media webs started moving into a portal after the models of Yahoo, Netscape, America Online and others. By 2006 and beyond; the really simple syndication system (RSS), videos and blog posts became more popularised, and by 2008, WWW became the second information avalanche for the American audience, including the use of social web, popularising Facebook and Twitter.

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 2: What are new media?

ITA 2: They are the newest platform of communication; powered by the internet and digitised equipment to make communication possible.

1.3 Types of New Media

The new media is a digital-powered communication relying solely on the internet. With the spread of the internet came the birthing of different types of the new media. Some of these types of new media includes:

- Social media platforms
- Virtual reality

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- Streaming services
- Blogs/Podcast
- Video games
- Mobile applications
- Websites
- Video games
- Email and messaging
- e-books
- Online newspapers

1. **E-books:** The new media makes it possible for people to access books at their convenience using the internet. The ease of using these internet-powered documents makes them a veritable type of new media for a lot of people, especially for open learning.

Activity 1.1: Make an assessment of the offline and online copies of the same book. List out the noticeable advantages of the online book as a type of new media!!

2. **E-mails and Instant Messaging:** With the invention of the internet, a lot of people are able to send and receive messages using the internet almost at the same instant of sending out such a message. A lot of businesses and companies have been able to stay in the reach of their customers through mail.
3. **Websites:** This type of new media provides an opportunity to source for topics, visit a social site, find news stories and locate answers to bordering

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social issues by typing in the questions on the search engine; anybody can develop a website for others to use for different purposes.

4. **Mobile APPS:** These are software that can be installed on any internet-powered device to make some of the daily activities of the user; these versions of the new media are so useful in navigating the user systematically through the activity they need help on. These apps range from financial, cooking and entertainment applications, among others.
5. **Video Games:** These type of new media allows the user to enjoy online sporting activities 'already installed using a disc. The idea of using a disc makes it easy and flexible for the user who must have an internet source to get the extensions to enjoy such games.
6. **Blogs and Podcast:** These type of new media encourages citizen journalism; this is because, devoid of your unpopularity, you can own a personal blog on the internet space and distribute your content to a large number of people. The podcasts and blogs share the same similarity, but the major difference is that a blogger must be willing to sit and write, while the podcast utilises audio and video. Regardless, this is a total divide away from the traditional media, being that it is entirely digital.

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Figure 1.1: A blog and podcast station

Activity 1.2: Analyse some blogs and list out their differences in terms of content.

7. **Streaming:** This online activity as part of the new media allows the user to watch real-time and recorded videos using the internet. A common example is Netflix. People can stream directly using the mobile applications or other internet-powered avenues like YouTube.
8. **Virtual Reality:** This type of new media is still witnessing an evolution, just like the video games. Meta, as an online company, and the likes have been pushing to develop virtual reality and augmented reality for some time now. However, with the internet, there is hope for a better version of this new media.
9. **Social Media Platform:** This has to be the most common type of the new

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media providing the internet user access to read and send messages in real-time including posting and sharing of online content. Facebook, a type of these platforms, seems to be the largest house in terms of users, and most journalists are beginning to appreciate it as a tool for online journalism. Others include Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, etc. Even online marketers, due to the accessibility and number of users on these platforms, have found these platforms even more succinct than the traditional media in selling their products.

10. **Online Courses:** These may be the most appreciated form of new media for students, this is because it gives learners the leverage to gain knowledge and enjoy a classroom experience by just having good access to the internet. Today people can pursue their degrees just like you at the MIVA Open University, made possible through the use of the internet. This form of new media became much popularised in Nigeria after the 2020 pandemic lock down owing to covid.
11. **Online Newspapers:** The Online newspapers have become another type of new media owing to most of their shared characteristics with the online blogs, as the user has the power to interact with the blogger using the comment feature. This gradual movement towards digitalisation of the newspaper came as a result of heavy reliance of people on the new media.

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1.4 Elements Of The New Media

Like any other type of the mass media, the new media is constantly challenged by a myriad of issues but it is important that we first look at the key elements making the use issues, media possible and accessible;

- **Digital technology:** Digitalisation is the only clause making the new media possible and seamless in its usage. Without the internet-enabled devices, the user cannot appreciate the new media; phones, laptops and the like have unified the society much more than we can imagine.
- **Real time:** The ability of instant reception, immediately a message is shared, remains an outstanding feature for the new media. It does not end with the instantaneous sharing and reception; people can get messages from anywhere regardless of the time.
- **Multimedia:** This as an element of the new media makes it possible to use and share digital content not in one form but as text, animations, GIF's, audio and even as video.
- **Networking:** This is a major advantage of the new media over the other types of media, though not all types of the new media grant the user the opportunity to meet with others, but the social media platforms housing a larger percent of the new media users thrive on giving people access to chat and communicate with people they wouldn't have met ordinarily. This networking and interactivity is made possible through the hyperlinks of pages.

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1.5 Challenges of the New Media

Having considered the elements making the new media a possibility, we consider below the challenges of the new media as a journalistic approach to reaching the audience:

1. **Lack of Accuracy:** In using the new media, immediacy owing to the online space makes everybody a publisher as in reporting and editing; this will affect the verification of details and the credibility of such stories. Remember that the difference between reporting using the new media and the traditional forms, which include the radio, television and print, is the need to get across to millions of people instantaneously during the news occurrence.
2. **Lack of Convergent Reporters:** A convergent reporter is trained to report for the different platforms. It means the reporter should learn how to write for the radio, television and trim videos and audio for the different online platforms.
3. **Penetration Factor:** The degree to which the new media can pass through the entire society will affect how these potentials are put into reality.
4. **Lack of Infrastructure:** The new media will require the use of so many technologies, but like Agboola has put it, Internet and communication technology is yet to gain massive popularity in rural areas of Nigeria.
5. **Lack of Gatekeeping:** The new media in journalism is like opening a newsroom without an editor; therefore, the new media lacks the conventional ethics of gatekeeping.

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6. **Threat of hackers/cyberbullying:** The new media offers the capability of improving the economic development of a society, but hackers and cyberbullies hamper the full gains that come with the new media.

Conclusion

The new media, unlike the traditional media, provides the much-needed change in the reporting, packaging and distribution of information in order to meet up with the demands of the 21st century audience. The new media thrives on the wings of the internet and the availability of digital facilities. Although faced with a mirage of challenges, the new media will continue to extradite these challenges as long as journalists utilise them in accordance with the ethics of journalism.

Summary

In this study session, we have been able to:

1. Define social media as a variant of the new media and not the new media in itself.
2. Consider and analyse the differences with each of the new media.
3. Trace the evolution of online journalism.
4. Look at the challenges of these new media, such as lack of gatekeeping, cyberbullying, hacking and lack of digital infrastructure, among others.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQ)

SAQ 1: List and explain two types of new media?

Answer:

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- **Virtual Reality:** This type of new media is still witnessing an evolution, just like the video games. Meta, as an online company, and the likes have been pushing to develop virtual reality and augmented reality for some time now. However, with the internet, there is hope for a better version of this new media.
- **Social Media Platform:** This has to be the most common type of new media, providing the internet user access to read and send messages in real-time, including posting and sharing of online content. Facebook, a type of these platforms, seems to be the largest house in terms of users, and most journalists are beginning to appreciate it as a tool for online journalism. Others include Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, etc. Even online marketers, due to the accessibility and number of users on these platforms, have found these platforms even more succinct than the traditional media in selling their products.

SAQ 2: Discuss one of the challenges of the new media.

Answer: Threat from hackers/cyberbullying: The new media offers the capability of improving the economic development of a society, but hackers and cyberbullying hamper the full gains that come with the new media.

SAQ 3: List and explain two elements of the new media.

Answer:

- **Digital Technology:** Digitalisation is the only clause making the new media possible and seamless in its usage. Without the internet-enabled devices,

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the user cannot appreciate the new media; phone, laptops and the likes has unified the society much more than we can imagine.

- **Real Time:** The ability of instant reception immediately a message is shared, remains an outstanding feature for the new media. It does not end with the instantaneous sharing and reception, people can get messages from anywhere regardless of the time.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **An investigative journalist is examining the conceptual difference between social media and the overarching framework of new media. Based on the theoretical distinctions provided in the course material, which of the following scenarios best reflects the precise relationship between the two?**

   A) An internet news agency releases a downloadable e-book, which functions as social media because it is distributed online.

   B) A reporter creates a digital podcast series; this is an example of social media because it relies entirely on micro-electronics.

   C) A journalist uses an online messaging app to chat with sources; this social media usage represents a specific subset within the broader scope of new media.

   D) A media house uses digital television to broadcast news, which replaces social media as the chief technology of new media.

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Correct Answer: C

Explanation: According to Section 1.1, social media is an internet-based platform for networking, messaging, and sharing. The material explicitly clarifies that "social media is not the new media but an aspect of the new media". Therefore, using an instant messaging app to interact with sources is a social media activity functioning within the larger ecosystem of new media.

2. **A news organisation wants to transition from traditional print publishing to digital formats. Reflecting on the evolution of online journalism, which historical milestone directly enabled modern online news platforms to transition toward multimedia portals and user syndication?**

A) The emergence of Internet Relay Chat in 1988.

B) The development of Really Simple Syndication (RSS), embedded videos, and blogs after 2006.

C) The initial launch of the Poynter Institute website in the early 1990s.

D) The release of the Mosaic browser in 1993.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 1.2 details the historical progression of online journalism. While early sites began in the 1990s, it was around 2006, and

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beyond that, RSS feeds, online video integration, and blog posts popularised news portals into interactive multimedia platforms.

3. **A media outlet publishes breaking news online and permits readers to comment, discuss, and critique the story immediately. Which specific element of new media is demonstrated by this two-way digital communication loop?**

   A) Real-time delivery

   B) Hypertextuality

   C) Networking and Interactivity

   D) Digitalisation

   Correct Answer: C

   Explanation: Section 1.4 defines key elements of new media. While "real time" refers to instantaneous transmission/reception, "networking" (and interactivity) provides users the specific opportunity to chat, connect, give feedback, and communicate through hyperlinked pages, distinguishing it from traditional static media.

4. **A digital publisher issues an unverified rumour regarding a political scandal to beat competing outlets to the story, leading to widespread public disinformation. Which inherent challenge of new media journalism does this scenario highlight?**

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A) The digital divide factor

B) Lack of gatekeeping and compromise of accuracy due to immediacy

C) Lack of convergent reporters

D) Threat of cyberbullying and hacking

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 1.5 explains that because the online environment prioritises immediacy, everyone becomes a publisher. This rapid publishing model lacks conventional editorial gatekeeping, which negatively impacts story verification, details, and overall journalistic accuracy.

5. **A newsroom editor notices that a reporter can write articles for print but cannot produce audio clips for radio or edit short videos for social media. Which organisational challenge of the new media era does this highlight?**

A) Infrastructure deficit

B) Cyberbullying vulnerability

C) Lack of convergent reporters

D) Low penetration factor

Correct Answer: C

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Explanation: Section 1.5 defines a convergent reporter as one trained to write and adapt content across multiple media platforms (radio, television, web, and social media). The reporter's inability to work across digital and broadcast formats reflects a lack of convergent reporters.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. With your understanding from this session, strike clear differences between the new media and the social media?
2. Trace the evolution of online journalism?
3. Discuss extensively digitisation as an element of the new media?
4. Gatekeeping is a major challenge for the new media. Discuss?

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Study Session Two:

Social Media Platforms for Journalism

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Introduction

Social media continues to pose a major competition for the media world; by this we mean that the way news is reported, packaged and shared has continued to witness a tremendous change owing to social media. Social media does not only affect the way information reaches people as in real time; it also affects how this information is being treated before it gets to the user. Of all the many social media platforms promoting interactivity through the hyperlinked pages by texts, pictures, audios and sounds. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn seem to be the most used platforms for different reasons to the journalist, as they foster connections and networking among individuals, communities and businesses all over the world, and so in this study session, we consider these major social media platforms and their utility for the journalist who is abreast of the pros and cons of the new media. Social media is an interactive internet platform that allows the user to create content and also distribute it with online users (Davis, 2016).

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Two

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

2.1. Discuss social media as an important type of new media for journalism
2.2. Explain in detail Facebook as a social media platform.
2.3. Examine the nitty-gritty of using Facebook for information dissemination.
2.4. Discuss Twitter as a new medium for sharing breaking news
2.5. Establish that LinkedIn as a professional work tool can connect journalists.

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2.1 Facebook for News Dissemination

Before discussing Facebook as a tool for news dissemination, it is important to first establish the advantages of social media in journalism;



Figure 2.1: Facebook Logo

1. **Building a Community:** Social media helps the journalist to bring their heterogeneous audience into one virtual community. This is made possible by the journalist's prompt response to questions and directing enquiries from the audience in such a virtual community. These platforms include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others.
2. **Establishing Relationship with News Sources:** The journalist earns news credibility by attaching actualities to his news story made possible by speaking with credible sources. The social media platforms can provide the journalist with private and homely access to an array of experts, stakeholders and others. Like Twitter and even LinkedIn can give the journalist access to collaborative interviews.
3. **Discovering Stories:** In terms of breaking news and trending discourses, the

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journalists who is not certain about trends can find Twitter very useful in this regard.

4. **Wide Reach:** The journalist is able to reach a large number of people with his/her content by a simple click on any of these social media platforms.

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 1: What is one importance of social media to journalism?

ITA 1: Social media can help the journalist build a community of people interested in his niche.

2.1.1 Facebook and News

To better appreciate the Facebook as a capable social media platform for information dissemination, it is imperative to first make clear that digitisation and news commercialisation pushing the traditional media away from meeting the demands of news gathering, packaging and dissemination. Hence, considering Facebook as a social media platform for news dissemination means that there is actually a new twist based on time which journalists can only meet up with, if we all understand the new trends in news publishing, streaming, audience demand and others. (Conboy & Eldridge, 2014; Örnebring, 2010). Understanding the above statements means that here we are considering Facebook not just as a social networking tool but as:

- A technological tool for journalists and businesses to achieve personal/organisational goals.
- A space where information exchange can happen between private and

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public individuals.

Facebook has become an integral aspect of journalism shaping and also being re-shaped as it bothers on communication patterns. This will mean journalists seeing the social media platforms including face book as a public sphere made up of networks giving the audience opportunity to share, discuss and give their opinions on news (Hermida et al., 2012). Journalists will employ the use of face book because of its ability to shift the control of the news out of the hands of the journalist to the social media user owing to the effect of the participatory role of the user. For Poell and Van Dijck 204; social media platforms like face book affect the production and dissemination of news. The face book remains a huge source of news although this sources must be properly fact-checked since they are untraceable outside the social media. As long as we are talking about the straight news reportage, the face book will remain an easy tool for filling the news hole without having to spend so much on the logistics of news sourcing. This may also be called environmental scanning by the journalist who finds face book useful to know what's happening although the question of maintaining ethics in this regard becomes a concern for the journalist who will most times rely on the ad hoc gatekeepers (some group of users who will vote an online source to be credible). The Facebook will remain a major channel of news presentation because it is no longer enough to produce very qualitative news but sociability has also being added as an important element towards efficient journalism and in this context that will be the virility of a particular news stories. Again the Face book will not just be a tool for news gathering or news presentation but also a tool to shape the flow of news as social media users now

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control what gets to the next person by re-sharing and publicising any of the news story deemed worthy on an online news site. To use Facebook as a journalist, you should follow the guidelines:

- Create an online news page on Facebook; this will help you to separate your personal life from your job.
- Employ the direct message features to enable you to respond directly to your post.
- Update your news page manually to enhance engagement
- Maximise the use of very useful applications like the ***'face book+ Journalists;'*** managed by Facebook employees to bring journalists together on Facebook.
- To find eyewitnesses and local experts on Facebook, check for topic-specific groups on Facebook and also look out for mentions.

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 2: How can Facebook influence the news?

ITA 2: Facebook is a tool used to shape the flow of news as social media users now control what gets to the next person by re-sharing and publicising any of the news story deemed worthy on an online news site.

2.2 Twitter as a Breaking News Tool

Since the inception of Twitter, now called X-in the last four years, it has become a veritable tool for journalists in breaking developing stories. As a social platform, it is the consumers who determine what becomes topical here by agreeing on a

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particular hashtag followed by a simple word or sentence. Once such is accepted, people look for stories based on the tags. Twitter is a blogging platform on a micro-level, with its messages referred to as ***'tweets'*** mostly delimited to 140 characters per post. So for most people, snooping for additional stories away from those on the core traditional media with depth and verified facts. Twitter as a social media platform becomes the way out. As long as journalism has grown to the deployment of digital platforms for message dissemination, Twitter as a social media platform will remain one of those very useful social media platforms. Twitter, by its nature of being instantaneous with message updates, presents itself as the best platform for the breaking news updates. Since Twitter booms on dialogue, most reporters, journalists and media personalities find Twitter very succinct to elicit reactions and comments on the breaking events. The nature of Twitter makes scene reporting interesting, as it allows videos, images and texts, although disinformation. It's a major limitation for Twitter, like other social media platforms, as a journalistic tool.

To use Twitter for news, the journalist should:

- Stay resolute; tweeting every minute or hour is not a job for the weak.
- Be original in your tweets; people appreciate the differences in the way people are likely to express humour.
- Keep your audience on your page by maximising the power of interaction that comes with the social media platforms.

So many tools make it easy for the journalist to be able to navigate and comfortably reach their twitter audience like;

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- Live tweet
- Hash tags
- Thread the tweet
- Initiate polls
- Use the live feature

Going live: As a journalist, presenting live coverage will enable the journalist to have a lot of engagement on their page, especially when experts and news sources are given the opportunity to interact with the audience.

Hashtags: These hashtags are keywords that can increase the visibility of your post, making your hashtags peculiar to yourself and helping you build a unique online identity.

Activity 2.1 Write a tweet and attach a hashtag following a popular trend!!

Live Tweets: This is not the same as your normal live coverage on Twitter; the live tweet means that the journalist can post events as they are happening, just like the breaking news under discourse. Example: elections, accidents and others.

Threading: This will mean building an online gallery just like the other social media platforms.

Initiating Polls: Create an opportunity for people to react and let them tell you how they feel about the general activities happening on your Twitter news account.

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2.3 LinkedIn for Professional Journalism Networking

LinkedIn remains a very important tool for networking among journalists, but before discussing the effectiveness of LinkedIn as a social networking tool. We will be considering what networking will mean for the journalists. To be good at this game of building professional relationships, which is what networking will mean, the journalist must:



Figure 2.2: LinkedIn

1. **Be a Patient Fellow:** The journalist most often is under pressure to deliver quickly to his/her editor; regardless, you need to carefully go through press releases from your colleagues who are working as public relations officers for the organisation sending out the press release.
2. **Be Approachable:** As a journalist, you can sometimes call your colleague not for the paperwork but a healthy chitchat to keep the relationship moving. Chat about movies, start-ups, politics and other non-personal aspects of life. This will earn you the impression of being a very approachable fellow.

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3. **Be a Helpful Resource**: sometimes your colleagues are likely to cut corners to get information, more like running away from the stress of visiting your station. Unless it is a confidential detail, be helpful to your colleague. You might be needing their help some day as a journalist.
4. **Be Sure of Your Goals:** The journalist who wants to build a good network with others must first outline what they really want to achieve with the network and how you also intend on being an asset to the network; this means how your skills, interests and achievements can be of relevance to these people.
5. **Always be Prepared:** You need to be intuitive and well informed about the person or organisation you want to connect with. This is made possible by keeping in mind a simple introduction and selling conversation about your interest as a reporter all the time.
6. **Keep Professional Boundaries**: Journalists, in that they are trying to build relationships with one another, must also remember to maintain boundaries. Do not let out so much about you/your station because you are trying to build a network.

2.3.1 Connecting with Other Journalists

To connect with other journalists online, here are a few things you need to take notice of:

1. **Optimise Your LinkedIn:** You need not be told as a journalist that your social media handles are like your online cards; therefore you need to keep them up to date. Make profile and cover photos relatable to your

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personality. Your LinkedIn feeds should not be tacky but professional, reflecting your day-to-day office (professional) business; this will make your profile easily discoverable. Since social media has the hypertext element, making it easy to connect related pages together.

Activity 2.2: Create a properly optimised LinkedIn platform and exchange the links among your colleague to see what you have!!

2. **Keep an Online Presence:** It is not enough to have a handle that is up-to-date; to link up with other professionals on linkedIn you need to keep an account that does not just reflect your niche but an account that can keep people glued to your page and even increase the traffic on your page. The easiest approach to this is to keep posting professional pictures, videos and even write ups. Like in optimising your page this posts will bring experts and likely news sources to your page which in turn will influence your network.

3. **Apply Hashtags (#):** The hashtags are used to join similar conversations. The journalist has the choice of using personal hashtags that are peculiar to just him/her or even a trending hashtag to lend his views to maybe the financial, health, education and other sectors of the society. But do not overuse these #tags keep it simple and organised.

4. **Share people's material that aligns with you:** The journalist who is interested in sports will not just stop at posting news trends such as match updates, transfers and new hires. The reporter should also post other people's updates that resonates with his type of stories and interest,

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as people engage on such posts; he/she is also expanding their own networks.

5. **Keep up with recent contacts:** This is tactfully enlisted as the last here. Building a good network on the LinkedIn social media platforms do not stop with the engagements and new connections. The journalist should be very active on the pages of his new contacts. You may be lucky to turn such a contact into a strong professional buddy.

It is not enough to use any of these social media platforms effectively for journalism; the journalist must be wary of the pending challenges of using the social media, which are not limited to:

- **Information Overload:** These platforms provide a wide and large field of information which may not all be credible, and so the social media user needs to constantly filter all of this wide array of information.
- **Security Concerns**: There is so much risk to those who provide information for the journalists and even the journalists who are at the mercy of faceless social media users.
- **Misinformation**: It is a herculean job for the internet user strolling through the internet to sieve which information is credible or not due to the high rate of i-reporting and citizen journalism.
- **Disrespect for Ethics:** Immediacy and real-time make it almost impossible to sustain the core ethics of journalism, which are fairness, objectivity and truth.

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Conclusion

It is important to let you know that all of the social media platforms share one unique attribute, which is interactivity. This makes it possible for the journalist to get responses to messages in real time, a very important element of social media. But the journalist must also appreciate the peculiarities of each of these platforms in order to get the best out of them. This entails knowing how and when to post on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Of course, there are lots of other social media platforms, but the nature of these three makes them viable for the journalist as communication tools.

Summary

In this study session we have been able to look at:

1. Social media as a type of new media.
2. Facebook as a major channel for news dissemination.
3. Breaking news as a type of real-time news that can reach a large number of people through Twitter.
4. News source as the credibility of any report and the LinkedIn platform as a worthy platform for journalists to link up with professionals, experts and even their primary news source.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Do you think social media is an effective platform for journalism?

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Answer: Social media does not just have the capacity to reach a large number of people at the same time, but it does this almost at the same time; the message is being sent out, reducing the challenge of staleness.

SAQ 2: What is breaking news?

Answer: They are news stories not complete in themselves, since fragments of ongoing events are being reported as they are happening while the audience anticipates a complete update later.

SAQ 3: Describe networking in professional journalism.

Answer: Firstly, professional journalism will mean carrying out journalistic activities following the core principles of objectivity, fairness and truth. Hence, networking here will mean linking up with other journalists and even news sources as a journalist, and on Twitter, it's a viable social media platform for this networking.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. An investigative reporter wishes to conduct a confidential, asynchronous interview with a high-profile industry expert across international borders without relying on public comment sections. Which advantage of social media in journalism best facilitates this?

   A) Establishing relationships with news sources through private and direct access

   B) Building a public virtual community

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C) Real-time crowdsourcing via public feeds

D) Maximising algorithmic reach

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Section 2.1 highlights that social media platforms allow journalists to establish direct, private relationships with expert news sources across distances for collaborative interviews.

2. How does the shift to Facebook as a primary news distribution channel redefine the traditional power dynamic between journalists and news consumers?

A) It locks content behind paywalls, restricting user access.

B) It transfers part of the news control to the user due to their participatory role in sharing and commenting.

C) It eliminates the need for journalists to verify their sources.

D) It forces audiences to consume news without giving public feedback.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 2.1.1 states that using platforms like Facebook shifts news control away from being exclusively held by the journalist, transforming the space into a public sphere where participatory users shape discussion through comments and shares.

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3. A news room relies on Twitter (X) during an ongoing natural disaster. Which unique characteristic makes Twitter an essential tool for the editorial team in this context?

   A) Its capacity for long-form, peer-reviewed academic publishing.

   B) Its reliance on static, offline database storage.

   C) Its effectiveness as a real-time breaking news tool and trending discourse tracker.

   D) Its exclusive focus on corporate recruitment and executive networking.

   Correct Answer: C

   Explanation: Section 2.2 and Section 2.1 identify Twitter as a primary real-time breaking news tool that allows journalists to discover emerging stories and track real-time trends during fast-unfolding events.

4. A media organisation wants to build a specialised network of professional media colleagues and industry executives to collaborate on cross-border investigative projects. Which platform is best suited for this objective according to the text?

   A) Instagram

   B) TikTok

   C) LinkedIn

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D) Snapchat

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Section 2.3.1 highlights LinkedIn as a dedicated professional platform designed to help journalists connect, network, and collaborate with other professionals and experts.

5. An editor encourages reporters to actively reply to audience questions on the news station's Facebook page to transform passive viewers into an engaged public unit. Which journalistic benefit is the editor implementing?

   A) Cross-platform convergence

   B) Building a virtual community

   C) Algorithmic gatekeeping

   D) Search engine optimisation

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 2.1 states that prompt responses to audience enquiries and interactive engagement on social platforms allow journalists to organise a heterogeneous audience into a unified virtual community.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss Facebook as a news platform?

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2. The nature of Twitter makes it the best breaking news digital platform. Discuss?
3. Analyse the peculiarities of LinkedIn as a social media platform for professional journalism?
4. Why should journalists use social media?

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Study Session Three:

Impact Of Social Media On News Gathering

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Introduction

Just like in every other of our daily dealings, social media does not just provide people with information and a platform to discuss with one another. Social media has recently influenced the traditional means of sourcing what the journalist considers as news-worthy and the process of putting these news stories together. The journalist who wants to be up-to-date can pick his news ideas from the social media platforms, but he/she also needs to verify these news stories for them to pass and not fall short of the required standard. In all of these, the reporter must also put into consideration the time factor, which is a pass element for publishing on the social platforms. In this study session we will look at what crowdsourcing of information will entail, what it means to publish in real time, citizen journalism and how to be sure of facts from the plethora of faceless sources.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Three

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

3.1. Analyse crowd-source information from online platforms

3.2. Carry out real-time reporting

3.3. Analyse the activities of citizen journalists

3.4. Verify sources from social media platforms

3.5. Evaluate the ethical implications, criticisms, and limitations of relying on crowdsourced and user-generated content in journalism.

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3.1 Crowdsourcing Information

'Crowdsourcing' as a journalistic term was coined in 2006, by Jeff Howe. The term "crowdsourcing" was coined in 2006 by Wired magazine journalists Jeff Howe and Mark Robinson. The term was created as a portmanteau of "crowd" and "outsourcing" to describe how businesses were using the internet to outsource work to an undefined, large network of people in the form of an open call. Jeff Howe further detailed this concept in his June 2006 Wired article, "The Rise of Crowdsourcing." Now crowdsourcing is associated with newsrooms. The public largely depends on the audience to broadcast their activities and those of others, which they expect to be unbiased. The core basics of journalism as the fourth estate of the realm and the new media as the fifth estate of the realm is to keep the audience abreast and hold public officials very accountable. However, this same audience, who are the ***'crowd',*** plays a very vantage role towards letting the audience know what is happening. This is the genesis of crowdsourcing, which is the act of completing the entire activities of journalism involving newsgathering, reporting and editing with full participation of the public. The use of the crowd has enviably propelled the tech world, health and other sectors of the society and so utilising them in the business of journalism is not out of place, although not without challenges. The journalist can successfully utilise the crowd by drawing from their experiences and inviting the audience to participate in the news gathering, data collection, interviews, submitting documents and other details that can help the journalist. So in essence, crowdsourcing removes journalism from the traditional solitary process involving just the journalist and his organisation due to the latest communication

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devices powered by the internet. Even for the production of a fine audience-oriented programme, there is need to incorporate the audience to usher in a thing from their own cultural ideologies. As it borders on journalism, crowdsourcing will mean a series of activities involving the cultural (knowledge), social (networks) and economic (finance) aspects of the public harnessed for a specific task during the news production. This simply means that the crowd is not limited to the public but larger social platforms like Twitter, Facebook and even LinkedIn. While sourcing is nothing short of the processes around the collection of knowledge, material and even cash to promote the journalistic activity of news production or a project. There are a large number of factors forcing media organisations into crowdsourcing as the latest form of news production process. They include:

1. Abundance of material even larger than the news team to sieve the news from; this always happens when there is an information overload, especially for investigative reports.
2. When there is a need to incorporate a lot of firsthand witnesses to make a news report thick and also present fresher news hooks to the journalist.
3. The need to increase the loyalty from the audience towards a media organisation can make the station pick a few members of the public as adjunct team members.
4. To increase the existing database or create a new database for journalists on a particular report.

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5. To create an opportunity for engaging the public, especially those in the rural areas, in an advocacy campaign. For example, special reports on health and the like.
6. To initiate answers for a defined problem through the user feedback.
7. To provide instructions or give information to a particular field.
8. To enhance audience contributions.

At this point in our lesson it is important to let us know that crowd sourcing information today in journalism gave rise to another news approach as an aspect of the online journalism known as ambient journalism. The goodness of crowd sourcing does not end with finding a news scoop; it can also serve various charity, commercial and advocacy purposes. What then is ambient journalism?

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 1: What is 'crowd' in online journalism?

ITA 1: The crowd is the public, and larger social platforms like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn serve as contributors for effective delivery from the journalist during a news production activity.

Activity 3.1: Attempt sourcing a news story from any of these social media platforms!

3.1.1 Ambient Journalism

This is simply the passion and interest of the crowd/public that is felt towards

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facilitating news production. It is not a holistic approach to news production on its own, they are bits of the actual chunk being expected from the traditional/mainstream media. But the audience participation is key in ambient journalism because the social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs are used to fly these fractions of bigger stories, even some times yet to be edited and verified. Hence, a journalist utilising the ambient approach towards carrying out their job has to keep an eye on popular pages online in order to sniff out these news stories, verify and then publish/broadcast such news. Presenting a case study to understand what really the practice of ambient journalism entails, we will examine Andy Carvin a digital media strategist at National Public Radio who reported the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt in 2011:

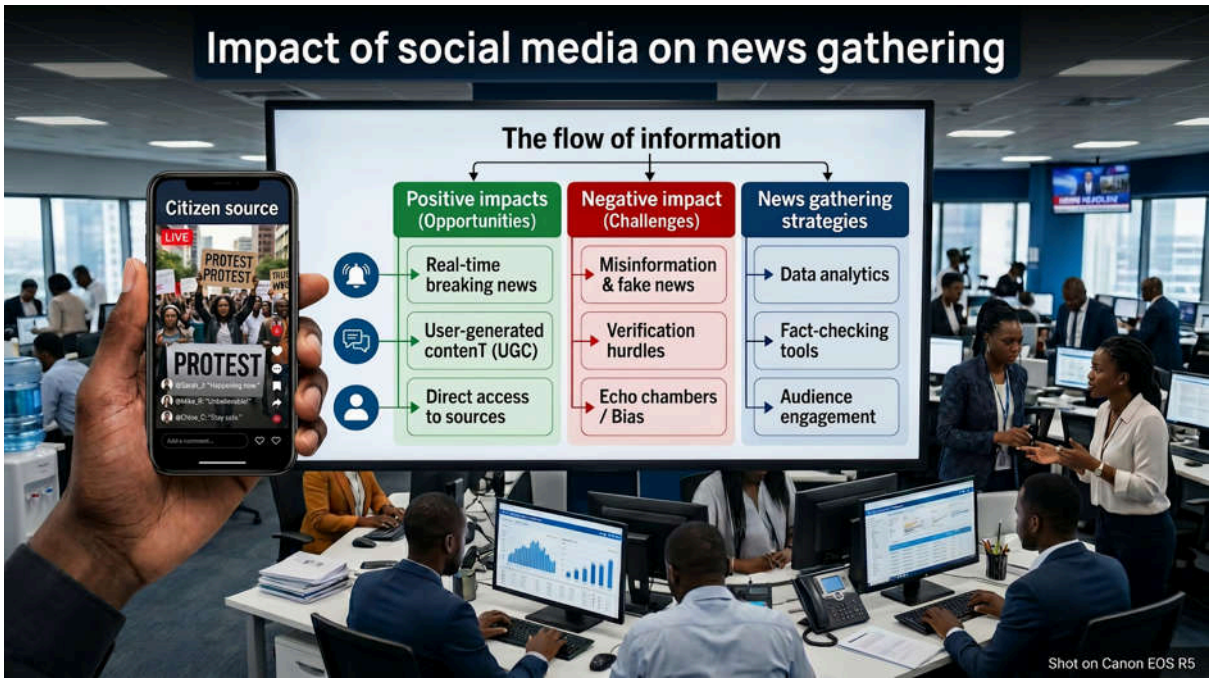


Figure 3.1: Social media impact on news gathering

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Case Study of Ambient Journalism

Here, a few Western media outlets kept people in these countries during the initial stages of their revolutions. But soon it became a task to report from those places, owing to government restrictions on reporting over the revolution. Some of the foreign correspondents who managed to still report on-site did not fully comprehend the underlying anti-government movements. Andy Carvin, who then was not even a foreign correspondent, realising there were lots of people in those countries who were tweeting about their experiences and capturing videos of the revolution, opted to tap into the collective intelligence of the citizens of those places for his station, rather than waiting on the NPR to send journalists to Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt to capture breaking news. If Carvin sights a video about government forces fighting protesters in a particular location, he would ask the tweeter for different angles, and if he did not understand what was being said by an audience due to language, he could ask the Libyans, Tunisians, and Egyptians on the network to translate such. As these publics demonstrated their reliability, Carvin returned to them. These earned him a strong following online, making him a trusted clearinghouse for information during a tumultuous and confusing event. As well, journalists working for other outlets also kept a close eye on Carvin's Twitter feed, as he helped break information.

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 2: What is ambient journalism?

ITA 2: This is simply the passion and interest of the crowd/publics felt towards

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facilitating news production as a news approach.

3.1.2 Stages of Crowd Sourcing for Information

In having the audience participate in sourcing the information, we find them mostly at the base of the news production activity, such as finding and collecting stories for upload. However the journalist can also utilise the crowd to source information at these stages to be discussed below:

- **Voting:** here the crowd helps develop the hierarchy for the stories the reporters should keep at the fore.
- **Witnessing:** during a breaking event, this takes care of the first-person kind of detailing, like a primary source for the reporter.
- **Showcasing Experiential Idea:** The public, as in human interest new reportage, can decide to share their personal experiences and reflections with the reporter to improve their report.
- **Expert Contribution:** Among the news public (crowd), the reporter can pick a person/people willing to contribute their expert knowledge drawn from professional experience, research or hobby to improve their report.

3.1.2 Approaches to Crowdsourcing Information

To reach the intended crowd, journalists must employ varying technologies and approaches. Some of the approaches journalists should take while crowdsourcing information may include, but are not limited to, using:

- **Websites**: In utilising a website for a callout to the desired crowd, it will involve using a newsroom's personal website to advertise for experts and employing a newsroom's social media presence on Twitter or Facebook.

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- **Television**: This is an open and accessible approach to making public, the need for a crowd. Hence, when journalists want contributions from the general, they can use this approach but not for attracting expert sources.
- **Radio**: publicising a crowdsourcing effort is possible on radio when the aim is to mobilise members of the general public.
- **Email**: This approach is used to activate consumers of a newsroom's content, and when seeking contributions from experts, followers or crowds having interest in the report.

Utilising an appropriate approach for crowdsourcing is vital to the success and outcomes of sourcing information from the crowd. Although, journalists must think deeply about who they want to reach out to before employing any of the approaches discussed above. It is of essence to let you know that the journalist for some reasons may utilise any of these approaches together. For example, while seeking information from anyone interested in the subject of discourse and also looking out for experts at the same time, the journalist can use both the radio and e-mail as an approach to crowd sourcing.

3.1.3 Criticisms of Crowd Sourcing

Crowdsourcing have been criticised for the amount of careful work needed before merging and concluding any journalistic writing. It also needs knowledge about the appropriate "target for outreach" and what the right "type of approach" is to reach the desired crowd. Also, journalists need to interrogate the truthfulness, importance and interest as a basis for the crowdsourced information. Without this, false information can be spread by sources or

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incorrectly evaluated by audiences. These risks introduce a danger to the credibility and trust of the media house at a level that is only possible owing to the use of the Internet. As crowdsourcing continues to grow in journalism, media literacy is an essential skill audiences must develop in order to be able to contextualise media messages during the decoding process.

Activity 3.2: As an approach to crowd sourcing information, develop an e-mail that will be used to approach some solar experts for a special report on the need for rural electrification using the solar system!

3.2 Real-Time Reporting And Citizen Journalism

Before delving into the nitty-gritty of citizen journalism, it is of the essence that I present to you a case study of what citizen journalism entails using what happened in London in July 2005:

Precisely on the 7th July, 2005, there were six hours of bombing continuously in some parts of London but of course, before the British Broadcasting Corporation could sum up their report for the audience, there were over 20 videos, 4,000 texts and over 20,000 emails from untrained journalists. According to Richard Sombak a former news head in BBC; the participation was massive from the audience in terms of reportage. So in essence most of those contents from the public published online were retrieved, edited and verified for broadcast by trained journalists. Again in 2016; here in Nigeria there was unverified news which quickly got everyone devoid of their location, jittery. Some citizen Journalist published the need for people to quickly bathe and consume salt water to escape some form of danger from the climate. Even the literate citizens

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did not wait for a radio or television broadcast before following the bandwagon. This was all due to citizen journalism.

It is therefore evident that citizen journalism comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. So we begin by saying that citizen journalism also means I-report; a situation where an individual decides to play the role of a journalist by instantaneously reporting events and activities in real-time without subjecting it to editing and source verification of such stories. **What then is citizen journalism?** In the words of Dr. Alex Burns, a senior lecturer in the Creative Industries faculty of Queensland University of Technology in Australia; citizen journalists act primarily as watchdogs for the traditional media. Citizen journalism describes the activities of individuals towards reporting events and happenings with just a tap on their digital devices. The interesting aspect of this latest approach to journalism is that most often these citizen journalists are able to report in real-time what may not even be reported now or later by the mainstream media. In essence anybody can report local happenings or special interests stories based on their view point, cultural biases and personal values as a citizen journalist. According to Sunday Dare a Nigerian investigative journalist with two decades of media experience both nationally and abroad; citizen journalism has spurred a new era of citizenship awareness, greater political participation and a greater demand for accountability and transparency from those at the helm of leadership. He argued that in Nigeria the growth of citizen Journalism was promoted by the interactive and investigative lacuna from the traditional media in Nigeria. A good example of this known pattern is the activities of the Sahara reporters.

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Figure 3.2: Real-Time Reporting and Citizen Journalism

3.3 Verification Of Social Media Sources

Verification in its purest form here will mean harnessing the originality and truth in the crowd-sourced information and also the reports of citizen journalists across social media platforms who are like the primary source for the news event. The core reasons for verifying social media sources will include to:

- Promote the accuracy of your stories
- Eliminate fabricated news & propaganda
- Provide context, details, background & honesty to your stories
- Provide the reporter with facts & matching evidence for images, videos and even infographics.

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3.3.1 The Basis for Verifying Social Media Sources

There are a few key elements that the journalist needs to consider to be sure that a story is worthy to be published and broadcast in light of journalistic principles. They include:

- **Interest of the Source:** The journalist needs to find out why such a social media account bearing such a story was ideally created and also the motivation for making the information that is being verified. For example, if an ex-minister of a country is criticising a current minister in his erstwhile position. You need to check the motive for such a post.
- **Date of Publication:** The journalist needs to find out the exact date of the first publication of the information under verification. Sometimes you may find a time stamp by keying in the viewer's time zone rather than that of the source.
- **Copy State:** The journalist if verifying an image, text or even a video should check if what he/she has is the main copy, cloned or even the abridged version.
- **Source:** The reporter should check for the profile of the originating personae of the information being verified. Check the followership on the page and the activities of the most engaging followers.

Conclusion

The power of citizen journalism with crowdsourcing has largely transformed the traditional process of news and the way we consume and contribute to news. This changing and collaborative approach has the ability to prioritise news

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selection providing a voice to those who might otherwise go unheard. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, citizen journalism, pumped by crowdsourcing, is sure to provide a vital force towards keeping us informed about the society around us.

Summary

In this study session; we have been able to look at:

1. The meaning of crowdsourcing and how to effectively crowd source an information.
2. Real –time as reporting events on-site.
3. Citizen Journalists as the ability of anybody to publish -in-real-time any event with the aid of a digital device.
4. Verification as an important element, if the journalist must utilise stories from social media platforms.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Why is it important to verify social media sources?

Answer: The need to report instantly, gain followers and even earn online poses a huge risk towards news credibility and so, the online journalist must constantly pay the due diligence of verifying the news stories.

SAQ 2: What is sourcing?

Answer: The entire activities of journalism involving the news idea, locating sources and news gathering.

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SAQ 3: What is citizen journalism?

Answer: Citizen journalism is all the activities of individuals towards reporting events and happenings with just a tap on their digital devices.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. An online desk editor notices a continuous stream of unverified posts, tweets, and photos emerging from a protest location. What concept describes this background flow of public information on social networks?

   A) Gatekeeping

   B) Ambient Journalism

   C) Agenda Setting

   D) Editorial Filtering

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 3.1.1 describes ambient journalism as the continuous, fragmented flow of information and updates present across social media networks that provides immediate environmental awareness of events.

2. During a localised flood, a news agency asks eyewitnesses to upload photos and real-time reports directly to their platform to piece together the event. What news-gathering practice is being utilised?

   A) Content curation

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B) Crowdsourcing information

C) Synchronous editing

D) Gatekeeping manipulation

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 3.1 outlines crowdsourcing as the process of soliciting information, footage, or eyewitness reports from a large group of online users or citizen observers to cover news stories.

3. A journalist receives a viral video claiming to show a political protest happening live in a major city. To verify the source before publishing, what should the journalist's primary step be according to verification principles?

A) Re-post the video immediately to see if followers confirm it.

B) Authenticate the origin, location, and timestamp of the media clip.

C) Write an opinion piece based on the assumptions in the video.

D) Wait for print newspapers to report on it the following day.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Sections 3.3 and 3.3.1 state that social media source verification requires rigorous cross-checking of the source's credibility, original location data, context, and timestamps to prevent spreading false reports.

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4. While crowdsourcing information from citizen reports during a crisis offers immediate coverage, what is a primary vulnerability or criticism associated with this method?

   A) Inability to reach broad online audiences.

   B) Risk of inaccurate, biased, or manipulated user-generated information.

   C) High costs of automated data extraction tools.

   D) Excessive editorial gatekeeping.

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 3.1.3 identifies major criticisms of crowdsourcing, noting that user-generated content often lacks professional verification, making it susceptible to inaccuracy, bias, and manipulation.

5. A bystander streams live video of an ongoing accident scene to social media long before traditional news crews arrive. What role is the bystander fulfilling?

   A) Gatekeeper

   B) Citizen journalists engaged in real-time reporting

   C) Content aggregator

   D) Media mogul

   Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Section 3.2 defines citizen journalism and real-time reporting as everyday citizens capturing and broadcasting news events as they occur using mobile devices and social networks.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss the crowd as a crucial source in online news production?
2. Establish the need for crowd sourcing in online journalism?
3. Citizen journalism has come to stay. Discuss?
4. Align real-time reporting as a major factor for fake news?

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Study Session Four:

Social Media and News Reportage

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Introduction

Here are the expanded Introduction and the updated list of Learning Outcomes for **Study Session Four: Social Media and News Reportage**:

Study Session Four: Social Media and News Reportage

Introduction

Study Session Four transitions from the mechanics of gathering information to the art and science of packaging news for social media platforms. The digital transformation of mass media has redefined the relationship between journalists and their audiences, replacing traditional one-way broadcasting with dynamic, conversational communication. In this modern landscape, news distribution is no longer constrained by rigid print schedules or fixed broadcast slots; instead, it operates continuously across diverse social networks. Writing for social media requires a distinct shift in style—moving away from formal, static reporting toward concise, engaging, and scannable narratives tailored to fast-scrolling readers.

Furthermore, digital journalism relies heavily on multimedia storytelling, where text, high-impact imagery, audio, and short-form video work together to convey complex events. Beyond content creation, contemporary journalists must understand engagement metrics and analytics to measure how news circulates, resonates, and triggers audience feedback. This session examines the strategies required to craft compelling social media narratives, leverage

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multimedia elements effectively, and utilise data metrics to optimise audience reach and journalistic impact.

Learning Outcomes for Study Session Four

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

4.1. Develop stories following the stylistics for the different social media platforms

4.2. Elaborate on the techniques for telling the developed stories for the multimedia

4.3. Clearly measure the engagement metrics and analytics of using the social media.

4.4. Evaluate digital analytics tools and approaches to measure audience behaviour and optimise post scheduling.

4.5. Critique contemporary social media reportage techniques to ensure journalistic accuracy and ethical integrity within fast-paced news cycles.

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4.1 Writing For Social Media Audiences

Before delving into the nitty-gritty of the media consumers online, it is necessary to paint a clear picture of the social media audience. Like we mentioned in the early chapters of this material, the World Wide Web brought a major positive revolution to communication, leading to the digital platforms which many now refer to as the fifth estate of the realm, with its own peculiarities in terms of not just the technology but also the audience and how to reach these audiences. So in writing for social media, there are few points to keep in mind as an online journalist.



Figure 4.1: Writing and publishing for a social media audience

- **Identify Your Target Audience:** An online journalist is obviously writing for the public but in the midst of the public, the journalist has a target audience. Understanding those ones you have in mind will help you to write

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alongside the audience interest. An online journalist has a global reach; you are not some local station or print organisation popular in just one region. Your audience is beyond your geographic location. This at the back of your mind will help you to always keep up with trends.

- **Think Differently:** Before writing your first word for a report, think it through like what will be the best of styles to get this message in mind across to the audience. Do not upload clumsily by adding points in between. Let your thought flow along trends, and then carefully report, having in mind your target audience.
- **Streamline Your Actualities:** The online journalists should use good pictures and videos that corroborate their stories, just like broadcast stations will seek for matching audios and videos. In your videos, keep it short and post pictures without a distracting background.
- **Keep Your Writing Livid:** Writing for the internet should be punchier than the traditional platforms. Employ humour and be very flexible with your writings. This does not mean ignoring the traditional principles of writing but avoiding rigidity. Remember that online readers have a lot of platforms to read through. Give them what to read!
- **Keep the Lead Glaring**: Most online news consumers are very impatient due to the number of stories available to them? Hence, do not play around with your first paragraph. Just like when writing for the mainstream media, employ the inverted pyramid approach. This simply means that your lead is not the end but has the power to keep your audience desiring to read till the end.

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- **Use Smaller Blocks:** Employ breaks and very short letter blocks while writing to help you sustain your news audience. Most times, imagine being the audience and then ask yourself, 'Is this paragraph too long or also too short?' Keep it in the middle as an online journalist. Use bullets if possible to put some details as highlights.
- **Write Voraciously:** An online reader most often than not will pause on an online post because they have seen what they have no or deep knowledge about. As an online journalist, do your homework properly. Just like traditional media organisations are struggling to be on the front burner, the online journalist is also jostling for online popularity as a social brand; you can't afford loosing readers due to lack of depth and research. Be intentional about informing people; it will drive you to dish out just the best.

In-Text Question and Answer

ITQ 1: What does thinking differently mean for the online journalist?

ITA 1: Before writing your first word for a report, think it through like what will be the best of styles to get this message in mind across to the audience. Do not upload clumsily by adding points in between. Let your thought flow along trends, and then carefully report, having in mind your target audience.

ITQ 2: What are smaller blocks in creating online stories?

ITA 2: This simply means keeping paragraphs short and sentences simple and direct.

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4.2 Multimedia Storytelling Techniques

In telling the story for the multimedia, the journalist must first appreciate and acknowledge the differences between the multimedia and other media of communication. A journalist who follows the procedures highlighted in the previous sub-session to write for the social media audience is still at the mercy of the web users due to the hypertext link enabling online readers to easily swim through a million pages simply by clicking through links. With this peculiarity happening just in a flick of time, there is the challenge of poor readership and the difficulty of securing readers' attention, unlike the other forms of mass media. At some point the online journalist is not very sure which writing approach will score the point with his web audience.

More often than not some techniques seem to do the magic with these users who have the power to access information in any other way due to the hypertext nature of the multimedia, while the hypermedia combines audio, visual and audio. Little wonder why Seven Birkerts the author of 'the *fate of reading in an electronic age'* adduced that hypertext liberates the reader from being guided by the author, and this means that stories can be comprehended even when the reader is jumping from one chunk of the story to another by navigating through links. Therefore, the online journalist understanding the power of hypertext and hypermedia as all elements of the multimedia will better approach stories using the nonlinear form. How then can we write for the multimedia using the non-linear approach?

- **Planning the Story:** An online journalist while planning for the World Wide

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Web will have to consider if the background for the story will give itself away to other pages? Should related elements to your story be presented as text/visuals/audio? Who needs to be part of your story like the web editors, multimedia specialists or designers? In the words of Robin Palley, a former Web editor for the online Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, he says to start writing for the Web, the journalist has to report for the online site. She says being an online journalist is available in the computer form to post on the Web.

- **Writing the Story:** The online journalists in writing their stories do this more as fictions except for the news. Avoid connecting your stories with conjunctions by splitting them into logical, non-linear parts. When your readers pass through chunks, make sure they are cliffhangers at the end of the story before they hit the next screen.
- **Rewriting the Story:** At the end of your writing your post, remove all the words and paragraphs. Remember that each screen can take up to 29 lines; this should guide you in rewriting for the upload.

In a study conducted around 1994-1997 on how to develop web content, Jakob Nielsen, a consultant and former Sun Microsystems distinguished engineer, alongside some of his consultant colleagues, listed some techniques for writing for multimedia:

- **Promotional Writing:** This involves adjectives found on many commercial sites and concise text with half the word count of the promotional model.
- **Scanable Layout:** This involves highlighted keywords, meaningful

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subheads.

- **Bulleted Lists:** They help scanners move through information by bearing one idea per line by using objective language.



Figure 4.2: A multimedia journalist

4.3 Engagement Metrics and Analytics

A social media metric simply means how the audience reacts to or follows content posted on the social media platforms. Constantly keeping up with this record helps you know which type of content can keep your audience glued to your account:

4.3.1 Measuring Tools for Social Media Metrics

To measure the metrics of your social media post as an online journalist has no fast rules, but we will be considering a few processes of checking for audience

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use of these social media platforms.

- **Engagement Rate:** The commonest of all the ways to measure this engagement is to add your total likes, comments, shares and saves, then divide the total figure by the number of followers before multiplying by 100 to get a percentage.
- **Likes and Reaction:** This may not look like the real deal while calculating the metrics of a social media post. However, for platforms like Facebook and even LinkedIn, people's reactions help you check the acceptability or people's sentiment towards a social media post. Checking these likes and other reactions may also not be done per post but calculatively for each week/month.

ACTIVITY 4.1: Make a simple social media post on any of the platforms and measure your engagement rate in terms of likes and reactions!

- **Comments:** This is the written expression of people's feelings on each of your posts. This is an extra effort showing an interest from your audience. According to Trish Riswick a renowned Social Media Manager at Hootsuite, "the comment section is saturated with inspiration and feedback, a great metric to track the effectiveness of your posts and the increase in love from your followers."
- **Shares:** This remains an index for how much your audience likes your content shown in their desire to share it on their own pages for friends, family and followers to see.
- **Reach:** This is the number of people who see your content. Keeping tabs

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on this helps you measure the overall reach of your social media account. **Another aspect of this metric is to check what percentage of your reach is made up of followers and non-followers.** If most non-followers are seeing your content, it means that you are doing well in the algorithms or both.

- **Impressions:** This is the number of times people see your content. You can check the impressions on a post, including the overall number of impressions on your social media profile. This can be higher than the reach because the same person might look at your content more than once.
- **Social Share of Voice:** This measures how many people are talking about your brand on social media compared to your competitors.
- **Conversion Rate:** This is used to check how your social content can lead to a subscription, download, or sale. This is a viable social media marketing metric, since it can show the value of your social media campaigns (organic and paid) in feeding your funnel.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** This shows how often people click a link in any of your posts to get through more content. **To calculate CTR**: divide the total number of clicks for a post by the total number of impressions. Multiply by 100.
- **Followership:** The number of followers you have across each of your social media accounts is another great metric to ensure your presence is growing healthily.
- **View count:** Each social media platform counts a few seconds of watch time as a "view." a video is counted when someone views it.

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- **Video completion rate:** It shows how many people completely watched your Video to the end, and this helps you to get better at what you are doing.

Being wary of your social media metrics, helps you know exactly what content types and topics your audience is most interested in. Your social media metrics enable you to understand your audience and what they really like.

ACTIVITY 4.2: Make an online video and calculate the click-through rate!

4.3.2 Approaches to Social Media Metrics

In the previous sub-session, we said that measuring the social media metric will mean checking how the audience utilises the content you put out for public consumption, and so in this sub-session, we look at the considerations for using the measuring tools.

- **Understand Your Engagement Objectives:** what do you want to achieve with your social media account? The ability to effectively understand the intentions and objectives behind building an online community means you can effectively measure the engagements on your account. As a journalist, the core objective should first be to sell yourself. Put yourself out there, constantly keep people abreast of happenings within their society and also promote your own organisation.
- **Choose the Right Social Media Metric Measuring Tool:** In the previous session, we presented lots of measuring tools, but the journalist must aptly choose which of them properly measures his objectives for the

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account. For example, to check for how much awareness people know about your page, you will need to check your reach. For traffic on your website, the measuring tool will be the click-through rate (CTR).

- **Develop a Social Engagement Report:** Every social media account has an inbuilt analysis, but the journalist needs to constantly go through how audiences are strolling through the platforms to make strong online policies for his/her organisation.

Conclusion

Just like in the mainstream media, the audiences, be it the radio, television or print, have their peculiarities, so also with the social media and so the online media, who are already abreast of the characteristics of the worldwide web, must merge this with their audience's peculiarities in order to fulfil the needs of the multimedia audience.

Summary

In this study session we have been able to;

1. Understand the social media audience and their consumption pattern
2. Propelling elements of the multimedia and their audience
3. The techniques of writing for the multimedia audience
4. Look at the reasons for measuring the social media metrics and the required analytics.

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Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Who is the social media audience?

Answer: The social media audience are users of all the social media platforms for interaction, sharing and distribution of messages.

SAQ 2: What is an engagement objective?

Answer: It is what the journalist wants to achieve with the social media account. It is the intention for building an online community.

SAQ 3: What is a scanable layout in writing multimedia stories?

Answer: This involves using highlighted keywords and meaningful subheads to present your stories as an online journalist.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. When adapting a long-form investigative print article for a social media audience, which strategy aligns best with effective digital writing techniques?

   A) Posting the entire 3,000-word text in a single block without paragraph breaks.

   B) Using concise language, punchy headlines, clear visual hooks, and scannable formatting.

   C) Removing all media elements and relying strictly on formal academic jargon.

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D) Delaying publication until the article can be published in a book format.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 4.1 emphasises that writing for social media audiences requires concise, clear, and engaging text paired with strong visual elements to capture shorter attention spans.

2. A digital reporter combines short audio quotes, interactive data graphics, brief video clips, and concise text blocks to present a story online. Which technique is being applied?

   A) Monomedia packaging

   B) Multimedia storytelling

   C) Traditional broadcasting

   D) Print syndicate reporting

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 4.2 defines multimedia storytelling as the integration of multiple media formats—such as text, audio, video, graphics, and interactive elements—to present a single comprehensive story.

3. A social media manager analyses click-through rates, shares, comments, and post reach to evaluate how well a news report resonated with the public. What is the editor measuring?

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A) Engagement metrics and analytics

B) Spectral bandwidth

C) Editorial integrity coefficients

D) Print circulation volume

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Section 4.3 outlines engagement metrics and analytics as the quantitative tools and measurements used to assess how online audiences interact with published content.

4. An online editorial team reviews performance charts and notices that video clips under 60 seconds perform significantly better than text-only posts on mobile feeds. How should they adjust their publishing approach based on these analytics?

A) Eliminate all online video production.

B) Prioritise short-form multimedia content adapted for quick mobile consumption.

C) Stop publishing news on digital platforms.

D) Increase text length per post while removing graphics.

Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 highlight that social media metrics inform journalists about audience preferences, guiding them to optimise content—such as using short-form video and visual elements—for higher engagement.

5. Why is relying solely on text-based stories considered a disadvantage in modern social media news reportage?

   A) Text cannot be published on the internet.

   B) Digital audiences expect visual, multimedia, and interactive content to maintain interest.

   C) Web browsers cannot render plain text formats.

   D) Text-based news requires more bandwidth than video streaming.

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Sections 4.1 and 4.2 explain that social media reportage thrives on dynamic, multi-sensory formats; relying strictly on plain text fails to engage audiences accustomed to multimedia presentation.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Describe the multimedia and its propelling elements?
2. List and discuss five techniques for telling a story using multimedia.
3. What is an engagement metric?
4. List and discuss some tools for measuring engagement on social media?

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Study Session Five:

Fake News And Social Media

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Introduction

The proliferation of social media platforms has drastically accelerated the speed at which news is created and shared, but it has also created a fertile environment for the spread of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. Unlike traditional media architectures that rely on rigorous editorial gatekeeping, digital channels often prioritise engagement metrics and viral dynamics, allowing unverified, sensational, or deliberate fabrications to reach global audiences within minutes. For contemporary journalists and media consumers, navigating this information ecosystem requires both a conceptual understanding of how deceptive content spreads and technical competence in evaluating source authenticity.

Addressing the challenge of fake news involves more than identifying inaccurate statements; it demands a systematic approach to fact-checking, verification, and ethical reporting. Modern online journalists must utilise advanced verification tools, cross-reference digital evidence, and detect manipulated media, such as altered images or deepfakes. Furthermore, publishing content in fast-paced online environments introduces complex ethical responsibilities, including balancing privacy rights against public interest, avoiding clickbait, preventing defamation, and maintaining accuracy under time pressure. This session explores the roots and mechanisms of misinformation, equips learners with practical fact-checking frameworks, and establishes the ethical principles necessary to protect journalistic integrity in the digital age.

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Learning Outcomes For Study Session Five

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

5.1. Ascertain what makes a news story fake

5.2. Elaborate on the misinformation and ways the audience can be misinformed

5.3. Fact-check stories and acknowledge the easy tools for fact-checking

5.4. Discuss the ethical practices in information sharing

5.5. Critique common digital reporting pitfalls—such as cyberbullying, sensationalism, and copyright infringement—to uphold ethical standards in news distribution.

5.6. Formulate strategies for journalists and newsrooms to counteract misinformation while maintaining public trust and balance.

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5.1 Understanding Fake News and Misinformation

Fake news is as old as journalism itself but may not refer to the same thing all the time. This became a global issue after the United States presidential elections around 2016 were won by Donald Trump, and most allegations from his strongest rival, Hillary Clinton, were unfounded and nothing short of fake news. Not as though no one was aware that prior to that, it had been a propaganda tool which became enhanced with the presence of digital platforms and improved gadgets powered by the internet. With a simple click, instantaneously, people are capable of spreading lies and rumours. Generally those who spread fake news intentionally have just two interests, which are

- To mislead
- Hurt the other person at the other divide

Since false information can come in many shapes and forms, we refer to fake news as "an ideally crafted, sensational, emotionally charged, misleading or totally fabricated information that imitates the pattern for traditional news" (Zimdars & McLeod, 2020). The ingenuity of so much information on the internet is a huge challenge for the online journalist, as he/she is almost not even considered credible by the online news audience. This aligns with the Reuters Institute for the study of journalism, as they posited that trust levels in the news vary by country when it comes to this issue of fake news. From the study the developed countries are more inclined to trust their media sources due to having well-funded broadcasters, with Finland having the highest level of trust at 62%, while American news organisations were at 38%. Going further on this discourse

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about fake news in journalism, we take a quick glance at some of the variances of fake news.

- **Disinformation** – This type of message is intentionally untrue, and it is geared towards causing harm. The driving elements here are money, influence and disarray
- **Misinformation** – The intent of disinformation is never to cause harm, and this is because the originator of the message is innocently distributing what they have no idea of its falsehood.
- **Malinformation** – The intent here is the same as in misinformation, but the difference between the latter and the former is that the message source shares true information out of the ideal context of such an information.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: What do you think is the underlying intention of every piece of fake news?

ITA 1: The intentions are usually first to mislead the media audience and also distort the easy flow of things in the society.

5.1.1 The Growth of Fake News

Fake news seems to be advancing with the growth of technology and advancement in the approach to journalism. It began with poorly verified newspaper stories, then gradually into magazine publications, and then with the popularity of e-mails by the early 2000s, fake news witnessed a wider spread, and the threat of social media has become the headquarters for fake news today. Since the last 20 years, it has become increasingly easier to share information,

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both true and false, with social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others acting as propellers. Like we earlier mentioned, fake news can be spread as misinformation, disinformation or malinformation. A very recent one was the Salt Saga of 2014 as a protection from an Ebola disease in the air. As fake news continues to grow, its rippling effect on journalism is that people hardly trust the mass media holistically.



Figure 5.1: Fake news update

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: What popularised fake news in the scheme of journalism**?**

ITA 2: One can easily adduce the popularity and growth of fake news to the influx of digitalisation and technological advancement making everyone a journalist.

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5.1.2 Detecting Fake News

So, we already established the fact that fake news abounds; however many continue to fall prey to this fake news everywhere. So how can one detect a fake news story?

- **Judge Every News:** You need to accept every news out there with some level of criticism. If a news story targets to incite, depress or keep you antagonistic against a system, then you need to revalidate the story. This will help you to actually understand the motive behind such news.
- **Check Source Reputation:** This is very essential for most stories and new sites belonging to personal blogs. Sometimes you can Google these stories, especially when the site extensions do not look so clear at a first glance.
- **Adjunct Sources:** When stories are copied and also peddled by well-known and reliable publishers, they may not be fake news at the end. But you also need to check the credibility of the organisations borrowing the story. How popular and trusted are they? This is because often times fake news is more likely to be sourced from unpopular sites that may downplay the truth for wrong justifications.

5.2 Fact-Checking Tools and Techniques

The techniques of fact-checking will include all that will be considered here below but are not limited to them:

1. **Cross-Examination Technique:** The reporter using the cross reading

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technique brings all the information tacked according to filters and begins to compare them with other ideologies and sources.

2. **CRAAP Technique:** This represents currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose; this technique considers the authenticity of the source by asking questions hinged on CRAAP. ***For example,*** *information from a document will require the reporter to check relevance, i.e., the newness of the material and how it applies to your report, and even the certifications, which is the authority of the source. This technique works well for materials sourced from the library.*
3. **SIFT Technique:** This is stop, investigate, find and trace; the aim of this technique is to encourage the reporter to pause, especially when stories, pictures and actualities look very fictitious and unclear. At this stage the reporter can trash this information if he/she is unable to trace the originator of such information.
4. **RAVEN Technique:** Here, reputation, ability to check through, vested desire, expertise and neutrality are the rating scale for the fact-checker who checks the credibility of the source by checking for reviews, the desire of the source and the independence of the information away from bias, personal idiosyncrasies and others.
5. **COR Technique:** Claims, outcomes and reasons will be the meaning of this acronym used to ascertain a predictive statement. The reporter here verifies the motive of such predictions using this approach.

Having looked at some of these fact-checking techniques, the reporter has a lot of tools at their disposal:

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- **Find Exif.com:** This application allows the reporter to cross-check images that might have been edited, like photo shopping. This application helps you to see the details of the equipment or gadget used and even other information concerning the image, such as dimensions and exposure, if they are real images.
- **Hoaxy:** This fact-checking tool works by putting bare the authenticity of a claim, especially contents from social media. To use Hoaxy, just input the claim and choose either 'trending' or 'recent' and the likes. Click search, and you will then see how the stories are spreading on the social media platforms. This helps the reporter to know the extent of their embellishment.
- **Factcheck.org:** This works to fact-check stories across news platforms to reduce misinformation and confusion.
- **Wolfram Alpha:** This will be very useful for scientific reports since it fact-checks figures, statistics, metric units and others.

ACTIVITY 5.1: Extract a picture from an online blog and attempt fact-checking. Put down your finding!!

5.3 Ethical Considerations In Sharing Information

Writing and uploading online has made almost everyone who owns a social media account a citizen journalist. You already know that there is no gatekeeping, regulation or editing for most of this social media content. However, there is still an underlying question to be answered when it comes to what should really be shared and here lies the core basics of online journalism.

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In essence there abound many disadvantages of uncensored uploads on social platforms, and these have been ethically questioned and investigated, such as dishonesty and distortion, cyberbullying, online hate speech and even invasion of privacy. In the observations of Khan (2015), these ethical questions on social media are escalating and growing daily in number. But we will be considering just a few:

5.3.1 Invasion of Privacy

The fast growth of technology, especially in the digital media, gave rise to the terms 'Information and Privacy', which is the power one has over his/her private data, thoughts and actions while using the internet (Moore, 2008). Every activity violating this concept of privacy online is deemed an unethical practice which may even be against the law of the country. Khan (2015) said these actions are a non-permissive approach to get intricate or similar information about an individual likely to affect them harmfully in every way. Surprisingly, social media users are aware of such targeting strategies based on their personal data and activities on social media, and their concerns about their privacy have increased significantly through the recent years. An international case study has it that in 2016 the School of Professional Advancement at Tulane University accused a Russian organisation of mishandling the private information of over 50 million American Facebook users to influence the results of the 2016 American presidential elections by inciting and manipulating the participation of people.

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Figure 5.2: A photojournalist invading a political figure's space

5.3.2 Cyberbullying

According to The Human Rights Council in the United Nations (2016) cyberbullying is 'an intentionally aggressive behaviour carried out by an individual or a group using digital platforms against a person who may not easily be able to defend himself or herself.' Cyberbullying can occur from a single act online to a social media user in the form of participation, yet it can be monitored and escalated through other social media users under the same context too. Another aspect of cyberbullying as an ethical dilemma is the unpreparedness of the victims over what has befallen them, making it uneasy to take action supported legally or ethically.

5.3.3 Sexual Assaults and Harassment

Sexual assaults, harassments and are rape may be relatively viewed from one

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country to another; this aligns with Burt (1980), who asserted that society's attitude and attributions determine eventually how these sexual cases are handled. Some victims of rape, sexual harassment and assaults look to the social media as succour to tell their stories and label their victimisers. Hence, digital and social media are championed as strong public agitation tools against sexual assaults, harassments and rape incidents. However, Awobamise et al. (2019) adduced that in the midst of lending out their voices and getting the desired support from social media, many are still being strongly blamed, a discouragement for other victims who may want to share their stories on social media and gain empowerment to seek justice for their cases.

5.3.4 Dishonesty and Distortion

Human relationships are built basically on trust. For Turculeț (2014), trust is an ethical need in order for a community to exist, even in real-virtual communities like social media platforms. However, some social media users can be exposed to false information born out of deception as a result of dishonesty and distortion.

5.3.5 Recruiter Misdemeanour

most recruitment firms now have specialist organisations offering social media screening services for the employers as part of assessing the viability of employees. This latest trend raises an eyebrow as to whether this practice is considered ethical or not due to the right to privacy for the employees and fairness in selection. On the other hand, social media accounts are considered to be great private spheres for the users, where they share their personal lives, thoughts and activities.

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ACTIVITY 5.2: Check and verify if there are organisations keen on social media handle as an employment requisite!

5.3.6 Organisational Reputation

As social media users share their opinions and experiences on their social media accounts, ranging from different topics, including their work. There is the likelihood for an ignorant expression that could demean the integrity of the user's employer. This becomes an ethical dilemma regarding the unclear borderlines of ethics over freedom of speech. Broughton et al. (2009) posits in this line that more questions of ethics here are begging for answers as it regards what control an organisation has, if any, over the participation of their employees through posts and comments communicated on social media in order to keep their reputation in check.

5.3.6 Accuracy

Accuracy remains an important value in journalism, and so online journalists must ensure that, while their angle is for real-time coverage of issues, a peculiar element of online broadcasting, posts are devoid of error. This is to avoid misleading the online consumers who have all their trust in them.

5.3.7 Copyrighting & Plagiarism

Online journalists should honour people's original thoughts and expressions. This will mean proper attribution while cutting and pasting articles, photos,

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graphics and video on your web page. In a situation that you are uncertain of the visibility of linking pages where an extraction was made from, name the publisher, date of publication and a short summary of its content. Just like news reporters used to reference other content before the Web.

5.3.8 Distorting Photos and Videos

The online journalist falls short of the cyber ethics if he/she distorts the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed or digitally altered. Enhancing actualities should only be for technical clarity, montage and photo illustrations. Avoid slicing and mixing statements together made at different times so as to suggest that they were uttered at the same time. Present interviews as they are in case there is a need to edit.

5.3.9 Identify Advocacy, Commentary and Factual Information

They are not all the same. The online journalist should not present advocacy writing and commentary as facts or news events.

5.3.10 Balance/Fairness

Online journalists should provide news balance by inputting all sides relevant to a news story and not take sides in news coverage. This can be achieved by ensuring that they are independent and not defensive of a sect, religion, political affiliation or even tribe due to some unpopular/personal interests.

Conclusion

As long as the digital platforms continue to evolve and people are able to post

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and share information from their kitchen, fake news and misinformation will remain an issue which the journalist has to sort by verifying this information carefully by using fact-checking tools and other methods available to ensure that the audience are not misled. Moreover, the online/cyber journalist should, as much as possible, keep in mind the core ethics of journalism and online journalism.

Summary

In this session of our lesson, we said:

1. Fake news is any form of untrue coverage of issues.
2. Fake news makes the audience lose trust and credibility in the online journalist.
3. Fact-checking and source verification are the only avenues to run away from fake news and misinformation.
4. Like in the mainstream media, online journalists must consider the ethics of cyberspace while utilising digital platforms of communication.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Who should fact-check fake news in online journalism?

Answer: A journalist who is only interested in sharing accurate and true accounts of events devoid of all other personal interest must constantly fact-check their stories to avoid misinforming or intentionally causing harm in the society.

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SAQ 2: What are ethical considerations in sharing information?

Answer: Ethical considerations are the journalistic basis expected of the journalist who is utilising the digital and multimedia platforms for the purpose of keeping the audience abreast with happenings in the society.

SAQ 3: What are fact-checking tools?

Answer: They are the applications at the reach of the journalist to verify the authenticity and accuracy of news stories.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. An online media outlet alters a photograph taken at a peaceful demonstration to show aggressive physical altercations, presenting it as authentic news. Which ethical violation under digital content sharing does this action demonstrate?

   A) Recruiter misdemeanour

   B) Invasion of privacy

   C) Dishonesty and distortion of visual media

   D) Failure to disclose affiliate sponsorship

   Correct Answer: C

   Explanation: Section 5.3 (and specifically sub-sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.8) covers ethical violations in digital sharing. Manipulating or altering images

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and videos to misrepresent real events constitutes clear dishonesty and visual distortion, violating basic online journalism ethics.

2. A digital desk editor receives a trending video clip depicting a major industrial fire. Before publishing the video as verified breaking news, which technical approach best enables the editorial team to detect whether the video is repurposed legacy content?

   A) Running a reverse image search on key frames and verifying metadata timestamps.

   B) Checking the number of retweets and comments on the source post.

   C) Forwarding the video to public social media groups to gather opinions.

   D) Rewriting the caption to include a legal disclaiming statement.

   Correct Answer: A

   Explanation: Section 5.2 highlights fact-checking techniques and verification tools. Establishing whether media is recycled requires technical checks, such as reverse image searches on extracted frames and examining metadata/timestamps, rather than relying on social engagement popularity.

3. A journalist writes an online article containing factual information about a public policy but embeds personal commentary and political advocacy

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within the text without clear labels. Which specific ethical reporting standard is compromised?

A) Privacy invasion standards

B) Separation and identification of advocacy, commentary, and factual information

C) Copyright and fair use protocols

D) Protection against cyberbullying

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 5.3.9 requires journalists to clearly differentiate and identify opinion/advocacy from objective factual news. Blending personal political commentary directly into factual reporting without clear labelling violates this ethical boundary.

4. A photojournalist uses a high-powered telephoto lens to capture private photos of an official inside their private residence through a closed window without consent, publishing them on a news site. What ethical infraction has occurred?

A) Cyberbullying

B) Copyright infringement

C) Invasion of privacy

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D) Recruiter misdemeanour

Correct Answer: C

Explanation: Section 5.3.1 outlines invasion of privacy. Intruding upon an individual's private physical or personal domain without permission to publish non-consensual imagery breaches privacy ethics.

5. Why does the viral acceleration of unverified news on social platforms present a far greater institutional challenge to online newsrooms than traditional print distribution models?

   A) Online platforms automatically filter out biased user comments.

   B) Immediacy and algorithmic distribution cause unverified reports to spread rapidly before traditional verification can occur.

   C) Print media relies on automated fact-checking algorithms.

   D) Social media algorithms prohibit users from sharing opinionated content.

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Sections 5.1 and 5.1.1 explain that the speed and architecture of social media enable rapid spread of misinformation (fake news) before traditional verification steps can intervene, posing a significant challenge compared to slower, editorially gated print workflows.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

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1. Fact-checking is a proven approach towards delimiting fake news. Discuss?
2. List and discuss two means of discovering fake news?
3. With clear examples, differentiate between misinformation, malinformation and disinformation.
4. Discuss the building blocks of fake news in today's journalism?

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Study Session Six:

Social Media And Citizenship

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Introduction

Here is the expanded Introduction and the updated list of Learning Outcomes for **Study Session Six: Social Media And Citizenship**:

Study Session Six: Social Media And Citizenship

Introduction

The intersection of social media and citizenship has fundamentally altered democratic participation, public activism, and state-citizen interactions. Historically, civic engagement relied on traditional institutions—such as political parties, civic associations, and physical news outlets—to aggregate public opinion and mobilise communities. Today, internet-based networks enable citizens to organise, campaign, and express political viewpoints instantly without central gatekeepers. Social media platforms serve as digital public spheres where individuals discuss policy issues, demand government accountability, and launch grassroots movements that can influence real-world social and political change.

However, the impact of digital media on citizenship is complex and multifaceted. While these platforms democratise voice and lower the barrier to political participation, they also expose democratic processes to challenges such as echo chambers, political polarisation, online harassment, and targeted disinformation campaigns during election cycles. Furthermore, digital activism often navigates the tension between meaningful civic action and superficial "slacktivism" or clicktivism. This study session examines how social media serves

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as a platform for civic engagement, analyses its influence on political discourse and electoral integrity, and explores the responsibilities of digital citizens and journalists in fostering a healthy democratic ecosystem.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Six

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

6.1. Explain the role of social media as a platform for civic engagement and public participation.

6.2. Analyse how social media platforms influence political discourse, public opinion, and voter behaviour during election cycles.

6.3. Assess the impact of digital grassroots movements and citizen-led online campaigns on policy decision-making.

6.4. Critique the challenges of digital citizenship, including online polarisation, political echo chambers, and algorithmic bias.

6.5. Evaluate the risks of digital voter suppression, political propaganda, and online misinformation to electoral integrity.

6.6. Propose strategies for online journalists and civic leaders to promote constructive digital discourse and informed democratic participation.

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6.1 Social Media as a Platform for Civic Engagement

Social media began with platforms like Six Degrees and Friendster, laying the groundwork to connect people virtually. Although the launch of Facebook in 2004 changed the way people discussed and distributed information using the internet. Its user-friendly interface and wide-ranging features quickly propelled it to global dominance, setting the stage for the social media revolution. The growth of social media brought about newer platforms, each attending to different demographics and interests. Just like Twitter came with the concept of microblogging, giving users' opportunity to share thoughts and updates in real-time, while Instagram revolutionised visual communication, making photos and videos the primary content outlook, and social platforms like LinkedIn focused on professional networking.



Figure 6.1: Instagram

As social media continues to spread its wings, it has been nothing short of a revolution, changing the way people relate and interact and making it seem somewhat of a global community. Social media has continually facilitated the solutions bedevilling democracy and the participation of citizens in politics. The

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social media has a way to propel the rights and obligations of liberal citizenship and participation of the audience. These civic engagements can be positive as in voting, volunteering and activism in community activities. What then is civic engagement? Civic engagement will mean being involved in political and social issues in ways that do not adhere strictly to the original perceptions of lawmakers. Social media has been observed to drive public spheres, and currently, with the growth of social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and even others, people now have the opportunity to connect with like-minded users who have an interest in one aspect or the other concerning the civic issue.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: What likely platforms did the social media begin with?

ITA: The social media began with platforms like Six Degrees and Friendster

6.2 Digital Activism and Social Movements

Digital activism will simply mean to foster and push a new cause of action using the social media platform, and so we talk about the hashtag as the transformative avalanche to inject a new narrative or even foster old ones based on how these popular hash tags help to prioritise social issues. To foster digital activism, most activists rely on the digital platforms already having a strong social bearing on issues of activism. ***A very glaring example of this digital activism was the hashtag-#bring back our girls# championed by a Nigerian lawyer Ibrahim Abdullahi to seek for the release of the adopted Chibok secondary school students around 2014, this hash tag drew the interest of so many international bodies all calling for justice over 100 school girls***

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kidnapped from their school in Chibok located in Borno State. The hash tag was reported to have generated over 4.5 million tweets. In Nigeria, undoubtedly, the hashtag has the power to make social movements very successful, but it has also received a significant backlash, which most often than not comes as threats to the social activists and imprisonments, like the most recent one due to the August 1, **#endbadgovernance#** in Nigeria – many of those who rolled this both online and offline were not waved off by hand. The federal government clamped down on them alongside their organisers. Currently one of the most recent surges in both online and offline activism is in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russian activists have planned out procedures to arrange protests against Russian President Vladimir Putin while Ukrainian resorted to the internet to find evidence of Russian war crimes. As proof of the important role social media can play, they were able to get international attention through lots of disinformation campaigns, on display during Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Twitter's ban on ads in Russia and Ukraine and Facebook parent company Meta's creation of an operations centre staffed by Russian and Ukrainian speakers are some examples of how tech companies have tried to combat Russia's disinformation war. Although many have said using tech companies is not enough remedy for this inconsistent and inadequate information from Russia. Moreover, experts have increasingly called attention to coordinated disinformation campaigns on TikTok and TikTok's failure to adequately contain the problem. Digital activism is not as simple as someone clicking "retweet" on Twitter—which all too often involves enormous risk to the activists themselves or can result in spreading disinformation. Foucault Welles

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says that digital activism will spread most often based on the extent to which a few powerful companies are willing to defend free speech, even in the face of immense pressure from national governments. What current tech companies are doing to limit Russian disinformation could prove instructive in other areas. ***The use of social media for social movement finds another practical interpretation in the January 2012 protests against the President Goodluck Jonathan's administration on the issue of fuel subsidy removal, which resulted in over a 100% increase in the pump price of petrol per litre. This led to the hash tag "#OccupyNigeria#".*** With alternative media platforms springing up every day, social networking sites and smartphones have opened up the media to newer groups across the world. Today imaginative campaigns are trending in that the use of social networking like Twitter, Facebook and Blogging are almost free. In recent years across the globe, citizens in many countries of the world, like in Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, France, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and many other countries, have gradually moved towards online petition as a way to create awareness, express their views and pressurise the governments to act towards a certain prevailing direction. It is pertinent to say that none of this would have been made possible without the emergence of the social media that allowed for quick socio-political mobilisation of people to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction on a particular issue that affects them.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: What are hashtags?

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ITA 2: These are short coinages used to popularise and also develop a community around a social issue

ACTIVITY 6.1: Check for popular hashtags on Twitter and write out the social issues around the hashtags!

6.3. Impact on Political Discourse and Elections

The use of social media during electioneering campaigns was first popularised by Obama in 2008 during his political campaign in the United States. Although, the 2011 general elections became a remarkable point in the history of Nigerian democracy, being the first time digital media was utilised as a political platform in the electioneering process and campaign in the country as democracy-inclined groups and activists moved their campaign platforms to the online space. Also, during the 2015 general elections, social media was employed by political aspirants to interact with the electorates. Also prior to the 2019 general elections, the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar found political utility in their Twitter handle to interact with millions of Nigerians on the need to vote for them during the Presidential election. Similarly, in the United States of America, social media was used by President Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential election to interact with millions of Americans. Hence:

- In terms of campaign logistics and mobilisation social media through mobile devices drastically reduces the costs of actual campaigning.
- Social media has been found useful for virtual town hall campaign activities

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where aspirants deliver their campaign messages directly to the electorates through their smartphones and other social media-enabled electronic devices.

Although not without its challenges, like demeaning politicians, let's consider one of the character assassinations on the Nigerian political terrain due to social media. Social media like Twitter and Facebook has also battered some politicians based on fake news in tweets. Like in 2019, Twitter and Facebook were used to humiliate the then presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) Muhammadu Buhari as they alleged that he died in 2016 and the seating President of Nigeria before the election was an impostor in the person of Jubril El-Sudani from Sudan. This even forced the Sudan Government to carry out an investigation into the allegation. Unfortunately, after the 2019 general elections, the tweets got buried.

ACTIVITY 6.2: Develop a tweet post for a mock political campaign!

Conclusion

With the fast pace of the mainstream media trying to infuse the social media into their activities, it shows that politicians, political activists and interest groups are not wasting their time and efforts chasing the faceless crowd online using various hash tags, while this same audience at the other end have the social media as veritable tools to push their demands and seek redress from the government.

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Summary

In this study session we said:

1. The elements of social media, especially interactivity, make it a viable canvas to bring people into one virtual community.
2. Politicians recognising the power of online users continually now push their campaigns through these online spaces.
3. The citizens can actually call for redress by simple hashtags.
4. Social media also has the power to make or mar the reputation of electoral aspirants.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Cite one gain for using social media for politics.

Answer: Social media has been found useful for virtual town hall campaign activities where aspirants deliver their campaign messages directly to the electorates through their smartphones and other social media-enabled electronic devices.

SAQ 2: How can social media demean politicians and political groups?

Answer: The absence of gatekeeping and checks for the ethical considerations in information sharing can lead to the spread of falsehoods, lies and malicious content capable of damaging the reputation of those involved.

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SAQ 3: Activists on social media will mostly have just one interest?

Answer: The common interest is always to seek redress for a social issue and not necessarily a personal interest.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. During a national election cycle, thousands of citizens organise voting awareness rallies, track real-time polling updates, and demand accountability from public officials using targeted hashtags on social platforms. Which function of social media does this describe?

   A) Corporate public relations enhancement

   B) Platform for civic engagement and political discourse

   C) Commercial network advertisement

   D) Passive entertainment consumption

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Sections 6.1 and 6.3 highlight social media as a dynamic platform for civic engagement. It empowers citizens to organise democratic movements, shape political discourse, and demand institutional accountability.

2. How has the widespread adoption of social media altered public political discourse during electoral processes compared to traditional broadcast campaigns?

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A) It restricts political commentary exclusively to verified party leaders.

B) It enables direct, two-way interaction between political candidates and voters while decentralising campaign messaging.

C) It prevents public voters from expressing opinions on political candidates.

D) It enforces unified bipartisan consensus among voters.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 6.3 discusses the impact of social media on elections. By replacing top-down, one-way mass broadcasts with interactive communication channels, social platforms allow voters to directly engage with candidates and shape political discussions.

3. A grass-roots human rights campaign uses social media videos to pressure policymakers into passing environmental protection laws. What civic role are the activists executing through digital media?

A) Corporate gatekeeping

B) Algorithmic indexing

C) Civic advocacy and digital activism

D) Commercial audience monetisation

Correct Answer: C

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Explanation: Section 6.1 emphasises civic engagement, showing how digital activism and public advocacy use social media platforms to mobilise citizens and influence governmental policies.

4. Which factor makes social networks double-edged tools during political elections?

   A) They eliminate public political debates entirely.

   B) While expanding voter engagement, they can also amplify political polarisation and targeted disinformation.

   C) They require voters to pay subscription fees to read election news.

   D) They prevent political parties from publishing campaign platforms online.

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 6.3 notes that while social platforms democratise participation, their viral structure can also heighten political polarisation, spread targeted propaganda, and destabilise healthy political discourse.

5. A group of local residents creates a public Facebook group to report municipal service outages directly to local councillors, forcing faster responses. Which aspect of digital citizenship is demonstrated here?

   A) Algorithmic content curation

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B) Direct community-driven civic participation and governance accountability

C) Digital divide enforcement

D) Automated gatekeeping

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 6.1 highlights how social platforms serve as accessible spaces for grassroots civic participation, allowing community members to organise and hold public authorities accountable.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss social engagement, citing examples?
2. Hash tags are vital to pull digital activism. Discuss?
3. Discuss briefly the indispensable nature of social media to Nigeria's current political terrain?
4. Discuss two challenges social media might pose for the political terrain of a country?

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Study Session Seven:

Shaping Identities Through Social Media

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Introduction

Social media has fundamentally altered how identity, representation, and community are constructed and communicated in the digital age. For journalists and media professionals, personal identity is no longer entirely separate from professional output. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and Instagram require media practitioners to intentionally curate their personal brand, establish digital credibility, and cultivate an audience. Personal branding enables journalists to project authority in specific beats, engage directly with readers, and build trust independently of traditional newsroom brand reputation.

Beyond individual identity formation, social media platforms act as spaces for building and sustaining virtual communities. These online hubs enable geographically dispersed groups with shared interests, cultural backgrounds, or political goals to interact, collaborate, and co-create digital narratives. However, managing these communities introduces operational challenges, such as maintaining constructive engagement, moderating toxic behaviour, and navigating digital fatigue. Furthermore, the global scale of social media deeply influences broader cultural dynamics by democratising cultural production, blurring regional boundaries, and accelerating the spread of digital subcultures. This session explores the strategies journalists use to build authentic personal brands, examines best practices for managing vibrant online communities, and analyses the wider cultural impacts of social media interactions.

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Learning Outcomes For Study Session Seven

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

7.1. Elaborate on personal branding strategies for journalists across digital platforms.

7.2. Explain how online communities are created and sustained through targeted engagement.

7.3. Analyse the cultural impacts of social media on global communication and audience behaviour.

7.4. Evaluate the primary challenges in community management, including moderation, online conflict, and user retention.

7.5. Critique the influence of algorithmic distribution on digital identity formation and personal brand visibility.

7.6. Formulate effective guidelines for balancing personal authenticity, professional objectivity, and platform ethics online.

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7.1 Personal Branding for Journalists

Branding in its simplest form will mean to show the uniqueness of a thing/organisation or even an individual. In personal branding, the person is interested in making themselves sellable to others by giving those people content over what they should think about them built around their achievements, interests, and professional experience. This is why most recruiters are keen on the social media account of their prospective employee. While the social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter bring the journalist very close to their audience, who get to know them based on how they sell themselves to these audiences. Many businesses have gone digital, and millions of media consumers are sitting pretty online; hence, journalists must brace up with this new order of things changing times in the industry. In as much as products and services can be branded, people can easily craft their personality to let people know what they represent; this is called personal branding (Harvard Business School).

In deciding to build an online brand for yourself as a journalist, there are certain considerations to put in place:

1. **Plan What You Want to be Known For:** The brand must be tailored to what kind of journalist you intend to be based on your coverage like sports, business, fashion and others. This will reflect in the journalist's posts and the topics they find interest to share daily with their audience.
2. **Online Titles:** Behind your personal name, attach a brand name that reflects what you want to be known for; multimedia journalist, tech and

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business reporter, music journalist, TV host, sports anchor, weather reporter, or even a blend of these. Schawbel (2010).

3. **Research Properly the Niche You Want to Be Identified With:** The journalist who wants to create a brand and make known the uniqueness of his persona to people must properly research the niche in order to post content from the point of being knowledgeable.
4. **Create Your Blog/Page/Website:** The journalist who wants to be identified with a particular niche needs to have their own page and follow other brands, whether known or unknown, doing the same thing they are aiming at. At some point you can develop your own name and build strong websites to showcase what you have.
5. **Seek to Know How Veterans in Your Niche are Succeeding:** There is never a fresh niche in any sector. You are only new in that niche as a journalist trying to get your brand out there. Hence, seek clarity by asking older people in the niche questions that can help you do better as a journalist growing in the field.

7.2 Building Online Communities

There are four popular social platforms for the journalist and others interested in sharing information and also building an online community. They include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

1. **Facebook** was developed in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, who aimed to bring people together for social interactivity.
2. **YouTube:** as a video-sharing website began in 2005, giving individuals the

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opportunity to interact with the larger society by seeing and distributing user-generated video content. YouTube's popularity has now made companies utilise videos to promote their business to other countries.

3. **Twitter:** as a social media platform, it allows people to communicate information using microblogging, which allows for 140 characters per upload. Twitter was created in 2006, "inspired by creator Tim Dorsey's introduction of an SMS-based concept that allowed members to keep tabs on one another. It has influenced intercultural dialogue as people worldwide focus on the individual life through connection and knowledge of events.
4. **LinkedIn:** This, among the other platforms, is the most professional due to its nature. It is a good platform for linking up with professionals.

The social space seems to have put the whole world into a small community through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, which gives people the permission to engage with others and also have those people engaging as permanent followers. The most common types of the online community will fall under one of these categories, but they are not limited to them.

1. **Interest:** This type of online community is specifically built for people with one interest.
2. **Action:** These are online communities with the aim of driving a social change, like an activist kind of group.

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3. **Place:** These online communities will likely consider the location and region for bringing people together. Such platforms aim at building cultural orientation and propelling the lifestyle of a place.
4. **Practice or Profession**. This type of group is used to build a virtual community of experts to advance their knowledge and to also help each other grow.
5. **Learning:** The sole aim of these online communities is to enhance learning and teaching among group members.
6. **Brand:** Building an online community for branding is mostly done by organisations that want the public to know what they are up to.

However, building these communities is not as simple as it seems; therefore,

- You need some measure of consistency and understanding of your audience in order to put out content capable of keeping this audience fully engaged on your page.
- Identify the rules and stylistics of the social media platform you want to use: for Facebook, you cannot have more than 5,000 friends. If this is so, consider opening a Facebook page, not an account, while those using Instagram should realise that it sells mostly with videos and pictures; therefore, consider making very short and clean videos. Twitter accepts not more than 140,000 words; make sure to think differently and summarily, not missing the intricate details of an event while reporting. On LinkedIn, it's more of a professional platform where the journalist can easily connect to experts and find helpful skills to improve themselves. The YouTube

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seems to be another strong social media platform that the journalist can likely use in branding themselves by constantly posting their video and even audio content to attract and build a community of like-minded people.

- If you choose to host a website, then you need to get a domain name. As a beginner, you may want to use a free site like the word press.org. Make sure that the name corresponds with the type of online community you want to build. The general outlook in terms of colour, text and background should match intent for the website. It will be wrong to design a website talking about agriculture and food sustainability using the red colour that will work for a page built to discuss relationships and love. For the niche under discourse, think of the green colour.

7.2.1 Challenges in Building an Online Community

In the guise of building a very strong and solid brand, the online journalist is most times faced with some challenges:

- The challenge of balancing the interest of the journalist as a personal brand and also aligning his visibility with the objectives of the organisation that he/she is working with as a journalist.
- The issue of ignoring ethics, since it is about self. Personal branding has no room for putting out poorly prepared materials lacking in structure and conciseness.
- Limited content: The journalist who is building a brand sometimes might be out of content but this can be sorted; if the journalist is able to stroll through tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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7.2.2 Building an Online Community with Quality Engagement

A strong engagement on an online community is not just an encouragement for the journalist but also increases the utility of such an online group. Here are a few steps to improving engagements on online communities.



Fig. 7.1: An online community with engagement

- **Develop Weekly Theme:** Having a topic planned out for each week makes your audience crave the community since they are expecting something new.
- **Ask Interesting Questions:** Some kind of open questions bordering on the niche of an online community are likely to spark up questions and improve the engagement of the people belonging to an online community. This can also foster critical thinking and analysis, especially when the questions are very controversial.

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- **Have Exclusive Contents for Your Community Members:** These are like incentives since such values are scarce outside your online community. These can come in the form of live question and answer sessions, workshops, templates or even insights born out of the personal experiences of the journalist hosting the online community.
- **Allow for Accountability:** This has a way to encourage practice and participation among members of the online community who are being assessed by each other.

7.3 Cultural Impacts of Social Media

We begin by discussing what culture means; culture is the way of life of a people, as it comprises ideologies, inventions, ambitions and idioms of a people. Meanwhile, cultural identity is the conglomerate of reminiscences, images, lifestyle and food based on internal dynamism. Social media is a promoter for the various cultures. Today, there is an increasing number of Internet users making social media more popular than the cultural patterns and routines of people. As people continually use the social media for interactions, it therefore gives people the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in cultural conversations and dialogue through a common virtual medium, which also means that at the same time, every person is a publisher and a critic of their culture in cyberspace (Georgetown University, 2010). People's Cultural differences have a way to influence communication, behaviour and values within social networking sites. The cultural differences are made clear through the five cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism,

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masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation. As it borders on social media, the differences in personal and collective cultures are propelled through the social media behavioural styles. People from different cultures can utilise social network sites to sustain relationships with close relatives or friends instead of developing new relationships with others. The spread of social media continues to affect individual cultures, causing a lot of connections among diverse cultures. The Four popular types of social media and networking sites are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. All of these platforms give people the opportunity to lay bare their culture, which will spread across others and likely influence their lifestyle. Intercultural Adaptation involves people changing their ways of life and communication patterns in order to adjust to a new culture which has been popularised by social media, bearing the experiences of sojourners, immigrants and others who successfully make the transition from one culture to another. These stages of intercultural adaptation are important to consider when drawing connections to social media use. According to Lysgaard (1955). The four stages are honeymoon, crisis, adjustment, and biculturalism.

- **Honeymoon:** At this point, people experience beginning euphoria with being around a different culture.
- **Crisis:** It is saturated with hostility and the frustrations of adjusting to the culture of others.
- **Adjustment:** This is the gradual recovery from the frustrations of aligning to a new lifestyle.
- **Biculturalism:** At this stage, there is the full adjustment and adaptation to

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the new culture.

The social media in trying to impact new cultures on the users have been known to cause ***cultural Mapping;*** a situation where the social media users feel the need to assess the similarities and differences between his culture and the latest one. There may be a frustration after the awareness of the differences, but after examining the different angles, it is important to tilt ourselves towards the other culture and also push to understand their society. Finally, social media continues to push global thought patterns by making individuals more interconnected and interdependent on other cultures around the world.

Conclusion

Social media, to a large extent, can help people develop an identity that is synonymous with the brand they are putting out there for the general public and media consumers, who they intend to build an online community with. The members of the online community most often than not will engage in cultural mapping, which at the end causes a new adaptation for these media users.

Summary

In this study session, we have been able to look at:

1. The need for branding
2. The essentials of a journalist who intends to brand themselves online
3. The online community as a virtual group with objectives ranging from learning, interest, location and even professionalism.
4. The social media and cultural intersections.

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5. How social media can lead to cultural adaptation.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: What is personal branding?

Answer: This simply means putting yourself and your niche out there in order to let your audience know exactly what your interests are, like sports, business, health and others.

SAQ 2: What is cultural mapping?

Answer: 'Cultural mapping' as a term describes a situation where a member of an online community decides to compare the similarities and differences between their culture and that of others being pushed on the public using social media like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

SAQ 3: What does it mean to build an online community?

Answer: This refers to all the efforts of the journalist towards growing an online community, which involves regular posts, tweets, providing question and answer sessions, live sessions and exclusive content.

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Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. A freelance journalist consistently curates a professional Twitter/X and LinkedIn profile, publishing insights within specialised beats to build credibility and career recognition. Which concept is the journalist practising?

   A) Citizen crowdsourcing

   B) Personal branding for journalists

   C) Gatekeeping suppression

   D) Information overload management

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 7.1 discusses personal branding. Journalists use digital platforms to systematically curate their professional identity, build authority within their niche, and cultivate direct relationships with their audience.

2. A niche news organisation launches an online space where readers regularly discuss environmental topics, share localised stories, and interact directly with editors. Which approach is the organisation applying?

   A) Building an online community with quality engagement

   B) Digital divide enforcement

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C) Unilateral broadcast distribution

D) Algorithmic gatekeeping

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Sections 7.2 and 7.2.2 outline building online communities. Facilitating interactive, thematic spaces where users share content and engage with journalists fosters a committed digital community.

3. A news manager struggles to keep members of their publication's online forum active and respectful due to spamming and disruptive behaviour. Which common online management issue does this illustrate?

   A) Infrastructure lack

   B) Challenges in building and moderating an online community

   C) Lack of multimedia formats

   D) Hardware obsolescence

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 7.2.1 identifies key challenges in community building, including moderating toxic interactions, maintaining sustained user engagement, and curbing spam to preserve community quality.

4. How does global social media usage primarily exert a cultural impact on localised digital societies?

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A) By isolating local cultures from external global trends entirely.

B) By facilitating cross-cultural interaction and sharing while transforming traditional cultural communication patterns.

C) By requiring all users to communicate in a single language.

D) By preventing youth demographics from participating in digital public spaces.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 7.3 discusses the cultural impacts of social media, highlighting how interconnected digital networks allow cross-cultural exchange, shape social norms, and alter communication habits globally.

5. What is a key requirement for a journalist seeking to maintain high-quality audience engagement within a digital community?

A) Posting static press releases without checking user comments.

B) Consistently participating in two-way conversations, addressing enquiries, and moderating discussions.

C) Limiting community access strictly to corporate paid subscribers.

D) Disabling comment sections on all published articles.

Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Section 7.2.2 stresses that generating quality engagement requires active two-way communication, responsiveness from the creator/journalist, and constructive moderation within the group.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Personal branding is akin to self-marketing. Discuss?
2. Discuss reasons for an online community with clear examples?
3. Link the social media to cultural influence?
4. Differentiate between cultural mapping and cultural adaptation?

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Study Session Eight:

Challenges In Using New And Social Media

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Introduction

In using social media, which is the latest form of communication, sometimes there is a huge information gap caused by the lack of the gadgets, appropriate networks and a whole lot of encumbrances, making it impossible for the journalist to categorically say they are doing good work in terms of coverage. A culmination of these issues is called the digital divide in the society. Again, the online journalist is uncertain of the security of passwords and even the privacy of information shared during personal interactions with members of his/her online community, and so in this study session, we will take time to go through the challenges facing the journalist who is keen on using social media, especially as it borders on accessibility and the social media environment.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Eight

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

8.1. Discuss the concept of the digital divide

8.2. Analyse accessibility as a major challenge for the online journalist

8.3. Examine information overload and attention economy as challenges of social media usage

8.4. Determine that privacy and data security are issues of concern while using the social media

8.5. Critique strategies for mitigating information overload and navigating the attention economy in online news production.

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8.6. Formulate practical protocols for journalists and digital media outlets to prevent data invasion, secure sources, and uphold user privacy.

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8.1 Digital Divide and Accessibility Issues

Digital divide is the space born out of the unequal access to modern telecommunications devices among various members of the society. It is the economic and social inequality for the use, impact of information and communication technologies (Wilmon, 2020). These devices will include phones laptops and access to internet. When the term "digital divide" was first used in the late 20th century, it was used to mirror the lacuna between those who possessed a gadget for communication and the other members of the society who had none. Today the concept has found its way to include:

- Inability to purchase the internet powered devices and even the financial capacity to afford data.
- Low internet access for socioeconomic reasons.
- Differences in internet speed and access owing to location.
- Gaps in digital literacy, owing to poor education.

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Figure 8.1: Example of the digital divide

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: What is the digital divide?

ITA1: Digital divide is the space born out of the unequal access to modern telecommunications devices among various members of the society.

ACTIVITY 8.1: Take an examination of your locality and ascertain if a particular sect is facing some kind of digital divide!

According to findings, this is the divide in the accessibility of resources from the internet owing to the possession of smartphones and other gadgets also existing between countries and continents. It also exists between the urban areas of a society and its villages. As of 2022, 62% of the global male population was using the internet, compared with 57% of the female population, although

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we are finding a noticeable block towards this gap, especially with the advent of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and even Instagram.

Away from these divides above, there exist other forms of divide in the society arising from digitalisation. They include:

- **The Access Divide:** This is the socioeconomic differences among people and the effect on their ability to procure enabling devices necessary to get online, especially among the rural populace.
- **The Use Divide:** This is the difference in the levels of expertise when it comes to the skills necessary to use the internet. The individual's level of education can also affect their level of expertise while using the internet.
- **The Utility Gap:** This is a very difficult measure to check one of the many gaps arising from the use of the internet and how some people can gain more utility than others using the internet.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: Define the use divide.

ITA 2: This is the difference in the levels of expertise when it comes to the skills necessary to use the internet. The individual's level of education can also affect their level of expertise while using the internet.

8.1.2 The Global Digital Divide

The global digital divide became a consequence of economic development owing to the financial expansion of countries. The access to digital services is still very

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low in many developing countries. In many cases, a country's lack of investment in internet infrastructure can cause a digital divide. As it is, the availability of the internet is yet to become very rampant, and this affects their association with others in diverse countries, leading to a digital divide. This is why the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations agency for information and communication technologies, has started providing details on this divide. According to recent studies, people living in urban areas globally have roughly twice the level of internet access in their homes compared with those who live in rural areas. Many analysts now know that this divide is getting wider due to many underdeveloped countries.

8.1.3 Consequences of the Digital Divide

In other words, the digital divide can also be called technological discrimination, which is a form of social exclusion depriving certain members of the society of essential online resources that can make them effective members of the society. Let's, in a quick glance, look at the common consequences of not having equal access to the internet:

- **Lack of Communication and Isolation:** Without mincing words, there is almost total isolation for people without access to adequate internet. Sometimes certain opportunities are missed by these people, like posts on free medical care, employment opportunities and others.
- **Barriers to Education:** currently education is increasingly delivered online; those who cannot access the internet are even as schoolchildren are limited to these remote learning opportunities to enhance their skills.

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ACTIVITY 8.2: Create an online poll to ask your online community, e.g., a WhatsApp group, to discuss some likely opportunities they missed while they didn't have access to any digital divide!

8.1.4 Bridging the Digital Divide

As the world continues to witness a lot of technological advancement. Many of these gap closures are being organised at the highest level, even within the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9, which permits individual countries to plan their activities around stopping digital discrimination. Recently, two new programmes have been launched in the past few years to address other aspects of the digital divide:

- **The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI):** This is geared towards downsizing the price of broadband internet in mapped-out areas in the world.
- **Starlink** gives strong internet and world coverage at lower prices through satellites already launched into space.

Currently some countries now also engage in digital literacy programmes aimed at showing both adults and children what they need to breach the digital divide.

Let's entertain a foreign case study:

In the year 2021, precisely on November 15th, President Joe Biden approved the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law. This was aimed at reducing the digital divide by giving $65 billion to bring high-speed internet to rural areas

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of America. Providers who took the money were expected to provide an affordable plan for consumers. It also demands that the Federal Communications Commission must put some guidelines in check to prohibit digital side lining, and create a permanent new perk to help low-income households use the internet for an affordable connectivity benefit, inclusive of over one-quarter of households in America. Also part of the bill is the Digital Equity Act, originally proposed by Sen. Patty Murray around 2019 and co-sponsored by Sen. Rob Portman, allowing two new federal grant programmes "to enhace digital equality nationwide." One from state governments and the other state-by-state digital equity planning to support digital equity projects from individual groups, coalitions, and/or communities of interest anywhere in the U.S."

8.2 Information Overload and the Attention Economy

There is an array of information out there which is also very cheap and easily accessible. This used to be in the form of instant messaging, but as the advent of social media has gradually led to information influx, it is popularly called the information overload. A situation wherein the audience is likely to run into misinformation if they have no understanding of these messages. This information overload, if not properly handled, makes the user spend so much time on the internet that it should have been channelled to other areas, thereby causing an impoverishment of attention. As information grows in abundance and availability, attention gradually turns to the hindrance in the consumption of information. For Thomas Davenport and John Beck, attention is a focused mental engagement over a particular item of information, making the scarcest

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resource not ideas or even talent but human attention as channels of information constantly competes to attract the largest share of that attention. In essence, the attention economy sees that it is scarce despite the myriad of information packaged to have many people aptly focused to gain utility from this overload. At the other end, many also view information overload as an underload for media organisations, which they think are doing less in filtering what goes out for public consumption. Many also are of the opinion that the issue of overload may not just be about the available quantity of information but the manner in which this information is made available in terms of quality, causing ineffective communication despite the quantity of information. Hence to be sure that the attention economy is not poor based on the media organisation. **Information houses should:**

- Employ a strategic approach to information dissemination.
- Understand their target audiences.
- Create strong message dissemination strategies that can be amended to suit different purposes.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of information dissemination in the society. Amidst the large marketplace of information, a lucid summary and its bulleted dissemination allows readers to easily gain more clarity than in a long summarised post.

8.3 Privacy and Data Security Concerns

Data privacy describes the framework of laws, protocols, and controls aimed at protecting people's data from illegal access and use. It involves a group of

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information such as names, addresses, financial details, social security numbers, and even online events. Data security refers to the protocols and standards put in place to keep online information safe from access, use, modification, or destruction without a licence. To safeguard our personal information from potential threats, organisations can employ several key strategies. Encryption stands as a powerful tool in ensuring data privacy. Implementing best practices for safeguarding personal information involves two key aspects: privacy policies and identity theft prevention. Privacy policies play a vital role in protecting personal information. It is important to ensure that these policies are transparent, clearly stating how personal data will be collected, used and protected. Identity theft prevention is another critical aspect of data privacy. Individuals should regularly monitor their financial statements, credit reports and online accounts for any suspicious activity. Both for data privacy and security, there is a need for constant monitoring and management by organisations and individuals. Most times criminals operating on the dark web use people's personal data for illegal activities such as theft, financial fraud and other attempts which can lead to dire consequences for all those affected by the cyber inversion. Data privacy and data security may look so much alike, as they are both interested in keeping the data secured, while data privacy in essence takes care of keeping mostly private information safe, while data security takes care of keeping both the physical and digital infrastructure of facts online safe from invaders and online miscreants. From a general perspective, the common privacy issues for the online journalist will include:

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8.3.1 How to Avoid Data Invasion

The risk of invasion of most online data is almost inevitable for the journalist and others working and using the online space. To avoid running afoul of the likely dangers that can mar the efforts of the journalist, some of the things to put in place include:

1. Use strong encryption techniques, locking and keeping the page out of reach for accessibility.
2. Strong firewalls.
3. Strong network infrastructure, recruiting a blockchain of cybersecurity experts can help keep your data safe as an online journalist.
4. Strict access controls; here the journalist and other online users can easily set a control over who can find their information and the access limit from a third party.
5. Incident response protocols: this sets a utility response for incidents likely to breach the security of data.
6. Remove location tracker; this can help reduce the risk of data leaking to unauthorised users.
7. Limit access for multiple devices; reduce the number of devices that can pick up your data using their personal devices.
8. Opt for constant data use of hard storage; constantly remove digital materials you don't need. Use hard storage to keep documents that are not constantly in use.

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Conclusion

The issue of the digital divide is as old as the internet, and many people living in the rural areas are mostly challenged by lack of accessibility to the internet. While the attention economy is a challenge to the online journalist who, in the midst of publishing online, must strive to get the interest of the public towards his page, which must be secured to avoid data theft, hacking and other issues challenging data privacy.

Summary

In this study session, we have been able to look at

1. The meaning of the digital divide and accessibility issues in online journalism
2. The concept of information overload.
3. How to deal with the attention economy.
4. The concerns on data privacy for the online journalist.
5. Steps towards securing your data online.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: What is the utility gap?

Answer: This is a very difficult measure to check one of the many gaps arising from the use of the internet and how some people can gain more utility than others using the internet.

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SAQ 2: Who are cybercriminals?

Answer: These groups of individuals are invaders of online data; they may be hackers, cyber thieves and others who illegally struggle to access people's data online.

SAQ 3: Digital divide and accessibility issues are major challenges for the journalist using social media.

Answer: The digital divide makes it difficult for people who do not have gadgets like phones or laptops and those who cannot also effectively use these devices to have access to information.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. A news agency attempts to reach rural populations with digital video reporting, but citizens cannot view the content due to low internet bandwidth and lack of affordable devices. Which challenge of new media does this scenario depict?

   A) Information overload

   B) The digital divide and accessibility issues

   C) Attention economy saturation

   D) Gatekeeping breakdown

   Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Sections 8.1, 8.1.2, and 8.1.3 explain the digital divide—the gap in accessibility caused by structural inequalities in technology, infrastructure, and affordable internet, particularly between urban and rural areas.

2. An online news consumer feels overwhelmed by the volume of breaking updates, push notifications, and competing social media threads, making it difficult to process key facts. What phenomenon is the reader experiencing?

   A) Cyberbullying

   B) Information overload

   C) Network convergence

   D) Digital identity synthesis

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 8.2 defines information overload as the state where an individual is exposed to more digital information than their cognitive bandwidth can effectively process and evaluate.

3. In the modern attention economy, media outlets compete aggressively for users' limited focus. Which publishing strategy is frequently driven by this competition?

   A) Publishing lengthy academic essays with no headlines.

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B) Utilising sensationalised headlines, eye-catching thumbnails, and bite-sized content to capture instant interest.

C) Restricting news distribution to print editions only.

D) Removing all visual media from online landing pages.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: Section 8.2 explains that in an "attention economy", human focus is scarce. Publishers adapt by crafting rapid, visually stimulating, and short-form content to capture user attention amidst constant digital noise.

4. A user's personal browsing logs, location history, and private contact lists are harvested without clear consent by an online app for targeted advertising. Which digital challenge is highlighted here?

A) Infrastructure deficit

B) Privacy and data security concerns

C) Lack of convergent reporting

D) Digital divide expansion

Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Section 8.3 details privacy and data security risks, emphasising how unauthorised data collection and corporate tracking compromise online user safety.

5. What is a major socio-economic consequence of the global digital divide for under-connected communities?

   A) Equal access to digital economic opportunities and online learning across all regions.

   B) Exacerbated economic and educational inequality due to limited access to vital digital information and resources.

   C) Complete immunity from fake news and online misinformation.

   D) Automated resolution of local infrastructure deficits.

   Correct Answer: B

   Explanation: Section 8.1.3 outlines the consequences of the digital divide, demonstrating that communities lacking digital access are further marginalised in education, employment, and economic growth compared to connected populations.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. The digital divide makes information dissemination online not effective for digital illiterates?
2. Elaborate on the steps to avoid data invasion as an online journalist?

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3. The attention economy is caused by certain factors. Discuss?
4. Analyse the lack of technological expertise as a major cause for use divide?
5. Discuss information overload?

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Study Session Nine:

Legal And Ethical Issues In Online Journalism

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Introduction

Study Session Nine: Legal And Ethical Issues In Online Journalism

Introduction

The migration of journalism to digital platforms has radically expanded the reach and speed of news distribution, but it has also complicated the legal and ethical framework within which news is published. In the print and broadcast eras, editorial teams operated within well-defined legal parameters governed by established media laws and standard gatekeeping procedures. Online, however, the blurring lines between professional journalists, aggregators, and citizen contributors have introduced complex legal liabilities regarding copyright, intellectual property, and digital defamation.

Online journalists must navigate copyright regulations and the legal concept of "fair use" when sourcing, quoting, or embedding third-party content, images, and video online. At the same time, the global accessibility and instantaneous nature of digital publishing significantly heighten the risk of online libel and slander, where defamatory claims can spread rapidly across borders before retraction is possible. Furthermore, ethical standards—such as respecting privacy, avoiding plagiarism, distinguishing commentary from factual reporting, and ensuring fairness—must be adapted to fast-paced digital newsrooms. This study session examines the key legal principles surrounding copyright and fair use, outlines the legal dynamics of digital defamation and available defenses,

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and establishes ethical guidelines necessary to maintain credibility and legal integrity in digital journalism.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Nine

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

9.1. Elaborate on the concept of copyright

9.2. Identify copyright infringement and determine permissible uses of third-party digital materials.

9.3. Analyse libel and defamation online

9.4. Critique common digital ethical dilemmas, such as online plagiarism, photo/video distortion, and invasion of privacy.

9.5. Formulate newsroom guidelines for balancing speed and accuracy while upholding ethical standards in online journalism.

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9.1 Copyright and Fair Use in the Digital Age

"Copyright" in its simplest definition will mean the right to copy. Copyright is a legal term describing ownership of control of the rights to utilise and distribute certain works of creative expression, including books, video and motion pictures (Peter, 2024). This started in England around the late 15th century, with the introduction of the printing press. According to the Library of Congress in 1710, Parliament passed the Statute of Anne, which gave authors ownership of copyright, stopping booksellers from monopolising the market. By 1998 President Bill Clinton endorsed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to move the nation's copyright law into the digital age as they set standards on copyright infringement liability for online service providers (OSPs). In essence, linking to an article or image on someone else's blog is not wrong; copying and pasting that same write-up and pictures from other blogs to yours requires some kind of permission to avoid litigation. To also avoid your materials online from being copied without permission, the online journalist should publish terms of service on their website, making known their ownership of all the content, including images, on their site. For Ta, in order to determine whether something is fantastic to share via social media or your own blog, the journalist should assess:

- If sharing the content can violate their services?
- If sharing will put online users at risk of litigation?
- If sharing the content violates the copyright law?
- If sharing can damage the journalist's reputation?

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If an organisation has Facebook, Twitter, and linkedIn buttons on its website, it is safe to assume that you can share contents from such pages.

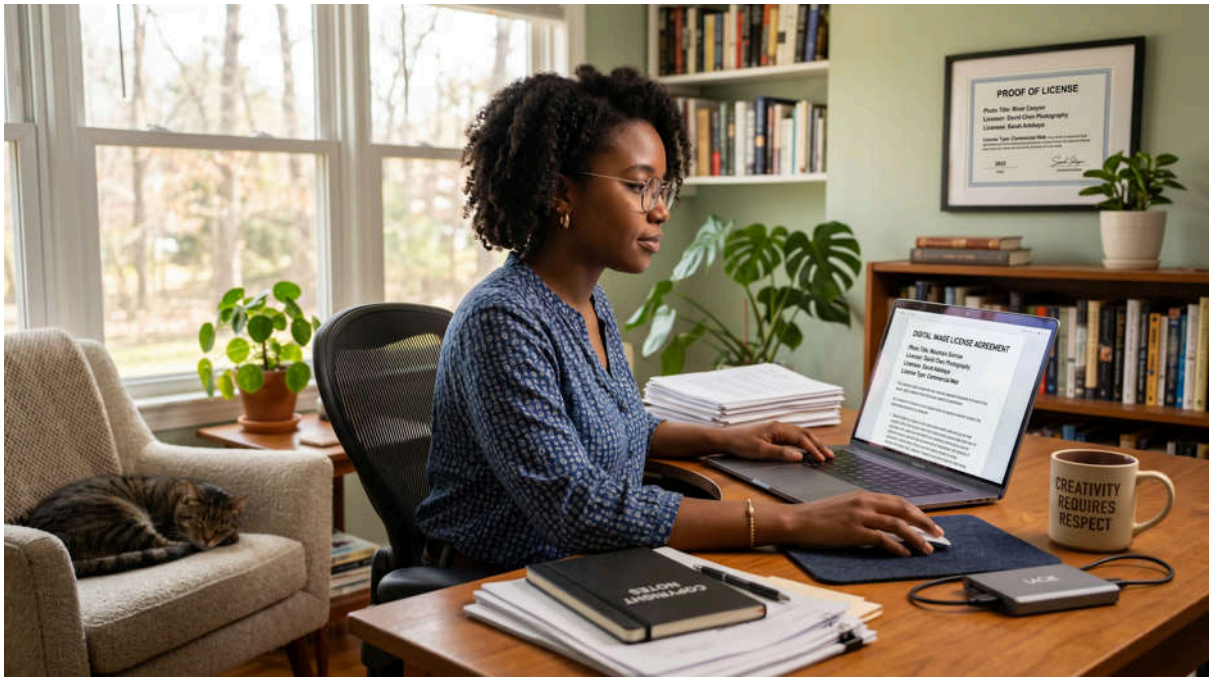


Figure 9.1: A writer obeying the copyright law

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ1: What impression does the share button create?

ITA: If an organisation has Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn buttons on its website, it easy safe to assume that you can share content from such pages.

ACTIVITY 9.1: Attempt to share a relevant link or post through a verified social media page!

9.2 Libel and Defamation Online

When we use the word 'defamation' in journalism, we most often than not are

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talking about ridiculing the integrity of a person in the eyes of right-thinking persons. This can come in the form of shame, hate and even contempt published falsely against a person; of course defamation happens either as slander or even libel. The overload of information makes it almost impossible to separate what is defamatory or not in the online space. But whether the publisher is aware or not, the law must take its full course in punishing those who fall below par in the ethics of online journalism. Defamation falls under the Law of Tort and in a broader legal perspective, it is false statements concerning a person or entity that can cause damage and even harm to the target's reputation and/or standing in the community. The general defamation is the same as with online defamation, where false statements are written or published through online mediums with the aim of harming the target's reputation or standing online. These written words are usually in the negative and generally untrue. Here online users see the messages or publication and make this a faster spread than in an offline defamation; this has become a problem in this age of the computer owing to virility as an element for online journalism. Regardless, with the advent of online defamation came the law to checkmate the rising troubles from online defamation. In Nigeria it has become imperative for courts and legal practitioners to checkmate what is happening in the online space to avoid the use of improper web conduct that one would not appreciate from others. If this defamation comes in a written format, it is called a libel.

In deciding whether a defamation is actionable, it has to be:

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In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: What is defamation?

ITA 2: Defamation falls under the Law of Tort, and in a broader legal perspective, it is false statements concerning a person or entity that can cause damage and even harm to the target's reputation and/or standing in the community.

- The defamatory online statement must be a lie; When online users communicate either in writing or verbally a statement that is not true, they cross the line in their right to free speech and this can result in civil liability.
- For cases where the person's expression is outrageous or planned solely to harm the reputation of a person.

In summary, there must be a proven statement that indeed there is a lie on the ground against the plaintiff, meaning that not every unfriendly publication seen online amounts to defamation. The allegation of defamatory publication within the context of online publication is based on the fact that the party claiming to have been defamed must present surety that other online users actually accessed and downloaded the materials and that they have been talked about by identifiable persons within the jurisdiction of the court. Thus, the law will not presume that the words were actually read. Therefore, online publications cannot be regarded as defamation by an ordinary statement of facts till such negative materials have been circulated online. Most people have continually been asking how to access reputational damage to prove a defamatory claim online. We say that the number of readers on such a negative post is a big proof, but generally the more readers the offending post has, the greater the likelihood

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of reputational damage. Damage may increase further, and additional claims arise, if the defamatory statement is republished elsewhere. However, if the level of readership is low, then a defamatory claim may have been untrue that it caused a reputational harm.

Let's consider a foreign case study for online defamation: *The case of Monroe v. Hopkins*

Jack Monroe, a popular food writer, tweeted against journalist Katie Hopkins. Accusing Monroe of desecrating a war memorial. Monroe was awarded £24,000 for damages due to the continual harm caused to Monroe's reputation by the tweets that went viral and were read by a lot of people.

9.2.1 Defences for Online Defamation

1. Fair comment; not aimed at hurting the plaintiff even though it is really not a positive statement
2. Statements made about a public person which may have a cause of action.
3. Typo errors during reporting, like the person's name or title wrongly written.
4. Governmental bodies due to the premise that a non-personal entity cannot have intent;
5. Public records can be exonerated from alleged defamation.

ACTIVITY 9.2: Search out for likely defamatory cases; you may consult a legal expert and turn in the details!

9.3 Ethical Guidelines For Online Journalism

Just like we have been discussing, online journalism largely shares some

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similarities with traditional journalism but differs in the peculiarities obtainable using the digital platforms and internet powered devices.



Figure 9.2: An online journalist

Therefore the journalist using the online platform must first take into consideration the ethics of core traditional journalism: these include

- Truth
- Objectivity
- Fairness
- Accuracy
- Making facts clear
- Privacy
- Juveniles and criminals

2. **Truth:** Truth in this context is born out of national interest and not

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the individual desire or need of the journalist. Report situations as they are without sugar coating it to favour a tribe, religion or a particular interest group.

3. **Objectivity:** While publishing materials, pictures and videos online, the online journalist should discard his/her personal idiosyncrasies and remain neutral. Avoid judging an occurrence based on any personal experience or presumption.
4. **Fairness:** This ethic can also be called 'humanness'; be humane while posting, especially about accidents, fire outbreaks and other neighbourhood issues. This is where you get the balance by touching all sides of the story.
5. **Accuracy:** Check the correct spelling for names, titles, places and even the age of people while you chase to post in real-time.
6. **Separate facts from adverts:** The online journalist should constantly draw the line between ordinary comments and adverts being sneaked into them. Make it clear since your audience is trusting you to do the right thing.
7. **Respect privacy:** If the reportage is not begging for a national clarity, be careful with digging into the personal affairs of people, especially in the guise of an interview or uploading pictures.
8. **Juveniles/Criminal suspects:** The online journalist should never name or release pictures of accused persons who are yet to be tried in court. Also, children below 18 should not be published (interviews) without their guardian. Blur images of gender-based violence

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survivors.

Conclusion

We say that libel is a written version of defamation which may occur if videos and audios are not properly scrutinised by the online journalist. Even though people are free to express themselves through social media platforms, hurting others by publishing whatever will degrade or ridicule them in the eyes of right-thinking members of the society is punishable by law, including pulling people's intellectual output without proper acknowledgement.

Summary

In this session we have successfully discussed

1. Copyright and fair use of internet materials.
2. Libel as a type of defamation
3. Ethical considerations for publishing online
4. The need for copyrighting

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: What is copyright?

Answer: This law seeks to protect people's material online.

SAQ 2: Relate national interest to privacy?

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Answer: The online journalist may fall foul in respecting the ethics of publishing if there is need to make public a location, name or story for the interest of the general public.

SAQ 3: Fairness as an ethic mean?

Answer: This ethic can also be called 'humanness'; be human while posting, especially about accidents, fire outbreaks and other neighbourhood issues. This ethic ensures the story balance by touching all sides of the story.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. An online investigative reporter copies three full paragraphs from a paywalled research report, pastes them verbatim into a news article without permission, and provides a direct hyperlink to the original author's page. Which legal argument best evaluates the reporter's action under copyright law?

   A) The inclusion of a hyperlink automatically grants full fair use protection.

   B) Direct copying of substantial original text remains a potential copyright infringement despite attribution.

   C) Fair use applies automatically because news reporting is completely exempt from copyright restrictions.

   D) The act is lawful because the original material was accessible on the internet.

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Correct Answer: B) Direct copying of substantial original text remains a potential copyright infringement despite attribution.

Explanation: Proper attribution or linking does not automatically grant immunity from copyright infringement when substantial portions of protected work are copied verbatim without authorisation.

2. A blogger publishes an article falsely accusing a local business owner of financial fraud based on unverified rumours, causing the business to lose major clients. What primary legal defence can the blogger rely on if sued for online defamation?

A) Demonstrating that the statements made in the article are factually true.

B) Claiming that online blogs are exempt from traditional libel standards.

C) Proving that the article was shared widely by other social media users first.

D) Arguing that the post was intended solely for personal entertainment.

Correct Answer: A) Demonstrating that the statements made in the article are factually true.

Explanation: Truth is an absolute defence against libel and defamation claims; if the published statements are factually accurate, a defamation claim cannot be legally sustained.

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3. A digital publication discovers that a writer embedded an uncredited copyrighted image into a breaking news story without permission. Which action best adheres to standard digital news ethics regarding copyright compliance?

   A) Change the image filter and retain it without credit.

   B) Remove or license the image and properly attribute the original creator.

   C) Move the image to a social media account where fair use laws do not apply.

   D) Delete the article entirely without notifying the readers.

   Correct Answer: B) Remove or license the image and properly attribute the original creator.

   Explanation: Ethical digital journalism requires respecting intellectual property by securing rights or permissions and providing accurate credit to original content creators.

4. A journalist receives an anonymous tip containing leaked confidential user data on a public official. What ethical standard must the journalist prioritise before publishing the document online?

   A) Maximising web traffic by publishing the raw files immediately.

   B) Verifying the authenticity of the information while balancing public interest against privacy harms.

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C) Altering the contents of the document to make the story more compelling.

D) Selling the data to third-party advertisers prior to publication.

Correct Answer: B) Verifying the authenticity of the information while balancing public interest against privacy harms.

Explanation: Ethical guidelines demand that journalists rigorously verify unprompted leaks and weigh the public's right to know against potential ethical breaches such as unwarranted invasion of privacy.

5. An online reporter accidentally publishes a significant factual error regarding a public policy vote. Which digital publishing practice reflects professional ethical standards for handling corrections?

A) Delete the original article quietly without issuing a notice.

B) Update the text silently and pretend the error never occurred.

C) Transparently append a clear correction note detailing what was altered and why.

D) Blame the error on technical glitches within the website server.

Correct Answer: C) Transparently append a clear correction note detailing what was altered and why.

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Explanation: Ethical standards in online journalism require open acknowledgement and clear public corrections when factual mistakes occur, maintaining credibility and transparency.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss the need for fair usage of materials picked online?
2. Discuss libel as a variant of defamation?
3. Ethics are important for the online journalist. Discuss?
4. Why should the online journalist be careful with publishing stories around juveniles?

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Study Session Ten:

Content Creation For Online Platforms

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Introduction

Content creation for online platforms requires a strategic blend of concise writing, dynamic visual elements, and targeted technical formatting. In a digital news environment where audience attention spans are limited, news stories must capture interest immediately while conveying critical information effectively. Traditional print and broadcast formats often rely on lengthy linear narratives; however, online platforms demand headlines that are sharp, engaging, and optimised for search engines and social feeds. Navigating different headline styles—ranging from direct informative titles to curiosity-driven hooks—and leveraging headline generation tools allows journalists to maximise story visibility across diverse digital ecosystems.

In addition to text-based narratives, modern online journalism relies heavily on visual and short-form video formats. Creating shareable graphics and infographics enables journalists to synthesise complex statistical data, timelines, and investigative findings into easily digestible visual assets that encourage social sharing. Simultaneously, the rise of short-form video on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts has transformed how breaking news and feature stories are consumed. Online journalists must master the techniques of scripting, pacing, and producing short-form video content tailored to mobile-first audiences. This session examines the core principles of crafting high-impact online headlines, designing shareable visual media, and producing short-form video content to enhance digital news coverage.

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Learning Outcomes for Study Session Ten

At the end of this study session, my students should be able to:

10.1 Write a concise headline for an online post.

10.2 How to develop graphics and info graphics worthy of upload

10.3 Apply how short videos can be used for news dissemination

10.4 Create short videos for news dissemination.

10.5 Design shareable graphics and infographics to visually represent complex news narratives and data.

10.6 Evaluate digital content performance across visual and video formats to optimise audience engagement and shareability.

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10.1 Writing Headlines and Teasers for Social Media

Headlines are the short phrases summarising a news event, but their lack of completeness as a story, if allowed to stand alone, is just like the teaser promising the reader a worthy read through a few words. Headlines bear the vital information that attracts the news reader (Reah, 2002). They are top-level headers used to make prominent the main points in a story in order to drive traffic, help readers to easily identify a story and also easily find them for sharing. Writing headlines remains a daunting task even with the traditional media because a failure here will affect the general interest and patronage for a story. Hence, the online journalist realising that the hypertext feature of the online space makes it easy for the audience to roam out of an uninteresting, confusing or poorly published content beginning with the headline must do his/her homework well. In creating the online headline, be prepared to cut away all forms of noise in order to make that killer impression that will keep the online user on your page.

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Figure 10.1: Headline

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: What are news headlines?

ITA 1: Headlines are the short phrases summarising a news event but their lack completeness as a story if allowed to stand alone. They are top-level headers used to make prominent the main points in a story in order to drive traffic, help readers to easily identify a story and also easily find them for sharing.

Therefore, what are the considerations for making an impressive headline?

1. **Make it Short and Simple:** Headlines are not supposed to have more than 70 characters; the lesser the better. This makes the message create an imprint on the first glance from the reader.

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2. **Use Catchy Words:** Experiment with words that evoke drama even without pictures. Find strong adjectives that embody what you have in mind as an online publisher. These words include 'cute, radiant, elegant, and outstanding'. Don't write like a louse by overbeating popular words and clichés.

3. **Make it Relatable:** Just like the body of the story, make an effort to create headlines that appeal to your target audience

4. **Answer Begging Questions on Your Headline:** Those questions you personally feel can be asked by your audience should be summarily incorporated into the headline.

5. **Use Numbers:** Apply numbers to deliver eye-catching and quick impressions from the headline. Example: '3 ways to make the most out of your night'.

6. **Apply Humour:** This should be done discretely bearing in mind that applying humour sometimes will not work in all situations. For example, reporting an accident or murder using a humorous headline will not effectively pass the message.

7. **Be Direct:** Be specific with what your post is about, rather than being non-directional. You need to let your audience trust you with detailing them on a specific issue.

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8. **Utilise Trends:** Incorporate topics that are in trend into your headline to make it timely and relevant. Let your readers know that you are aware of what is going on.

9. **Use Alliteration:** Alliteration means to repeat the first letter of all the words in the headline. This can make your headlines more memorable and catchy. For example, 'St. Stephen students stands out successfully'.

ACTIVITY 10.1: Demonstrate your understanding of the social media headline by curating two headlines for a social media post!

10.1.2 Types of Online Headlines

Online headlines will vary in form; they include:

- Negative headlines
- Number headlines
- Surprising headlines
- Emotional headlines

- **Negative Headlines:** The negative headlines have a way of driving clicks. In fact, even though there were more positive words than negative ones, negative words increased click-through rate. The twist here is to make sure the headlines match up with the body being published.
- **Number Headlines:** Numbers are useful while creating headlines since they create the sense of prediction.
- **Surprise Headlines**: Readers can embrace a story based on how surprising and suspenseful your story looks. Curiosity has been found powerful

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towards keeping your audience.

- **Emotional Headlines:** The readers can be pushed towards the story if the tone of the headline aligns with the experience.

10.1.3 Social Media Headline Generation Tools

Recently a lot of digital tools have now made it very easy for the online journalist at a crossroads on how to write a compelling news headline:

1. **CoSchedule Analyser:** This free tool helps you check your headlines based on some indices like balance, sentiment, character count and even clarity.
2. **Share through Analyser.** This checks your headline based on the length, structure, grammar, and engagement potentials. It provides a quality score, strengths, and suggestions to make your social media headline stronger.
3. **Hubs pot Blog Idea Generator.** You can use this tool to create content ideas and come up with social media headlines by simply entering a topic.
4. **ChatGPT:** Use the right prompts to push a headline out of your submission.
5. **Trends Headline Generator.** This tool helps you pick out headlines in different forms, which the journalist will need to peruse to pick out the most suitable one.

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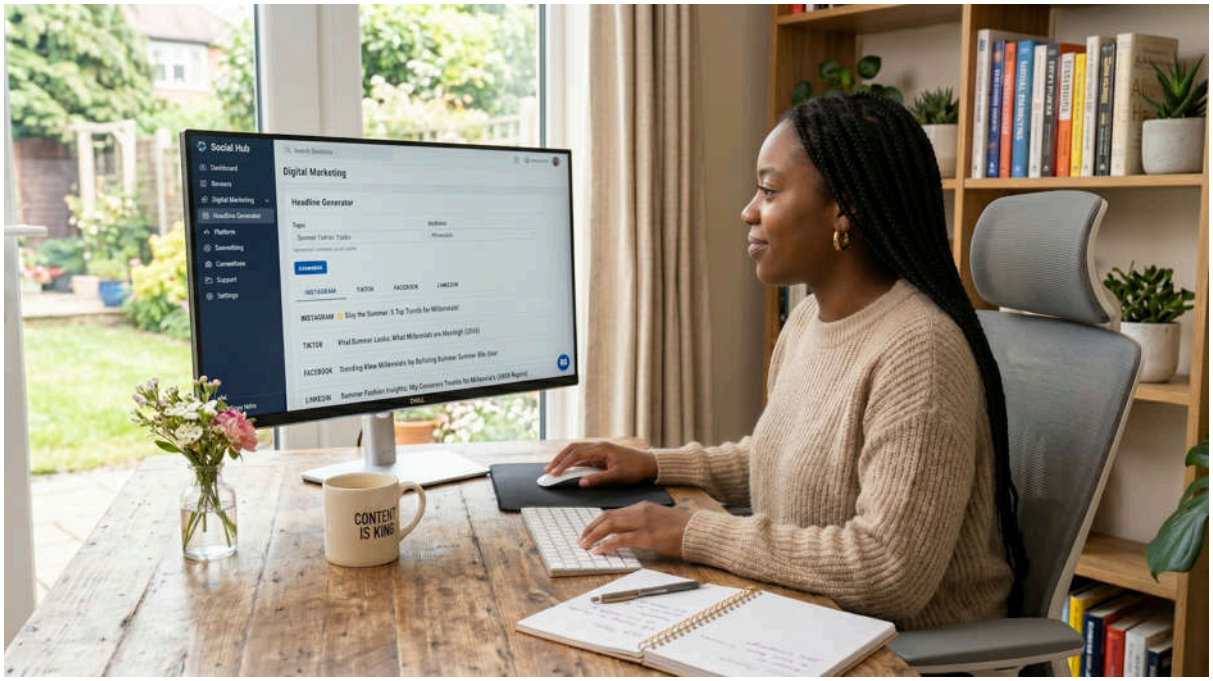


Figure 10.2: A writer using social media headline generation tools

10.2 Creating Shareable Graphics And Infographics

While designing your infographics, develop a clear thought of what you want your audience to know. This is made easier when you recognise your target audience and what they need. Make sure your infographics also follow a unified visual theme with corresponding colours, fonts and images to appear professional on social media. An infographic is a visual form of showing information using charts, diagrams and even icons that can resonate with the learner. This type of visual simulation is highly effective on social media. Therefore, the web/online journalist must consider some of the following points:

- To improve visual appeal, use icons and graphics in their highest quality.
- Maintain a simple, uncluttered layout while concentrating on communicating information succinctly.

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- Use data visualisation tools, like graphs and charts, to effectively present information in order to guide the viewer's eye through the content.
- The best info graphics are usually in synchrony; visuals, colours and fonts need to be in synchrony. When adopting the message, focus on being simple and obvious; tools like Canva are great options.
- Avoid fonts that are hard to read; your reader should not be struggling between clarity and comprehending the content.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: What is an infographic?

ITA 2: An infographic is a visual form of showing information using charts, diagrams and even icons that can resonate with the learner. This type of visual simulation is highly effective on social media.

10.3 Short-Form Video Content for News

The short-form video has witnessed a lot of growth over the past few years. Especially with the advent of the latest being TikTok, with over 1.5 billion users in just seven years, the user-generated format, sophisticated algorithm, mobile-friendly format and bite-sized content have made it a colossal success. In the last two years, other social platforms like Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat have been trying to replicate the major feature of TikTok with *Reels, Shorts* and *Spotlights,* respectively. Even YouTube is trying to surpass TikTok's viewership with the introduction of Shorts as one of the latest features. Having this in mind, news publishers now have a lot to experiment with in terms of video

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content and to engage their audiences. This is because evidence has shown that 66% of people use the video as their primary source of information daily.

In creating your online short videos for news, here are a few points to consider:

- **Understanding Your Audience Base:** over 60% of TikTok's users are Generation Z. To engage this group in current affairs, the journalist particularly should learn to navigate through employing good short and direct views.
- **Optimising Your Mobile Presentation:** The online journalist should learn how to produce mobile-optimised vertical videos for a mobile-native audience in order to improve digital credibility.
- **Learn How to Distribute Content**: According to the Manifesto Growth Architects, 64% of online users now utilise information on multiple screens, making it paramount for news publishers to experiment with "bite-sized" short videos to share comprehensive information for the large number of audience who have an increasingly selective attention span.
- **Monetisation Outlet:** As many social media platforms keep pushing for dominance in the short-form format, new monetisation opportunities are now available on these media platforms for the publisher to build credibility.

ACTIVITY 10.2: Develop a short news video and post using any of the short video approaches for the selected social media platform!!

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A CASE STUDY OF SKY NEWS USING TIKTOK AS A SHORT VIDEO PLATFORM FOR NEWS DISSEMINATION

For Sky News, TikTok is another reliable platform that has been employed to disseminate eyewitness reports, accounts of events and even live broadcasts. Hence, a larger portion of the content on their TikTok handle is reproduced directly from their broadcasts, using a horizontal aspect ratio. Devoid of this, viewership remains unwavering. A good example was during the covid-19 lockdown when it gained millions of views for live streams of the government's press conferences and 16 million views for a real-time broadcast during the burial of Queen Elizabeth.

While the aforementioned news publisher continues to acquire viewers across the TikTok social media platform. We find it interesting to explore how publishers are integrating Shorts, Reels and Spotlights into their short-form strategy. Interestingly, a quick investigation into their media channels suggests these publishers appear to be using the platforms to republish content directly produced for TikTok, though with varying consistency. We can boldly say that after TikTok, Instagram's Reels receive the widest viewership, but Snapchat's Spotlights remains on the outskirts of media use. Meanwhile, while YouTube's Shorts currently receive a lower view count per video for News Publishers, Google's investment in the format is already delivering for digitally native publishers such as Vox Media, who have reported that the main driver for their channel. Although there is a challenge from the latest research revealing that young people are twice as likely to pay for news from independent creators rather than traditional providers. However, as the short video evolves into a

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mainstream source of information and current affairs, we hope to continually see how these impacts on the traditional media of communication.

Conclusion

Writing the headlines for the traditional and social media has not much difference, but the hypertext element of the web makes it imperative that the online journalist should make the social media headline punchy and direct to avoid the media audience from running out of the page. These headlines are written with the audience in mind, just like in also developing the short videos for news, which must be direct in content.

Summary

In this study session, we have been able to look at:

1. Headlines and their types
2. Elements of a good headline
3. Designing a good infographic worthy of upload
4. The need for short videos as tools for news dissemination

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: How can icons be used to improve visual appeal for a news headline?

Answer: Using icons in their highest quality and proper alignment can help direct the attention of the reader to the page contents.

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SAQ 2: Describe ChatGPT as a tool for headline generation.

Answer: ChatGPT, though not just peculiar to the media industry, can be useful for the online journalist. To develop the headline, put in the key prompts to generate your corresponding headline.

SAQ 3: Do you think YouTube has become another form of short-video platform for news?

Answer: Even YouTube is trying to surpass TikTok's viewership with the introduction of Shorts as one of the latest features. Having this in mind, news publishers now have a lot to experiment with in terms of video content and to engage their audiences. This is because evidence has shown that 66% of people daily use the video as their primary source of information.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. An editor is reviewing two headline options for an online article: one is vague and clickbait-driven, while the other clearly incorporates specific, high-intent keywords relevant to the story core. Which outcome best describes the strategic advantage of the second headline?

   A) It eliminates the need to write an introduction for the article.

   B) It improves Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) visibility and sets clear audience expectations.

   C) It guarantees the article cannot be copied by other outlets.

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D) It automatically formats the content into a short-form video.

Correct Answer: B) It improves Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) visibility and sets clear audience expectations.

Explanation: Accurate, keyword-rich headlines enhance search engine indexing and communicate clear relevance to readers, driving organic engagement without misleading the audience.

2. A newsroom wants to present complex statistical survey data regarding local economic trends in a highly shareable, easily digestible visual format. Which digital content type is best suited for this task?

   A) An audio podcast recording.

   B) A plain-text email newsletter.

   C) An interactive or static infographic.

   D) A long-form academic transcript.

   Correct Answer: C) An interactive or static infographic.

   Explanation: Infographics combine visual design with concise data presentation, making complex numerical statistics far easier to comprehend and share across digital platforms.

3. A digital media creator needs to adapt a 2,000-word investigative piece into short-form video content for social platforms. What core principle should guide the editing process?

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A) Reading the entire 2,000-word text aloud at high speed over background music.

B) Distilling the key narrative point into a concise hook within the opening seconds to maintain viewer attention.

C) Including every single secondary detail and source quote from the original text.

D) Removing all visual elements and displaying only static text slides.

Correct Answer: B) Distilling the key narrative point into a concise hook within the opening seconds to maintain viewer attention.

Explanation: Short-form videos rely on fast-paced, concise storytelling that captures audience attention immediately through strong initial visual and conceptual hooks.

4. Which type of headline structure is specifically designed to provoke curiosity while maintaining accurate context about a news development?

A) Purely descriptive summary headline.

B) Direct quote headline with zero context.

C) Question or forward-referencing informative headline.

D) Unrelated promotional advertisement headline.

Correct Answer: C) Question or forward-referencing informative headline.

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Explanation: Informative question or forward-referencing headlines engage readers' curiosity effectively while remaining truthful to the story's actual context.

5. When generating graphics for online news platforms, why is visual consistency (such as brand typography and colour schemes) critical?

   A) It ensures the image file size remains under one kilobyte.

   B) It builds immediate brand recognition and visual trust across varied social feeds.

   C) It prevents search engines from indexing the image.

   D) It automatically translates the graphic text into multiple foreign languages.

   Correct Answer: B) It builds immediate brand recognition and visual trust across varied social feeds.

   Explanation: Maintaining consistent visual design elements across graphics allows audiences to instantly identify and trust content originating from a specific news brand.

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss the infographic as a form of visual news content?
2. What are short-form video contents?
3. Discuss the emotional online headline with relatable examples?

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4. Using numbers on the headline can heighten curiosity and predictability. Discuss with examples?

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Study Session Eleven:

Content Management And Publishing

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Introduction

The final phase of the digital news lifecycle involves publishing, organising, and optimising content within Content Management Systems (CMS). In contemporary digital newsrooms, a CMS—such as WordPress, Drupal, or proprietary media engines—serves as the technical foundation that allows journalists to draft, format, schedule, and distribute news without requiring deep programming knowledge. However, effectively utilising a CMS goes beyond simple text input; it requires a comprehensive understanding of media asset management, workflow automation, categorised metadata tagging, and platform-specific formatting.

Beyond publishing mechanics, online journalists must master Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to ensure news stories remain discoverable in a competitive digital marketplace. Applying core SEO principles—including keyword research, meta descriptions, image alt-text, header hierarchy, and internal linking—directly influences how search engine algorithms index and rank news content. Furthermore, content distribution strategy relies heavily on strategic timing and automated scheduling. Analysing audience behaviour metrics allows publishers to schedule posts during peak engagement windows, maximising readership and interaction across multiple platforms. This session explores the essential features and benefits of CMS platforms, details foundational SEO strategies for digital reporters, and examines best practices for post scheduling and audience reach optimisation.

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Learning Outcomes For Study Session Eleven

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

11.1. Discuss how the content management system works

11.2. Enumerate the Search Engine Optimisation basics for the online journalist

11.3. Explain how to apply Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) techniques to improve online news visibility.

11.4. Ascertain the best times to post online materials as an online journalist

11.5. Evaluate the role of metadata, taxonomy, and content categorisation in managing digital news archives efficiently.

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11.1 Introduction to Content Management Systems

The content management system will involve all of the application that can enable the journalist to create, edit and produce contents alongside safe keeping of the developed digital content. The web content management in this instance is a subsidiary of the content management system (Adam, 2024). Basically the content management offers users graphics enabling tools to develop their websites and even make public what they have on their website without the stress of first developing some codes. Before deciding on which of the content management systems to use for your personal website or the organisation as a journalist, you need to be sure that it has an easy-to-use editor interface and very smart search capabilities. Some of the popular content management system providers are Drupal, Joomla, Word press and others. The content management system has two major variants;

- The application for the content management
- The application for content delivery

The Application for the Content Management: This is an interface permitting the use of graphics for the journalist and even lifting the content from the website without the knowledge of the hypertext markup language.

The Application for Content Delivery Management: This grants the journalist access to the back-end services that back the management and presentation of a content once the user develops this in the content management application.

In the content management system, there is an interplay between the web

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content management, enterprise content management and the general content management system. The web content management system operates like the enterprise content management but differs in that the latter is used mostly for websites bordering on the economy or even a product page, while the web content management system encourages contributory content development. Hence, we take a quick look at the major features of the content management systems.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: Name one popular content management application.

ITA 1: Wordpress.org

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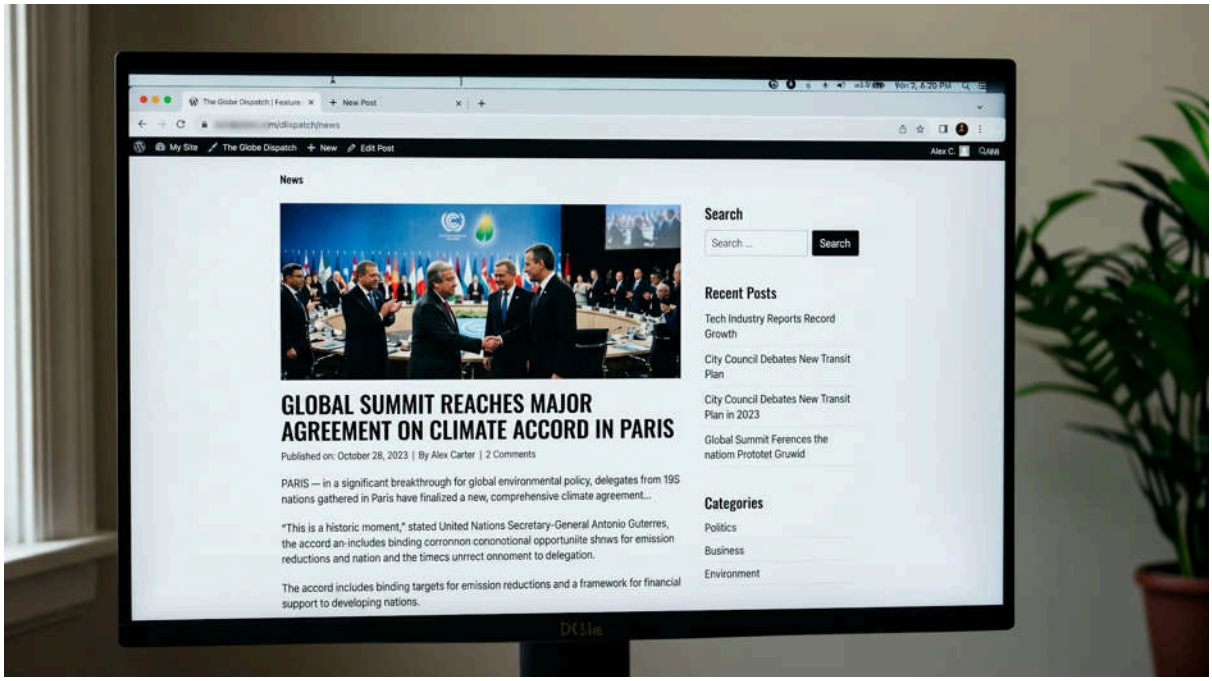


Figure 11.1: A published story on WordPress

11.1.1 Features of the Content Management System

- **Revision Elements:** This permits the journalist/user the ability to update and enhance the content after churning out an initial post.
- **Uploading the Content:** This element of the content management system makes it possible for the user to pick a predetermined layout approved by an organisation or some technical experts for their content creation.
- **Convertibility:** As an element of the content management system, this enables the journalist/user to convert scanned and electronic documents into the hypertext markup language or even the portable document format.
- **Searching and Retrieval Made Easy:** The online user can easily access documents on the web content management system by filtering documents with the upload date, key prompts and even the author' s

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name.

- **One-to-one Marketing:** This feature of the content management system allows the website to bring down their content to serve a particular audience interest or online community. Example: type male wears online; this will display most fashion houses selling male outfits instead of female outfits.

Other features of the content management system include integrated file managers, minimal server requirements, full template backup and custom templates.

11.1.2 Benefits of Utilising a Content Management System

Using the content management system has a whole lot of functions which include but are not limited to:

- **Low Cost of Website Deployment:** Most of the content management system platforms are free, and even those who charge do not overprice. Regardless of which of the types of content management systems is in use, there is little or no need for a high-level internet skill.
- **Easy Navigation:** The content management system has an internal search ability allowing users to receive tons of information and lists from just one key prompt.
- **Multiple Interface:** The content management system allows for many users to publish from one site.
- **Real-time Update:** With the content management system, the publisher can easily harness and upload content as it happens notwithstanding the

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absence of the developer.

- **Remote Access:** The content management system, as you know, is cloud-based, and so as long as the user has comprehensive access to the internet, they can access content from any location.

In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: What does 'real time' mean for you in a content management system?

ITA 2: In the content management system, real-time updates enable the publisher to easily harness and upload content as it happens notwithstanding the absence of the developer.

11.2 SEO Basics for Journalists

Every second of the day, people are snooping around their devices and internet-powered gadgets just to know exactly what is happening around their environment. This makes them completely dependent on the journalist who in turn must understand and appreciate at most the basic search engine optimisation demand in order to reach the target audience of the journalist who are increasingly abandoning the traditional channels of communication.

What then is search engine optimisation?

It is all the activities geared at increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to a website using organic search engine results.' Basically, it will mean efforts from the journalist to push content to the top of search engines like Google to satisfy the increasing audience news demand. We will be considering below some of the

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basic search engine optimisation approaches to help the journalist:

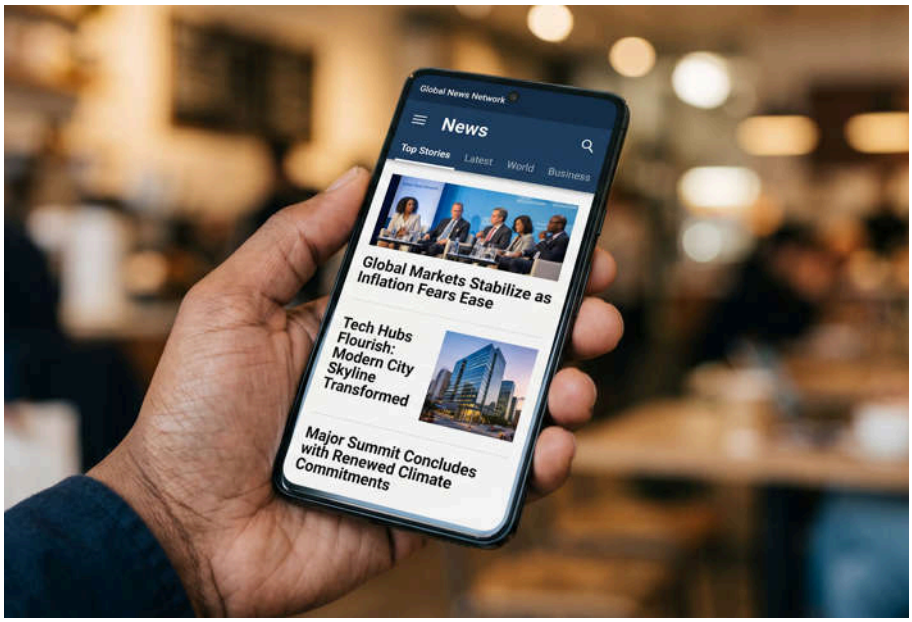


Figure 11.2: A published story

1. **Topping the Google Stories: The** report has it that most content featured in the snippets gets 2x more click-through rate (CTR) than others. These featured snippets came to be around 2014. These are also called the 'Answer Boxes' or 'Position 0' appearing at the top of the search engine bearing answers to your search query in the form of summaries. The best approach to getting your news website on the featured snippets of Google search engine results is by using question-based keywords instead of generic keywords.

ACTIVITY 11.1: Write a news story using any of the beginner questions of how, why, where or when?

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A simple clarity to what has been discussed above is to write news stories with these forms of beginners:

- How to?
- Why?
- Where?
- When to?
- Whom?

2. **Give Google News Publishing Centre Access to Your Website:** The Google News is a part of the Google search engine that checks through thousands of news websites and presents from there news-worthy stories to the users based on the users' preferences and interests. It is therefore imperative that the online journalist mark the right category for his/her published news in order to increase its chances of getting featured. To do this, you have to put up an online request, then apply the search console to verify the ownership of your news website with all the details like news section URLs and labels before checking in for a review. If Google accepts your application, you will find your website as "included" under the Google News section.

Your stories can then easily be found on the 'Featured Topics' and 'In the News' topics, which suggests the trending newsworthy keywords to your online. In 2016, Google replaced its 'In the News' section with 'Google Top Stories' highlighting the latest news stories of the day in a card-style format.

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3. **Adopt the AMP 'Stories' Format:** The Accelerated Mobile Pages are a look-like of the Instagram stories and Facebook stories that are told through multiple cards and come with an easy trappable interface. Here the AMP news stories will mix videos, texts and images into the AMP framework which when clicked, can expand to a full-page featured news story. AMP stories can be embedded across various websites and apps since they are more effective at keeping the users down than the usual news stories. AMP stories are carried on the publisher's website, which means they do not disappear after 24 hours like social media stories. Developing AMP stories for your news website as a journalist is important since it is optimised for mobile users with a faster loading time, engaging, and can also be shared easily across various platforms.



Figure 11.3: Online publications

4. **Structure your Website:** An online journalist should focus on a proper news website structure in order to top the search engines. Categorisation

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of stories is a sure bet here for people to easily find the news they want to read. For Google to index your news stories at the top, optimise your site speed and work on XML sitemaps. For the news site sitemaps, you need to keep latest stories on your site and avoid creating new sitemaps for each article but rather update the existing one.

5. **Build Quality Content:** This is an essential element of the search engine optimisation for the journalist. Be original in content and also build your news website around relevant, true stories and develop category pages for every kind of news. You can make your website content evergreen by optimising backward stories with relevant keywords and bringing them to newly published stories or trending news. Keep away from stories that can make Google flag down your site.
6. **Optimise properly:** It is not enough to optimise a page. This should be done correctly as well, keeping in mind the most essential elements of an on-page SEO optimisation, including:
    - **Headlines**: This should be clear and concise and also encourage the audience to click, having relevant keywords that can make it rank top in the search engine and keep the audience's interest to read more.
    - **URL**: Make them simple and straightforward. Avoid using linking words like 'and,' 'or.' etc. in your content. Universal Resource Locator and ensure the URL appears relevant to the news piece.
    - **Categorising**: Put contents into proper categories and tags to segregate them properly.

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- **Be Social**: Build social media profiles and share your latest news and content there. As a journalist, your news stories should be able to impact and educate your audience.

7. **Make Your Website Compatible for Mobiles:** According to Statista, in 2018, over 50% of all the existing websites are friendly for mobile users. If your news website is not mobile-friendly, you will lose out on the maximum traffic that comes to your site.

11.3 Scheduling and Timing Posts for Maximum Engagement

It is not enough to be able to manage contents properly or understand the search engine optimisation basics as an online/web journalist. To be able to drive the desired traffic and engage a particular group of audience on a social media post. You need to understand how to plan your posts and what time of the day is most suitable for such a post. Sharing your social media posts when everyone's online and willing to engage helps your content get noticed and shared more. And if you've a global audience, scheduling means you can get to them, no matter the time zone. Keeping to a regular posting schedule makes you reliable before your audience, and scheduling ahead makes you align your posts with any big events you're running to achieve social media success. Understanding the engagement metrics and analytics of your page as discussed extensively in study session 4 of this material will help you understand what time works with your audience. **However, we will borrow some of the algorithm presented by Alexandra, a content manager at SocialBee:**

What are the best days to make a social media post? Mondays through

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Fridays; they are optimal since they capture the audience when they're most engaged and possibly looking for a break in their weekly routine, making them more receptive to content. While we can say the worst times to post on Facebook is open late at night, from 8 PM to 8 AM, and also very early in the morning. This is because the user activity decreases significantly during these hours, as most people are winding down for the day or asleep, leading to lower engagement with posts.

For Instagram, there is a thing called ***the Explore page***, which is your passage to finding new trends. Instagram uses information about what you like to introduce you to new accounts and posts. Reels also work in a similar way, focusing on videos you've previously shown interest in and what's popular among users with preferences like yours. **Hence,** posting on Instagram at peak times means that there are more opportunities to get likes, comments, and shares from more people being online. This early engagement can make the algorithm show your content to even more users.

On X, formerly called Twitter, you've two tabs that can help tailor your scrolling experience:

- **The "For You" tab,** which shows your tweets, topics, and accounts you're likely to enjoy, based on previous likes and interactions.
- **The "Following" tab** shows you the latest tweets from the accounts you've decided to follow and keeps you abreast of their updates. Timing your tweets to coincide with when your audience is active, the journalist can increase the chances of your content appearing on both the "For You"

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tab for potential new followers and the “Following” tab for your current audience.

LinkedIn as a professional-focused social platform, takes you into your profile activities to get the content that interests you, even from outside your immediate circle. Posts that encourage conversations and share useful insights get extra attention. LinkedIn prefers in-depth discussions over simple likes.

ACTIVITY 11.2: Make a single social media post across platforms at different times to find out the peak time for the audience engagement and write this down to find out the best time to make a post!!

Conclusion

The search engine optimisation helps the journalist to increase the quantity and quality of traffic to a website using organic search engine results; understanding this will help the journalist to rank top of the news sites and Google. Again it is not enough to properly optimise your page or even have quality contents. The journalist must pay attention to his engagement metrics so as to learn the times and days of peak engagement from his audience; they may also be a little variable based on the social media platform.

Summary

In this study session, we have been able to look at

1. The concept of content management means for the journalist
2. The features of the content management system

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3. How to use the search engine optimisation as a journalist
4. How to schedule and time a social media post for maximum engagement

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: Why should a journalist use the content management system?

Answer: The content management system, as you know, is cloud-based, and so as long as the user has comprehensive access to the internet, they can access content from any location.

SAQ 2: What is search engine optimisation?

Answer: Basically, it will mean efforts from the journalist to push content to the top of search engines like Google to satisfy the increasing audiences' news demand.

SAQ 3: What do we mean by posting schedule?

Answer: Posting schedule in online journalism is the outline and plan used by the journalist in mapping and publishing his/her post to ensure that the audience engagement is high.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. A digital news organisation adopts a Content Management System (CMS) like WordPress for its editorial team. What is the primary functional advantage of implementing a CMS in a modern newsroom?

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A) It automates the writing of investigative journalism pieces without human input.

B) It allows non-technical creators to organise, edit, schedule, and publish digital media content efficiently.

C) It replaces the need for web hosting servers and internet connectivity.

D) It legally shields the publication from all copyright liability.

Correct Answer: B) It allows non-technical creators to organise, edit, schedule, and publish digital media content efficiently.

Explanation: A CMS provides a user-friendly interface that streamlines content creation, formatting, scheduling, and publication without requiring advanced programming knowledge.

2. A reporter optimises an online news article by inserting structured meta descriptions, image alt tags, and target keywords. What fundamental digital publishing strategy is being executed?

A) Digital Rights Management (DRM).

B) Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).

C) Peer-to-peer file sharing.

D) Offline distribution management.

Correct Answer: B) Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).

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Explanation: Structuring elements such as meta descriptions, alt text, and relevant keywords aligns with basic SEO practices to improve organic visibility on search engine result pages.

3. An audience editor analyses user interaction logs and determines that target readers are most active online between 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM on weekdays. How should the publication leverage this data?

   A) Stop publishing content during peak active hours to avoid server load.

   B) Schedule high-priority news stories to go live during these peak window times for maximum engagement.

   C) Publish all articles exclusively at midnight when site traffic is lowest.

   D) Delete older articles during peak hours to free up database bandwidth.

   Correct Answer: B) Schedule high-priority news stories to go live during these peak window times for maximum engagement.

   Explanation: Timing posts to align with audience activity analytics maximises reach, click-through rates, and social engagement.

4. Which built-in CMS feature directly assists editors in maintaining a consistent publication flow across multiple writers and time zones?

   A) Automated legal advice software.

   B) Editorial calendars and content scheduling tools.

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C) Hardware repair diagnostics.

D) Video rendering graphics card acceleration.

Correct Answer: B) Editorial calendars and content scheduling tools.

Explanation: Scheduling features within a CMS enable editors to organise publishing timelines and automate when stories go live, ensuring consistent content output.

5. Why are descriptive alternative text (alt text) tags essential when uploading images into a content management system?

A) They increase the resolution of low-quality photographs.

B) They improve accessibility for visually impaired readers using screen readers and aid search engine indexing.

C) They automatically watermark the image to prevent unauthorised downloads.

D) They reduce the bandwidth cost of hosting the website.

Correct Answer: B) They improve accessibility for visually impaired readers using screen readers and aid search engine indexing.

Explanation: Alt text provides context for screen readers used by visually impaired individuals and allows search engine crawlers to interpret image content accurately.

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Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss the benefits of the content management system?
2. List and discuss some features of the content management system?
3. Optimising social media post is important for the online journalist. Discuss?
4. Highlight some SEO basics for the online journalist?
5. Discuss the concept of ***'peak time'*** in social media post timing.

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Study Session Twelve:

Future Of Online Journalism

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Introduction

Study Session Twelve: Future Of Online Journalism

Introduction

The future of online journalism is defined by continuous technological innovation, shifting media economies, and evolving audience behaviours. As traditional publishing models continue to decentralise, the industry is experiencing a profound transformation driven by emerging technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Generative AI and automated journalism tools are redefining content creation, automated transcription, data-driven reporting, and personalised news feeds, while immersive media like AR and VR offer audiences unprecedented levels of presence and experiential storytelling.

However, technological integration alone is insufficient to sustain modern news organisations. The decline of print subscriptions and unpredictable programmatic advertising revenues necessitate new, sustainable business models for digital news, including paywalls, membership programs, microtransactions, and grant-funded non-profit journalism. Furthermore, as newsrooms adapt to hyper-personalised algorithms, synthetic media, and changing media consumption habits, journalists must cultivate strategic foresight. Navigating these future trends requires balancing technological innovation with editorial integrity, critical inquiry, and an unwavering commitment to core journalistic values. This session explores the transformative impact of

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emerging digital technologies, evaluates financial models for sustainable online publishing, and prepares journalists to proactively navigate future shifts in media production and distribution.

Learning Outcomes For Study Session Twelve

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

12.1. Discuss the newest technologies in journalism like the VR, AR & AI

12.2. Analyse the required model that can help sustain online news

12.3. Assess the future of the digital media as it relates to news dissemination

12.4. Evaluate the ethical, editorial, and labour implications of deploying Artificial Intelligence and automation in newsrooms.

12.5. Formulate strategic adaptations for legacy and startup media outlets to maintain operational resilience amidst technological disruption.

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12.1 Emerging Technologies in Journalism (AR, VR, AI)

The constant evolution in journalism owing to technological advancements seems to be overwhelming for the journalist who is yet to wake up from the challenges posed by social media as a digital platform for news dissemination. The begging question now remains: are we prepared to face the challenges from the emerging technologies in journalism, which are augmented reality, virtual reality and even artificial intelligence? This trio enables content creators to develop unique experiences that have brought the media users of their content into a special world. We take a look at what each of these emerging technologies can do in the business of content creation for the digital platforms:

- **AR:** This makes interactive design solutions very possible to the user in real-time through virtual elements replicating reality.
- **VR:** In the years to come this digital evolvement will make it easier for the online journalist to tell their stories in more exciting manners that can make the user a part of the plot. Since it makes the user feel that they are in the real environment where such an action is taking place.
- **AI:** These enhance efficiency for the media organisation since machines are going to be programmed to learn and think like humans.

As these digital technologies are evolving and as journalists anticipate a complete overturn in the business of journalism, it is safe to say that they are not here to replace the journalist but rather to ease the workload in the process of news gathering, packaging and news content dissemination.

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In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 1: What is AR?

ITA 1: This makes interactive design solutions very possible to the user in real-time through virtual elements replicating reality.

ACTIVITY 12.1: Using your Snapchat filter, create and record a particular augmented reality!

However, we expect these trio to help the journalist:

- Tell their stories in a way that it resonates better with the audience.
- Build distinct and powerful visuals that no one has ever envisaged.
- Distribute their contents faster to the target audience due to the AI analytics.
- Optimise their content for easy adoption by the target audience.
- Create more innovative adverts to sell products.

It is safe to say that the AR, VR and AI will not just influence the way journalists process, package and distribute their content, but even media consumption is going to witness a diversion as users are tilting towards having a personalised immersive environment with the AR and VR gradually thinning the line between the physical and digital society through additions of digital components mimicking the real-world experience.

Let's consider some practical applications of VR, AR and AI even as these tools continue to evolve.

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AR––*The possibility of the application of filters on pictures and videos using social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat is made possible through the use of augmented reality.*

VR––Most of the cinematic experiences in films are made possible through the use of the elements constituting technology's capability to bring an immersion. This makes it possible for storytellers to achieve scenes that were previously almost impossible.

A1––*A common example is ChatGPT, which provides the journalist with answers to questions from various sectors of society and life issues to enhance his/her writings.*

In media advertising, the intersection of AR and VR provides an experience that makes media messages almost unforgettable. Take a look at the Coca-Cola VR sleigh campaign that skyrocketed their customer patronage.

12.2 Sustainable Models for Online News

The Internet as a news publishing site now requires journalists to redesign their activities as journalists to match up with the peculiarities of the new media. Scholars of the networked society as a new way of living say that the roles for news selection and production are gradually shifting from publishers, editors and reporters to individual media users. A new media commentator, Jon Katz, has been asking insistently if the traditional media can still survive in the face of the new media, as he painted the picture of the backwardness of the traditional media: media audiences are in chunks, integrated into different online communities, which permits the widespread of individual opinion all over the

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country as against the newspapers, televisions and radios. In more grounded analyses, online journalism is widely taken to represent a new model of journalism. Prior now, the traditional media of communication presented communication vertically, but with the overwhelming growth of the new media driven by digital and internet-powered devices. Communication has become a horizontal process (Bardoel, 1996) serving relevant issues from an array of information in a crowded public domain and its fragmented segments. In a similar vein, Schudson has suggested that with the online journalism introducing the horizontal model of communication, media consumers are now handicapped with understanding the legitimacy of stories, turning media professionals whose ideal roles were sourcing of news and reporters to interpreters (Schudson, 1995). In one of the few books attempting to synthesise the experiences and implications of online journalism as a horizontal model of communication. Jim Hall addresses the change of journalism's role as "that of authenticators and designers" whose map the audience has to follow (Hall, 2001). Little wonder, John Pavlik, of Columbia University's New Media Centre, while discussing the new media, asked to know the responsibilities for journalists in an age where citizens can increasingly be the source of news. For him;

- Journalism should embrace the new media due to its capability of setting up communities who have shared interests and worries.
- Embrace this horizontal model of communication with unlimited space for reportorial depth, texture, and context that are difficult with any other medium

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In-Text Question and Answer (ITQ and ITA)

ITQ 2: Online journalism may likely be redesigning the role of today's journalist?

ITA 2: media professionals whose ideal roles were sourcing of news and reporters are gradually also becoming interpreters for news sources.

12.3 Preparing for Future Trends in Digital Media

As the media sector continues to witness a very huge evolution due to the digital landscape, which has not largely crippled the traditional media but has influenced content creation, running ahead should be a major concern for the online journalist. Predicting the future of communication in the wake of continuous digital upgrades should force the journalist into devising plans towards remaining in the business of news journalism. This is because the upcoming trend is going to be more interactive than what we have already. Currently in 2024, most media professionals and organisations have gradually infused the use of short-video forms for their news, as in ***reels*** for Facebook and TikTok accounts and even ***shorts*** for the YouTube pages. Even the ***podcast*** being distributed on different social platforms may likely take over the traditional radio transmission since almost the same experience is now digital with a lesser cost of production. The virtual reality and the augmented reality, as they continue to evolve, present that immersive environment for the media user. Gradually, the era of journalists digging into archives and histories is gradually becoming an old discourse with the introduction of AI tools such as ChatGPT for text generation, image creation and even music production. In the submission made by Gartner, by 2025 AI will be responsible for 30% of most content digitally.

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Also, with the hyper-personalisation element of the AI over 80% of media consumers will be saturated with content without raising a brow. According to the submissions from the Pew Research centre, the digitalisation of the media industry is evolving everyday as the news consumption online is over 80%. Recall that virtual reality creates the environment, while augmented reality enhances the physical images in the immersive environment, which can even help the print media to blend pictures and texts enhanced by VR into a personal experience powered by the AI. Having meshed the future offers of the VR, AR and AI, it is safe to highlight some of these likely trends as the future of the digital media in communication:

- New job roles: media influencing is almost a full-blown job for most people whose duty is to engage others through building a peculiar niche.
- There will be a need for stricter regulations to keep the digital space sane due to the increasing number of social media platforms and even the citizen journalists.
- Increased social activism online, as people can recruit others to join them in the pursuit of a particular social issue through posts.
- Loss of job for the journalist who has little or no skill with navigating through the digital platforms.

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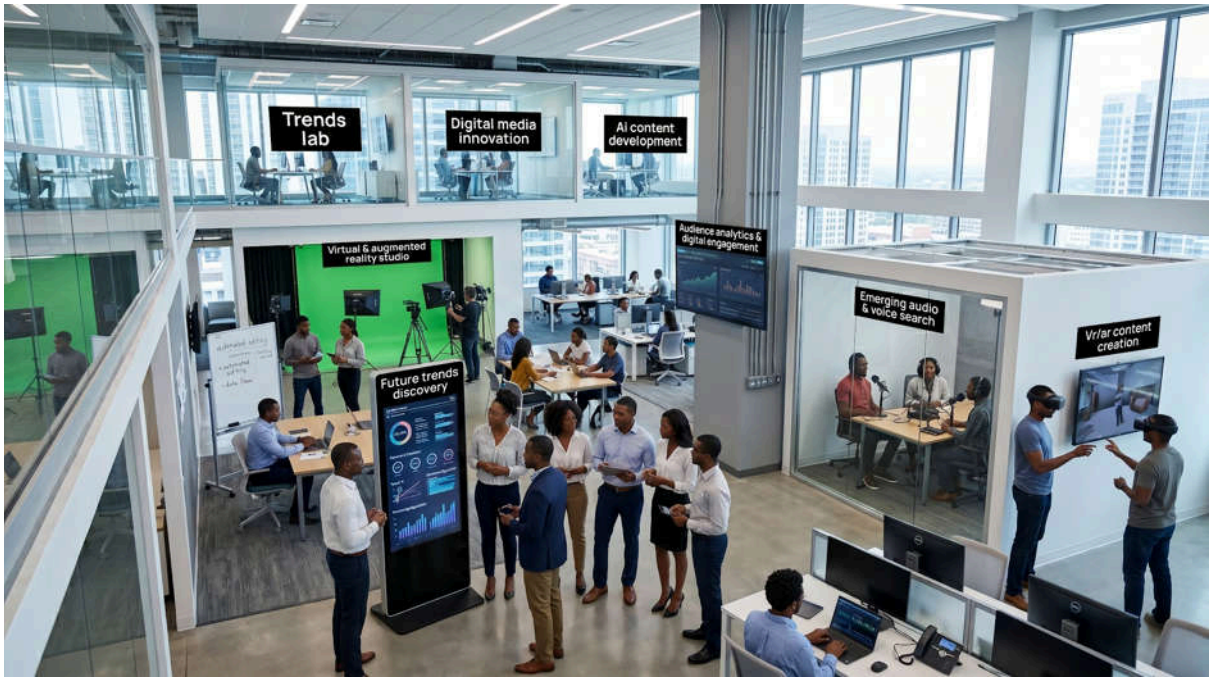


Figure 12.1: A mass media house preparing for the future

ACTIVITY 12.1: Take a close and careful observation of media organisations well known to you, either the print or broadcast, and clearly spell out how they are gradually blending into the dynamics presented by the digital media!!

Conclusion

The VR, AR and AI are the latest babies as they concern the continuous birth of digital platforms changing the order of things in the media space. The only sustainable model in the current trend of online journalism is the horizontal approach wherein the media user/consumer is part of the process of content generation, and the role of the journalist is largely no longer that of news gathering and reporting but also an interpreter for the user who is not sure of the legitimacy of some news sources in the face of information overload. The future of the media is almost predictable; if the traditional media and journalists do not

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brace up to the trends of new media and digitalisation, they run the risk of leaving the media space.

Summary

In this study session we have been able to underscore:

1. VR, AR & AI as the newest technologies in journalism
2. The horizontal communication as the required model that can help sustain online news
3. The future of digital media as one coming with a bang for those who are media intelligent and abreast of the peculiarities of each of the digital platforms.

Self-Assessment Questions and Answers (SAQs and SAAs)

SAQ 1: What is Augmented Reality?

Answer: This emerging technology makes it easier for the media user to have a complete feel of what the environment under discourse looks like owing to an immersive environment powered by technology. Imagine narrating the ecosystem and you, the user, having a direct immersion into the ecosystem.

SAQ 2: The media user is the message generator?

Answer: Understanding this as an online journalist will make you understand your new role as a journalist, not limited to news gathering and reporting, in order to match up with the demands of online journalism currently.

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SAQ 3: What is the future of the media with the current trends in journalism?

Answer: The future of journalism with AR, VR and AI is less stressful for the journalist and more personal for the consumer, even as we await more evolutions in digital communication.

Multiple-Choice Questions and Answers (MCQs and MCAs)

1. A news platform incorporates Virtual Reality (VR) technology into an investigative documentary series. What primary immersive experience does VR offer news consumers that traditional video cannot?

   A) Faster text reading speeds.

   B) A fully immersive, 360-degree environment that fosters strong spatial presence and empathy.

   C) Automatic verification of all facts presented in the story.

   D) Elimination of the need for audio narration.

   Correct Answer: B) A fully immersive, 360-degree environment that fosters strong spatial presence and empathy.

   Explanation: VR technology places the user inside a simulated environment, offering spatial immersion that allows audiences to experience news events with heightened presence.

2. A digital publication transitions away from sole reliance on banner advertisement revenues by introducing reader subscriptions,

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memberships, and specialised newsletters. What core challenge in modern digital media does this address?

A) The technical inability to store web pages on cloud servers.

B) The financial instability of ad-dependent business models in digital newsrooms.

C) The legal requirement to eliminate paid editorial staff.

D) The complete disappearance of mobile phone web browsing.

Correct Answer: B) The financial instability of ad-dependent business models in digital newsrooms.

Explanation: Diversifying revenue through subscriptions and memberships creates sustainable business models that reduce reliance on volatile digital advertising income.

3. How can Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools be most responsibly integrated into newsroom workflows to support journalists without compromising editorial integrity?

A) By allowing AI to independently generate, edit, and publish news stories without human oversight.

B) By using AI to automate repetitive tasks like transcription, basic data analysis, and initial research draftings, subject to human editorial review.

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C) By deploying AI to fabricate quotes from public figures to speed up story production.

D) By replacing all human investigative reporters with automated scripts.

Correct Answer: B) By using AI to automate repetitive tasks like transcription, basic data analysis, and initial research draftings, subject to human editorial review.

Explanation: AI functions ethically as an efficiency tool for data processing and administrative support, provided human journalists retain oversight and final editorial control.

4. A media organisation invests in training its journalists to use data analysis tools, multimedia production suites, and cross-platform verification software. Which forward-looking digital media strategy does this reflect?

A) Preparing the workforce for technological convergence and evolving digital storytelling methods.

B) Abandoning digital journalism to return exclusively to print printing presses.

C) Restricting news distribution solely to radio broadcasting frequencies.

D) Reducing the technical standards required for news production.

Correct Answer: A) Preparing the workforce for technological convergence and evolving digital storytelling methods.

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Explanation: Continuous upskilling equips newsrooms to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies and cross-platform storytelling demands in modern digital ecosystems.

5. What role does Augmented Reality (AR) play in enhancing digital news stories on mobile devices?

   A) It completely replaces the physical phone screen with sound waves.

   B) It overlays interactive 3D digital elements and contextual information onto the real-world view via a device camera.

   C) It converts text articles into physical paper copies automatically.

   D) It blocks users from interacting with social media comments.

   Correct Answer: B) It overlays interactive 3D digital elements and contextual information onto the real-world view via a device camera.

   Explanation: AR overlays digital graphics or context directly onto a user's real-world environment through smartphone screens, enriching narrative depth and audience engagement

Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA)

1. Discuss extensively the impact of AI on news gathering?
2. Discuss media consumption in the wake of digital evolution?
3. Narrate the impact of VR in media content creation?

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4. What is the place of today's journalists envisaging the future trend with digital media?

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Glossary of Terms

Content: This is what the online journalist decides to share with his media audience in words, images or sounds and even videos.

Digital Devices: They are the media of sending and receiving messages made possible by the internet, such as the digital television, smartphones, laptops and others.

Fact-checking: This means to verify the authenticity of a news story.

Hypertext: This is the element of the digital platforms that helps connect pages with related content, making the content creator or journalist powerless towards determining what the audience should read, since one click offers the same content from another creator.

Internet Users: Anyone utilising the contents from any of the digital or social media platforms is an internet user.

New Media: These are the latest platforms/channels of message distribution, made possible through the use of the internet and digital equipment such as social media, blogs, podcasts, etc.

Online Community: This is a group of people coming together due to tribe, religion, social affiliation or any other interest and being able to communicate and maintain virtual relationships using any of the social media platforms.

Online Journalism: This is the activity of news gathering, reporting and distribution using the new media of communication.

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Platforms: These are different online spaces where the online journalist can share his/her content, and almost all of these platforms allow for interactivity between the journalist and the online user, either by comments, likes or other means. These platforms are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and podcasts, etc.

Publishing: The process of making news stories, images or even videos public by either writing, broadcasting or uploading such content.

User Generated: These are contents developed by or emanating from the online user.

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