

A Power Shift in Journalism with Social Media: How the Attitudes about Traditional Newspapers Influence on Preference for the Online Citizen Journalism?

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Abstract

Smartphones and social networking services are changing the journalism. Now citizens as readers are becoming accepted as active and important. Accordingly, it is important to study 'why does citizens participate in journalism?' because it can lead us to the answer of 'how do we make journalism communicate more with citizens for the future'. Especially, it is significant to research the relationship between attitudes about the traditional journalism before the emergence of the Internet and the preference on the online citizen journalism. This research investigates how the attitudes about traditional newspapers influence on preference for the online citizen journalism by comparing two similar citizen journalism websites in two different societies. In this research, Oh My News (OMN) and Japanese websites such as JanJan and OMN Japan which are both modeled on the system of OMN are mainly analyzed.

Keywords: *Citizen journalism, Professional journalism, OMN system, PE system, Oh my news, JanJan*

1. Introduction

With the emergence of online journalism and use of social media, it looks that the concepts of 'readers and writers' or 'producers and consumers of information' are becoming less distinct. Readers and writers communicate with each other; consumers are now producing news and decide what news is and what is not.

Consequently, citizens as readers are becoming accepted as active and important. For example, Google started a program called 'Google News Lab Fellowship' from 2013 to conduct a study on how to make citizen participates more actively in making news. This program explains its goal to create a new journalism model that citizen and journalism experts can cooperate closely. The New York Times also encourages readers to be journalists. It has been implemented a system called 'Public editor' which enables the readers to monitor the articles and to criticize.

Accordingly, it is important to study 'why does citizens participate in journalism?' because it can lead us to the answer of 'how do we make journalism communicate more efficiently with citizens for the future'. Especially, it is significant to research the relationship between attitudes about the traditional journalism before the emergence of the Internet and the preference on the online citizen journalism. It can be investigated

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that how the pre-existing relationships between citizens and journalism in traditional expert-centered journalism connect or shift to the online public journalism.

This research investigates how the attitudes about traditional newspapers influence on the preference for the online citizen journalism by comparing two similar citizen journalism websites in two different societies. In this research, Oh My News (OMN) and Japanese websites such as JanJan and OMN Japan which are both modeled on the system of OMN are mainly analyzed.

2. Citizen journalism

2.1. Citizen journalism in 1980s and online citizen journalism

A term of citizen journalism has been around since the 1980 from the United States of America and defined in various ways by researchers. For example, Kim Byung-Chul [1] defines the citizen journalism as a relationship model between the public and the mass media. Kim Min-ha [2] explains it as an innovative movement which tries to change the role of mass media from the traditional information deliverer into an active role that inspires the citizens to participate more for the society.

Also, some researchers use the term of citizen journalism together with public journalism. According to Choi Young [3], Rosen and Merritt used 'public journalism' while Fouhy preferred the term 'civic journalism'. Choi Young also analyzed that the meaning and usage of the two terms have a lot in common and the words have rather various meanings than have a standardized definition. In conclusion, civic journalism can be explained as information produced by citizens and as journalism inspiring civic consciousness.

Meanwhile Bowman & Willis [4] pointed out the limit of the civic journalism in 1980's that the participation of citizens was highly controlled by journalists. For example, the journalists selected citizens as participants for the news and also, they were the only who set the news agendas.

Internet was the breakthrough to overcome this limit of the former citizen journalism. Citizens now produce the news information directly online. According to Allan [5], online citizen journalism such as citizen-produced coverage or DIY reporting has appeared since September 11th attacks 2001. Citizens stepped out on the street and reported the news directly through the Internet. Since then, citizens and their participation in producing the news have been important in journalism fields.

2.2. OMN, JanJan and OMN Japan

'Oh My News (OMN)' is an Internet newspaper published in February 2000 in Republic of Korea. It is known as one of the pioneers that brought its own public editor system that anyone registered can write articles into Korea for the first time.

Ham Young-Jun [6] said that there are only a few examples of Korean Internet newspapers including OMN that have been recorded surplus and survived until the late 2000's. OMN indeed shows a considerable increase of the number of the registered public editors from 27 in the first year to 83,000 in 2016. The public editors in OMN have written approximately 852,000 articles since the publication.

JanJan is an Internet newspaper website brought the public editor system of OMN into Japan for the first time in 2003. Ken Takeuchi, a journalist of distinction in Japan,

established this newspaper on February 2003 and the name of the website is an abbreviation of ‘Japan Alternative News for Justice and New Cultures’.

OMN Japan is also known as a pioneer in the online citizen journalism field in Japan. This newspaper was established by OMN Korea in August 2006. In the homepage of Softbank Group in Japan, it is announced that ‘SOFTBANK CORP and OhmyNews Co., Ltd. have reached an agreement that Softbank will invest 693 million yen in OhmyNews International Corp., which OMN plans to establish as its Japanese arm’.

However, these two Japanese websites both closed their business in about 10 years from the foundation unlike the example of OMN Korea. This is a remarkable result because OMN Korea was published on a small scale while there was a huge amount of investment or the famous journalist was related in the publication of JanJan or OMN Japan.

This research emphasizes the different attitudes about traditional newspapers between Korea and Japan and explains that this different result of OMN, JanJan and OMN Japan happened because the two different attitudes influenced on preference for the online citizen journalism.

3. Research method used

In this research, in-person interviews with 4 main founders of OMN and 3 Japanese journalists who imported the system of OMN were mainly analyzed. Related data was used additionally.

The interview was conducted with people who have been working or worked for each of their newspapers from the first step for publication. These interviewees were set to hear the opinions of the people who decided everything about the publication and the close of the services. Especially, in cases of Japan, to meet every main founder failed because some of them are no longer possible to contact and interview.

Table 1. The interviewees

| Interviewees | Newspapers | Positions |
|--------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| A | OMN | Chief editor |
| B | OMN | Reporter |
| C | OMN | Reporter (Former chief editor) |
| D | OMN | Deputy managing editor |
| E | JanJan | Director |
| F | JanJan | Chief editor |
| G | OMN Japan | The second chief editor |

4. Conclusions

The attitudes about traditional newspapers between Korea and Japan show a different tendency. First of all, in Japan, there are many research data that Japanese thinks the traditional newspapers as prestigious and reliable mass media. In the interview of this

research, Japanese interviewees who even brought the citizen journalism into Japan as an alternative news media showed a favorable attitude about traditional newspapers.

G (OMN Japan): “People trust in print media so much. People think the newspapers are much more reliable and authentic than other news medias. Newspaper circulation between Japan and Korea are totally different and I think this shows that people basically trust in the newspaper even though the Internet news medias have been growing. I also trust in the traditional newspapers like Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi more than any Internet newspapers that might be inaccurate”

According to Hashimoto [7], Japanese trusts in the traditional newspapers more than Internet as a media that they can get information on trends and issues from.

Table 2. Where the Japanese get information on trends and issues? (%)

| | TV | Radio | Newspapers | Magazines | Books | Internet |
|------|------|-------|------------|-----------|-------|----------|
| 2000 | 55.9 | 1.5 | 39.1 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 0.4 |
| 2005 | 56.7 | 2.3 | 34.5 | 0.4 | 1.5 | 3.7 |
| 2010 | 55.2 | 1.6 | 30.5 | 0.5 | 1.8 | 9.0 |

In Korea, On the other hand, people trust in Internet more than newspapers according to the data of audience research report announced by the Korea Press Foundation in 2015. This data also shows that the credibility of newspapers has been declined steadily since 2000 while in case of Internet it has been increased consistently. [8]

Table 3. Trust in news medias in Korea (Year/%)

| | 2000 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TV | 61.9 | 48.4 | 62.2 | 66.6 | 60.7 | 75.4 | 72.1 | 72.0 | 73.4 | 65.7 | 73.2 |
| Internet | 10.8 | 8.5 | 16.3 | 12.8 | 20.0 | 10.8 | 13.8 | 15.9 | 17.9 | 23.9 | 17.4 |
| Newspapers | 24.3 | 19.9 | 16.1 | 18.5 | 16.0 | 13.1 | 11.8 | 10.6 | 7.2 | 8.1 | 8.0 |
| Radio | 2.5 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 1.4 | 2.7 | 0.6 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 0.8 |
| Magazines | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.5 |

In Korea, citizens have been tried to alternate the traditional journalism since the emergence of the Internet. The parody newspapers were one of the early forms of alternative journalism. ‘Ddanji Ilbo’ was one of the most famous parody newspapers in the late 1990s. The political satires and sarcastic articles were the main contents of the parody newspapers and the targets for satire were mainly the authority or the political power of the traditional newspapers and politicians.

However, most of the parody newspapers were short-lived and Kim Jong-Kil (2005) pointed out that it is because of the financial difficulties and the fact that people didn’t think the websites were professional and reliable enough as newspapers. [9]

Online citizen newspapers including OMN emerged after most of the parody newspapers closed in the early 2000s. According to the interview, OMN was published for media diversity and the balanced environment of journalism fields in Korea.

A(OMN): “(We decided to publish OMN) because people started an anti-Chosun Ilbo campaign at that time on the Internet and the traditional newspapers were losing their authority.

D(OMN): “Yeon-Ho Oh, the founder of OMN, opened a ‘citizen journalism school’. He met the main members of the publication there and they all agreed with his idea of ‘now in the environment of Korean journalism the conservative and the progressive newspapers are not balanced. It is like 8:2 and we have to keep it balanced into 5:5.’”

The interviewees in OMN said that the emergence of the Internet and a critical attitude about the traditional newspapers worked as a background of OMN’s publication. Also, they said that this unfavorable attitude explains the reason why the number of registered public editors has increased rapidly, why the citizens participated actively and why people voluntarily supported OMN financially.

In conclusion, it can be said that the two different attitudes about the traditional newspapers between Korea and Japan influenced on the different level of preference for the online citizen journalism. In Japan, citizens demanded for citizen journalism less than in Korea because Japanese citizens trust in the traditional newspapers and it was not needed very much to alter it. Also, people think the information from Internet is not reliable enough and it can be one more main reason why the online citizen journalism was not accepted actively.

In Korea, on the other hand, it can be analyzed that the criticizing attitudes and the low level of trust in the traditional newspapers that has been existed since before the emergence of the Internet formed a movement to have an alternative news media in the early 2000s. Moreover, the public editor system of OMN matched the demand of people who have been wanted to participate in journalism by writing articles and reporting. These two were the main social factors why the online citizen journalism accepted more actively in Korea than in Japan.

Nowadays, social network service is changing the online journalism fields again in the new Internet environment. Citizens now can participate in journalism in more various ways than ever and in this changing world of Internet, another transformation is required for the existing online citizen journalism. At the same time, the change is also required for the traditional journalism too. As a result, with the change of media environment, both traditional and online citizen newspapers are now facing new phase.

For the traditional journalism, it is needed to enrich communications with citizens as readers based on their professionalism of the news reporting. For this, it is necessary to build up new categories of news reporting. Meanwhile, for the existing online citizen journalism, it is necessary to increase the credibility of news reporting by creating coexistence environment for professional journalists and citizens. Also, it is required to develop various profit models based on the participation of citizens to stabilize the business.

Now a power shift in journalism fields is in progress. In the future, the most important value for both traditional and online citizen journalism will be the participation of citizens.

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