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Article:	Cycles of Needs and Wants: Entrepreneurial Journalism in Pakistan
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ABSTRACT

Technological convergence has created an opportunity for journalists to navigate through the consequential media convergence and create their individual space in the market economy. New digital technology helps individuals to produce and broadcast different types of content encouraging varieties of entrepreneurial journalism. This study aims to explore the reasons and practices of digital entrepreneurial journalism in Pakistan and the role of mobile media technology nowadays. For this purpose, we conducted interviews with 30 entrepreneurs who are running their YouTube news channels. It was revealed that the layoffs of journalists from the media industry along with the filtering and priming of news by media conglomerates contributed to journalists looking for alternatives. Data collected about the role of smartphone technology disclosed that media convergence has made smartphones a primary and affordable means to reach the singular mega platform for information dissemination. Various smart applications provide economical broadcasting techniques to reach multiple online platforms. This research further exposes entrepreneurial journalism as an emerging need of Pakistani journalism rather than just an opportunity due to the possession of freedom of expression and economic independence.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Journalism, Smartphones, Technological Convergence, Digitalization, Media Convergence.

Introduction

A nation, Pakistan, which ranks at 145 in the World Press Freedom Index and undergoes sanctions, censorship, and layoffs of journalists has seen a rising trend in entrepreneurial journalism. In the digital age with access to technology, one often deems this rising trend as a consequence of this effective medium of information dissemination provided by the mass media. Individuals are producing content for social media using smartphones' digital production technology equipped with a camera, graphic designing, video editing, and highlighting cues which fulfill major requirements of content production (Hou, 2019; Pakistan, n.d.).

One has to find out the extent to which intuitive and user-friendly technology (Bird, 2011) plays its role as an opportunity for entrepreneurial journalism in the Pakistani stratosphere. A country that has been facing problems in editorial independence and falls victim to the power dynamics of conglomerates and institutional hierarchy makes one question the use of entrepreneurial journalism as a means to an end. According to the Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ), 3105 media workers lost their jobs from 2019 to 2020. Journalism in Pakistan has always been a challenging task, *"Imran Khan's government, however, has caused the biggest blow to the media in Pakistan's history, leaving thousands of journalists unemployed,"* claimed Hassan Abbas, KUJ president. While, Shahzada Zulfiqar, President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) said, *"This government has virtually strangled all journalists by tightening its hold on media houses,"* with 2020 being the worst year for press freedom with layoffs and the demise of 4 journalists while more than two dozen faced court trials. On-duty journalists have been falling victim to "mysterious" "nameless and unidentified actors." The media industry of Pakistan which employs almost 250,000 people is not only at risk from the state policies and political elite but it has also fallen victim to the COVID-19 pandemic (Khan, 2020; Saeed, 2021).

Amid this crisis, the digital platform has provided the space for Pakistani journalists to continue disseminating information. The pandemic acted as a catalyst in ensuring a swift shift from mainstream media to digital media. The "online-only media platforms such as Sujag, Humsub, Naya Daur and The Current as well as the digital operations of mainstream media groups like Dawn and Jang" have proven to show a high increase in traffic during this time (Rehmat, 2020). Technological convergence has simplified the process of content production which has enabled journalists to continue their practices. In the globalized world of today, adapting the advancing technologies has become a necessity in all industries and the media industry's digitization is foreseen as a probable outcome of technological convergence. Entrepreneurial journalism is supplemented by technological convergence as it provides economic independence with ease of content production with smartphones and a surge in advanced applications for editing and production purposes (Gasher, 2019; Salamzadeh et al., 2019).

Where one might look at advanced technologies as the purpose behind entrepreneurial journalism, the socio-economic conditions of Pakistan make one question the exponential rise as a means to an end rather than a consequence of technological advancement. The study aims to

identify the purpose behind the rise in entrepreneurial journalism and the extent of its relevance to affordable technologies. Is this shift a consequence of layoffs? Or paucity of editorial freedom?

Literature Review

A world embarking on technological convergence has seen a rising trend in entrepreneurial journalism. “Entrepreneurial Journalism describes a field of media where journalism is the underlying discipline upon which to create content-based businesses and services that can make money” (Bhargava, 2011). The emergence of cheap and simple technologies that helps to interact with all kinds of media forums (Bird, 2011) has also opened the way for freelance young journalists (Salamzadeh et al., 2019), and we can recognize that entrepreneurial journalism is going to become an impressive domain due to the loss of jobs from media industry (Hassan, 2018). Online startups are taking the lead in the field of journalism with the help of mobile devices and social media (Hee, 2013). Now, most of the news content is produced keeping in mind the users of Facebook and Twitter, however, YouTube is a basic platform to channelize the work and has become a new hub of freelancers and entrepreneurial journalism (Hadland et al., 2019; Singh, 2020). Entrepreneurial journalists are self-employed, make financial decisions (Massey & Elmore, 2013), and earn more as compared to the employees of mainstream media outlets (Willnat & Weaver, 2018).

A nation like Pakistan in the globalized world of today has also seen a rising trend in entrepreneurial journalism. The purpose behind this rise, however, is what concerns this research paper. It is a study to find the extent of relevancy of technological convergence in the rise and how other socio-economic and political factors played a role in this enhanced means of communication.

The fourth industrial revolution and technology

Technological convergence derived from the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" where a disruptive innovation will expand the market economy as new demand is created via digital technology. It is the fusion of digital technology with the "third industrial revolution (representative of digital technology creating new demand in the market space), and physical and biological fields,” as explained by Hang Sik Park in his research titled, *Technology convergence, open innovation, and dynamic economy*. According to Park, technological convergence is the new aspect to the varieties of technology which he claims, “*is expected to serve as a catalyst to boost creative convergence.*” This advancement has resulted in a set of “new values” in the market space. The change in the value curve has also created space in information communication and one cannot deny entrepreneurial journalism as the “disruptive innovation” Parks mentions in his research (Park, 2017).

Technological Convergence creating a pathway for Entrepreneurial Journalism

The market space has been entrenched with a myriad of platforms of news dissemination. Entrepreneurial journalism delves into the disruption technological convergence has created in the market space. A smartphone with the technology to create content, produce it, edit it and disseminate (Hou, 2019), has empowered journalists to have their agency which is free from censorship and editorial discrepancies natural to mainstream media platforms in a feasible manner (Jamil & Adjei, 2019). Technology has enabled quick dissemination of content that was not possible before technological convergence, and now the convergence of impressive digital

information technology is expanding the media landscape by changing the media styles and structures swiftly (Singleton, 2019). It is establishing new forms of media on the globe (Zerfass, Verci, & Wisenberg, 2016) which is more interactive as compared to traditional media where one can share (Walther, 2017), organize, acquire, integrate, evaluate, analyze and construct new knowledge (Hauer, 2017).

In this scenario, YouTube has become an alternative platform for journalism (Poell & Borra, 2012) which is providing opportunities to young content providers (Bärtl, 2018). Most journalists on social media are young (Willnat & Weaver, 2018), and YouTube provides opportunities to promote their news, share their opinions and live blogging as well (Zhang & Li, 2019; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). Moreover, journalists interact with the public, follow events, monitor media, and reach the media audience in no time (Nassar, 2019). YouTube, on the one hand, is the source of broadcasting and on the other hand, it makes the journalist more productive, efficient, and accountable among the public. Further, the immediate access to online platforms with high traffic enables journalists to create an agency irrespective of media conglomerates hierarchy and the political economy of the elite (Weaver & Willnat, 2016).

Technology has enabled media convergence and enhanced modes of communication but it has also commercialized information dissemination as Baldwin worries, "The News is a "product", the circulation or signal area is now a "market" As business logic begins to permeate the newsroom and journalism is crafted to serve the "market", will it provide a clearer picture of the world upon which we can act? Or as news becomes more explicitly a commodity, will it lose informational value?" (Flores, 2010). In the capitalist world of today, one cannot deny the commercial aspect the technology has opened for the media industry, however, in the current digital landscape one can surely view the reestablishment of "informational value." The possibility to create, direct, produce, edit and disseminate content without the barriers of mainstream media conglomerates- the breaking free from the shackles of the political economy established by the Big 6 (Nedeljkovic et al., 2014).

As information finds voice on the digital platform- entrepreneurial journalism became the disruptive innovation of the consequential media convergence. Entrepreneurial journalism gained momentum in marginalized voices and silenced issues. The Plug- which "contextualizes work done by black people," is one such example, where Journalist Sherell Dorsey tapped into the digitized form of information dissemination. The Logic- by David Skok and The Information- by Jessica Lessin are the few examples of multi-million entrepreneurial journalist ventures that have gained momentum in the digital age (Dyer, 2019).

Entrepreneurial journalism, therefore, can be viewed as a consequence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the global aspect as well but ventures like The Plug also makes one wonder the extent of this rise as a result of a social need such that media could truly be the agency for "all people."

Incorporating the opportunity of Technological Convergence in Pakistan's media stratosphere.

A "multi-linguistic landscape with clear urban-rural disparities" as stated by Najam U Din (Journalist) in works with Free Press Unlimited, ranks 145 in Press Freedom and 152 in Peace Index Ranking with a 22.2% internet penetration, Pakistan's media landscape is not an attractive place of agency in the global aspect. The media is controlled not only by the state with organizations like Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) but is largely owned by a select few who have a hegemony that questions the media's role as the agency for "all people". A nation with the public's access to the "right to information" law under article 10A, fails to prove itself effective when the regulatory authorities show a significant bias in the state-owned media centers and privately-owned media outlets. This is followed by a monopoly in the marketplace such that "68% market control among the Top 40 media entities in terms of audience domination to only eight of market players" according to data collected by Media Ownership Monitor. A nation with such "control" on media makes one question the integrity of the fourth pillar of democracy not only in theory but the myriad of established boundaries a journalist shouldn't cross (Media Ownership Monitor Pakistan, n.d.).

With a media landscape having such discrepancies and lack of editorial freedom either coerced or blatantly censored, "entrepreneurial journalism" can be viewed as a socio-political necessity rather than a product of technological convergence. Such enabling factors that have enhanced modes of communication and content creation are sure to be exploited and digitalization provided the perfect platform for journalists to disseminate information using their smartphones. YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have become avenues for journalists to give agency to all matters irrespective of institutional hierarchy and censorship natural to a mass media outlet (Tapsell, 2014).

Upon reviewing research papers and studies regarding technological convergence, digitalization, entrepreneurial journalism, and Pakistan's media landscape one can aptly understand Dyer when he states, "Entrepreneurs find opportunity in adversity, however. The technical barriers to launching a new digital media venture—a website, podcast, or newsletter, for example—are as low as ever" (Dyer, 2019), and this opportunity has surely been grasped by journalists in Pakistan. Because the present government is attempting to gag the media under the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) Ordinance 2021. This authority will also monitor the digital media platforms to keep the media under criminal acts of cybercrime and taxation. PMDA will impose huge fines and sanctions on print, broadcast, and digital media producers. The senior journalists are extremely concerned about the constitution of this new agency and see it as another hurdle against the freedom of media due to the dictatorial history of such types of institutions (Salman, 2021). "You may not be aware, but a long-running effort to deny you access to independent information is culminating. The state's attempts to control the media are blatant and blunt. If they succeed, Pakistan will be authoritarian in all but name" (Yusuf, 2021, para. 1).

Amidst COVID-19 and the current government's tight leashes around media outlets, one can observe a significant rise in entrepreneurial journalism which builds the basis for this research paper. What this research paper, however, allows us to understand is the extent to which the existing media landscape pushed a journalist towards this disruptive innovation.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative method of in-depth interviews as a discovery tool to examine what respondents say about the role and use of smartphone technology in this new emerging scenario and about intentions of entrepreneurial journalism. 30 entrepreneurs having more than five years of field experience and a minimum of one year of entrepreneurship practice were interviewed from the two main cities, Islamabad and Lahore, of Pakistan. Due to the very small population, purposive sampling was used to select the sample. We, before the interview, provided study goals to the participants and recorded interviews with their permission. We encouraged interviewees to provide detailed answers to the questions, keeping in mind the current requirement and use of smartphones in their profession, for the variety of information. More specifically we inquired respondents about the usage of gadgets and applications of mobile technology for content production and broadcasting. Further, they were also asked about the motives of entrepreneurship. Qualitative interviews sought detailed information regarding the opportunities provided by mobile phone technology in the field of journalism.

Findings

The findings revealed that advanced digital technology has a substantial role in achieving the goal of entrepreneurship in the news media of Pakistan, and digital media has been emerged here as a channel to struggle against the suppression of the freedom of expression and victimization of employment. It is providing platforms to innovative and creative individuals, and the use of smart and easily portable equipment has been significantly increased for entrepreneurial journalism.

Effects of Media Convergence

Smartphone has not only enabled the efficient and cheap production of news stories but their ultra-fast services due to technological convergence are providing the facility of immediate dissemination of the news stories to the entire world.

The data analysis showed that 26 out of 30 participants are using smartphones to produce content for their YouTube channels. Most participants said that they use mobile phones for shooting and recording in studios as well because it is affordable and could be carried out anywhere to record the videos anytime. The participants said that they use a good quality phone to record the videos and further support it just with a tripod and microphone for picture stability and voice quality.

Participant Y expressed that *"smartphone due to its affordability, simplicity, and productivity has become a dominant apparatus for entrepreneurs of journalism. It is used not only for recording or shooting a video, but it is very helpful to edit and broadcast as well."*

The majority of interviewees said that they edit their content with the applications of smartphones which provide post-production features of cropping and voice-over and manage lighting modes. They added that no doubt these applications are not compatible with the heavy professional software, but it is a good alternate of them and fulfill the requirement of the small screen.

Participant V explained that *“these applications like KineMaster are very helpful to perform multiple tasks with a nominal training even titles, thumbnails, graphics, and animations could be added easily to make the video more attractive and pleasant.”* *“The most interesting thing is that now a one-man can do all the tasks of pre-production, production, and post-production which are generally done by a team of several persons,”* expressed by the interviewee R.

Moreover, the majority of the respondents stated that the simple and easy-going applications and functions of smartphones are also very convenient and efficient for uploading and broadcasting all sorts of content, text, audio, and video. The impressive part of smartphone technology is the feature of live broadcasts on different platforms from anywhere at any time. Six of them also shared that they use mobile to search the content and information online. They revealed that one of the major roles of mobile is information-seeking through social media and international media outlets which are connecting Pakistani journalists directly to the sources of information whether they are individuals or the news networks.

Further, the friendly use of these applications has gathered the audience to these new platforms which are accelerating entrepreneurial journalism and motivating young journalists to flourish their work. In Pakistan, YouTube has become the major platform for journalists who are using it to become an entrepreneur.

Freedom of Expression

The state control of media is a bone of contention between government and journalists. Pakistan has separate media regulatory bodies to regulate print and electronic media, and nowadays the proposal of a new body, Pakistan Media Development Authority, for all types of media, print, broadcast, and digital, is under consideration due to the emerging phenomenon of social media. The journalists who were already perturbed to the previous regulatory authorities are protesting on the new proposal because they have opted for social media platforms to raise their voice for the rights of destitute people.

The clear majority of the interviewees (25 out of 30) said that mainstream media don't allow us to speak freely; we have to follow the policies of the TV channels based on the government, owners, and pressure groups' directives. Even, the important news stories of the junior journalists are halted till the confirmation of senior journalists. Only influential journalists have the privileged to express their views without any restrictions that is why we move towards digital media to break news and to express our views openly. Participant P said that *we are independent on YouTube to share our stories and views without angling as compared to TV channels which are monitored and regulated by the PEMRA.*

Four of them further expressed that YouTube has provided them an opportunity to share their views in detail which is not possible on mainstream media due to time limitations. Similarly, the area covered by our TV channels and journalists is also very small and it is mostly focused on political issues. They ignore important social issues of the folks like education, health, legal rights, women's issues, etc. while we are at liberty to use YouTube channels to highlight these soft areas and to share facts and figures accurately.

Economic Independence

The fall of the newspaper industry and layoffs from electronic news media have pushed journalists of Pakistan towards entrepreneurial journalism, and the digital age with its sophisticated technologies is supporting the mode of entrepreneurship in the media industry of Pakistan.

Replying to the question about the economic independence with YouTube channels, 90% of interviewees said that one of the basic purposes to use digital outlets is earning and formation of own business because it is now quite easy and affordable here on digital media rather than a job in the media industry. They added that the emergence of digital media due to technological advancement and the shift of media users towards digital platforms is changing the economic model. This new model on the one side is increasing the termination of employees from the media industry but on the other side, it is providing opportunities for the entrepreneurs. So, the future is bright for YouTubers in terms of earnings and business. *Now YouTubers are getting more as compared to mainstream media's salaries*, an interviewee Y said.

Further, 6 out of 30 expressed that we have initiated our YouTube channels after job loss because we felt that the situations are becoming worst in the Pakistani media industry and there is no chance of a good job in near future. This situation of insecurity directed us towards startups; now our hard work pays us directly which is better than our previous earnings. In the ongoing situation of the Pakistani news media market, the digital platform is also helping newcomers to establish their business and they can get their part from the digital market. Participant C said that *it is helping us to establish our business and it has made me independent and has saved my future but it needs just the quality and creative work*.

Conclusion

The digital communication technologies, with their integration of network services and vertical expansion, have enabled new practices in the world media industry (Fagerjord & Storsul, 2007). The ultra-fast pace of digital technology is overwhelmingly altering the production patterns of the media industry over the past decade. Nowadays, new forms of media for journalism have emerged significantly and creative individuals are looking more interested in this new model. They are focusing on innovative and novel ideas of influence and content curation to grab the attention of many. This research set out to investigate the role of smartphone technology for entrepreneurial journalism and to know the motives behind the startups. Focusing on the concept of Convergence in Media (Jenkins, 2004; Erdal, 2007; Arceo, 2017), our study found that fusion of different tools and equipment for news production and distribution in the form of economical smartphone technology is providing great opportunities for Pakistani entrepreneurs which were impossible earlier due to heavy expenses. Its latest easily understandable software and applications are very supportive to improve the understanding of services and to work steadily. No doubt, smartphone applications are not equal to the heavy software in results, however, their smart use has overcome the differences of production for the small screen. That is why entrepreneurial journalism using smartphones and YouTube is growing exponentially here in Pakistan which is also providing them economic independence and freedom of expression. It has become the popular medium for individuals to earn revenue and to express their views freely (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2019; Olsson, 2019). They feel more secure as compared to the job holders who are facing job insecurity and

salary cut in the recent media crisis. Further, entrepreneurs are enjoying sovereignty as they are sharing content directly to the audience instead of passing through an editorial policy of media outlets and government regulations. In this digital world, most of the news content is produced keeping in mind the digital citizenship, particularly users of Facebook and Twitter, however, YouTube is a basic platform to channelize the work and has become a new hub of freelancers and entrepreneurial journalism (Singh, 2020; Hadland et al., 2019; Neto et al., 2019).

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