THE SOCIAL MEDIA (R)EVOLUTION?

Asian Perspectives On New Media

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C O N T E N T S

Foreword

Within the last few years, social media has radically changed the media sphere as we know it. Social media has never been so prevalent. Almost every major product launched these days has a Twitter account, almost every brand a Facebook page.

Nowadays, it is inevitable for television channels, newspapers, organisations and companies to have a social media presence. Politicians, celebrities, journalists and even reality show contestants are linked to the big social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, or to domestic social media platforms, for example, in China, Japan and Korea.

People use social media not just to connect with friends, but as a source of news, information and entertainment, while broadcasting outlets and companies use social media to connect with their audience, push out content, and promote their brands across this new medium. Internet usage is sky-rocketing throughout the Asia-Pacific region, making the growth rate of social media the fastest in the world.

Consequently, it is worthwhile to examine the developments and changes in media that Asian countries have been exposed to in recent years. In this context, the question arises to what extent this new communication tool has affected the traditional media landscape in Asia – can social media be characterised as a revolution or merely an evolution?

In order to resolve this question, we invited some alumni of the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, to provide us with their perspectives on this emerging topic. In total, eleven authors from six different countries contributed to this publication, giving insight into their on-the-job experience with social media, as well as reviewing its influence on traditional media.

In the first article, Ratana Som assesses the integration of social media in Cambodian newsrooms, which he affirms is a very new phenomenon. He gives examples of how traditional media in Cambodia is slowly evolving into a new era, but also identifies obstacles such as high Internet connection

costs, inadequate infrastructure support within media organisations and the lack of IT staff and development plans.

Edi Utama's article portrays Indonesia's challenges with social media. Discussions on social media issues in Indonesia are most relevant, as Indonesia is the world's second largest Facebook "nation", with over 40 million users. Almost half of all Indonesian Internet users access the net via their mobile phones, making Indonesia the most reliant Southeast Asian country, on this form of Internet access. With the prospect of advanced technology being used by social media to engage audiences, the author points out risks and dangers of social media- for instance abuse, prostitution, Internet fraud and other criminal activities occurring in social networks.

Anisha Bhaduri takes a different approach in her article by focusing on newsprint, which she feels is often underestimated in these times of social and digital media - at least as far as India is concerned. While newspaper circulation is waning across the world, in India it has grown from 127 million in 2000 to 207 million in 2008.

The author describes the potential of newspaper advertising in India, in comparison to social media advertising, which is still in an early stage of development. According to a report titled, "Where print makes profits" (*The Economist*, 23 September 2010), during 2009 and 2010 alone the amount spent on newspaper advertising in India increased by 30 per cent - the swiftest increase in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sherrie Ann Torres from the Philippines deals with the online news industry in her piece "Philippine's television network war going online – is the Filipino audience ready to do the click?". According to a recent study conducted by ComScore Inc., a global digital marketing intelligence agency, the Philippines is number one in the Asia-Pacific region for citizens spending their time browsing the net, specifically on social networking sites. In the study, Internet use was recorded in the Asia-Pacific region at an average of 2.5 hours per day. In the Philippines, a regular Internet user browses the net for an average of 5.5 hours per day. However, do Filipinos also prefer reading news online rather than turning on the TV? Sherrie Ann Torres analyses whether the television industry is taking over the web and competing with other TV networks for the "Pinoy" audience.

In another article, Engelbert Apostol describes ways to maximise social media while benefiting traditional media, using Filipino television network, ABS-CBN, as an example. Currently, forty-six of ABS-CBN's pool of fifty Manila-based reporters maintain a Facebook and/or Twitter account. Speaking from his own experience, social media has had a two-fold impact in the traditional newsroom, in the sense that it has changed the way journalists perform their jobs, and how people communicate and share information. According to Engelbert Apostol, the use of social media in the traditional newsroom can complement or even maximise the effects of reporting.

Bruce Avasadanond's chapter looks at case studies concerning two news organisations in Thailand that are actively involved in social media. Although social media helps in terms of hits to a website and in promoting a two-way dialogue between news organisations and their readers/listeners, the benefits are intangible and do not yet lead directly to increased earnings. This article is based on interviews with key informants at the Nation Multimedia Group (Thailand) and Radio Thailand English Language Service. It includes an analysis of how social media is benefiting these news organisations, and the future impact on their financial earnings.

KY Pung discusses how social media has been effectively utilised to engage targeted audiences in mobilising popular support in Malaysia; as seen in the case of Bersih 2.0, a mass protest movement in Malaysia demanding clean and fair elections. His article examines this online phenomenon as a potent communication tool for shaping public opinion. Being omnipresent in our daily lives, it can be similarly used to mobilise and carry out a campaign with negative intent, such as character assassination of a person from either side of the political divide. The chapter further highlights how in its current form and practice, social media has yet to command a strong impact in the commercial arena, even though the potential for marketing consumer products is huge.

Susan Tam's contribution "Social media - a cash cow or communication tool? Malaysian impressions", looks into the feasibility and complexity of using social media, both as an advertising platform and as a tool for communicating branding messages to online communities. About 17 million Malaysians (60 per cent of the total population) spend most of their time online; 12 million of them are Facebook users. The article discusses

how corporations are looking at different ways to monetise social media. Critics have argued that it is not simple to measure return on investments in social media marketing of products and services, due to the lack of tangible sales results. This piece also examines the successes and failures of Malaysian companies using social media, as both an advertising and communication tool.

In his article, Syed Nazakat's analyses the way social media and investigative journalism are intertwined. He describes how institutions such as the Center for Investigative Reporting and the Center for Public Integrity, and other watchdog media outlets, use social networking sites like MySpace and social bookmarking sites like del.icio.us and Technorati, for investigative reporting. Social media is also being used to promote investigative stories and journalism. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) for instance, says they are using social media sites to promote their investigative work, and to reach a wider audience.

Karen Yap dedicated her article to the phenomenon of Chinese micro-blogs and Internet censorship in the People's Republic of China. The use of micro-blogs has exploded in China over the last couple of years. Chinese people know they can express opinions and gain access to information through these interconnected blogs. Because government policies block Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other Western social networking sites, vibrant domestic alternatives of similar online platforms are booming. Chinese micro-blog users benefit from the Twitter-like 140 characters messaging, because they can say much more with Chinese symbols, than with English letters. Coupled with the ability to attach photos and documents, Chinese micro-blogging sites increase their influence among users through information dissemination. Along with the growth of the Internet and these micro-blogs, China is seeing unprecedented Internet censorship by its authorities. According to Karen Yap, in 2010, about one million articles were censored every day in China.

The final articles, written by Michael Josh Villanueva, deliver a very personal insight into the concept of social media. As a social media pioneer in the Philippines, Villanueva can speak from his own experience when addressing new media issues. Hence, in his first piece "Issues in Social Media" he points to potential risks that arise from the use of social media. Its emergence has brought along a whole new range of issues and challenges. Average

day-to-day users fail, because they are not educated on the dangers of improper use, while many professional organisations are at risk because they lack a deeper understanding of social media and how to maximise its use. The Philippines is the eight largest Facebook "nation" worldwide, and a 2011 ComScore report even ranks the country as the top Facebook Market in the world. The Philippine Facebook page with the highest number of "Likes" belongs to the ABS-CBN noon-time television show, Showtime, with 2.5 million "Likes". The top celebrity fan page belongs to Showtime's host, Vice Ganda, who currently has over 3.8 million likes. Therefore in his second article Villanueva sheds light on the social media presence of Filipino TV news outlets. His third article deals with the impact social media can have on a society and presents different case studies.

All in all, we believe this compilation of articles is extremely helpful for gaining insight into social media trends and developments within Asia. Authors from various countries deliver their views and impressions on social media issues and illuminate numerous aspects that are not necessarily covered in the media. As all of the contributors have hands-on experience with social media, this pan-Asian publication gives a taste of what is currently happening in the social media sphere and what might come next.

I strongly recommend the book to everyone interested in this emerging, far-reaching and exciting branch of media.

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Evolution or Revolution - Social Media in Cambodian Newsrooms

by Ratana Som

Abstract

Communication technology does impact on our world. Its impact extends across all fields, from pure sciences to social and humanity schools of thought. A recent study was conducted to find out how new communication technology, particularly social media, has been integrated into Cambodian newsrooms, and to also gauge the extent the integration has affected newsrooms' traditional workflows and their editorial mindsets. In-depth interviews with selected editorial staff and journalists from mainstream media institutions, in Cambodia, have been conducted to get practical insights to supplement the content-analysis approach of available literature. The study found that although social media is being adopted by the new generation of journalists, it has not yet been well-integrated into newsrooms, and thereby minimally affects traditional newsroom practices and editorial mindsets. The limited integration capacity and effect is due mainly to the weak information communication technology infrastructures in Cambodia's newsrooms. Also, staff lack skills, which leaves no room for social media to flourish robustly. Besides, almost all newsrooms are still controlled by the old decision-makers who are not very tech-savvy, and hence do not encourage their juniors to adopt technology. The study, therefore, concluded that the move to social media use in current Cambodian newsrooms is an inevitable evolution, but is certainly not a revolution. Though the findings are scientifically limited due to time-constraints and the lack of empirical research, the results probably represent most Cambodian newsrooms.

Background

Internet use is a relatively new phenomenon for Cambodia. Despite being widely available in the rest of the world for a long time, it was not introduced to Cambodia until 1994, by the Open Forum of Cambodia. And it was not until 1997 that this country was connected to the Internet via a link to

Singapore[1], with the support of the Canadian International Development Research Center (IDRC).

Though it was not clear from the beginning how this new technology would change the way Cambodians communicate, it was well-foreseen that Internet users would certainly grow. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2,000 users from Cambodia were recorded in 1998, but this statistic rose sharply to around 100,000 in 2010[2]. The rapid growth was due, not only to the vastly known benefits of the Internet, but also because it provided new communication tools for its audiences. From a mere search engine, a small email route and a narrow chat room, where only a few people could interact together at a given time, the Internet has offered a new path of communication technology. Social media (as the web-based and mobile technologies that turned communication into an interactive dialogue, is called), such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace etc., opened wider opportunities for people to interact with hundreds of others, at a given time, with just one click.

Social media indeed transforms the way people interact. While some people are using it to communicate in their work, others are using it to entertain, to socialize and to build friendships[3]. But regardless of what people are using it for, social media has been well-integrated into the Cambodian user's daily experience, with some using it for many hours daily. Its growing popularity across all fields has brought about speculation that social media use in Cambodia will be on a constant rise in future years. According to Facebakers.com, about 85,000 Facebook accounts were registered in Cambodia, as of July 2010. However, these statistics could not be immediately confirmed given their complexity.

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1 Loo, E. & Hang, D.T.T (2007). Effects of ICTs on media transformation, education and training in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. University of Wollongong, Research Online Website. Retrieved from http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=creartspapers

2 Peou, Chivoin. (2010). Internet integration among Cambodian students: motivations, attitudes and academic utilization (Research Report). Cambodia: Department of Media Communication, Royal University of Phnom Penh.

3 Sary, S., Chea, L. & C Peou. (2010). Fun, friendship and socialization: Facebook by Cambodian users. In C. Peou (ed.).Cambodia Communication Review. Department of Media and Communication, Royal University of Phnom Penh. pp. 11-22.

With respect to the media industry in Cambodia, social media has attracted newsrooms across the country to consider integrating social media use in their daily practices. Interactive websites have been established as a replacement for, or an addition to, traditional media templates, and Facebook, Twitter and other social media tools have been harnessed by newsrooms to gather news tips, to contact and confirm sources, and to disseminate news products. Nevertheless, questions around this integration still exist, such as, to what extent has social media been integrated into journalists' daily practices? And what impacts did it have on traditional workflow and mindsets – has the integration been an evolution or revolution to current Cambodian newsrooms?

A need for integration
Here and elsewhere, as traditional media practices gradually decrease, social media as a new tool, is taking shape, and becoming popular and more prominent in journalism practices. Hardly anyone forgets the powerful impact on the Cambodian public when social media helped authorities to arrest criminals who had robbed, and brutally shot a woman to death in front of Phnom Penh International Airport. While traditional media practices were slow and less effective in pushing for police action, Facebook was used by people who had witnessed the incident to share hints and tales with journalists, who constructed consecutive stories that finally led to the arrests of the criminals and their accomplices.

The above case shows not only how powerful social media is, but also how it is being integrated into the daily practices of Cambodian journalists. From getting newsrooms connected to Internet for simple purposes such as emailing, and researching for basic information, social media is now being used as a mean of hunting for news tips, gathering necessary information, verifying sources, and writing-up stories. This adoption, on one hand, shows the strong presence of social media integration into newsrooms. On the other hand, it presents the modern 'use and gratification' ideology within Cambodian newsrooms, where the public is seen to be no longer the passive receiver of information, but the active and valued partner for media practitioners.

Social media impacts on newsrooms
The mushrooming of social media use and website launching, either as a replacement for old practices, or as an addition to the old media templates

in Cambodian newsrooms suggests that traditional media and its practices are being taken over gradually by the powerful social media impact. It also reflects the successful integration of various novice approaches into the traditional newsroom workflow.

As a tool, social media is used to hunt for news tips. As always, editors and reporters in the past had a hard time finding story ideas that fitted the needs of their audiences. But, with social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook, reporters and editors can now effectively and efficiently do 'crowd-sourcing' for story ideas from their readers. Chhay Sophal, publisher of *The Cambodia News*, admits that he uses Facebook to make friends, but he can see the potential power of Facebook for searching for news tips from the public, who are more energised now by the power they have in news making. This power sharing and participation, eases the day-to-day workload for reporters and editors. Keo Kounila, an independent blogger, said she has noticed journalists and editors are becoming more relaxed, despite other challenges, because they can find more accountable ways for searching for daily story ideas.

In addition to searching for news hints, social media is seen to be very helpful for reporters in news gathering and writing processes. While traditional media seems to be of less help in getting feedback, social media creates a user-friendly template whereby journalists can get the best quotes, search for correct sources, ask for relevant views, or confirm a remark with their sources, by just clicking buttons. This new possibility could save not only reporters and their sources' time, but offer a more convenient space for the general public to get involved more actively and meaningfully in the news making process. As a result of this, comments and reader-generated content keeps flowing in, making it one of the most interactive platforms ever for journalists to harness. Neth Pheaktra, former editor of the *Phnom Penh Post* (Khmer Section) said that, like other mainstream news agencies, the adoption of social media by the *Phnom Penh Post*, for receiving feedback from readers and viewers, has made many of its news reports much more satisfying for them.

The very restricted nature of the traditional media has made it difficult to circulate over a long distance in a short time. However, with the integration of social media into current Cambodian newsrooms, news circulation can be quickly relayed to every corner of the world. Mainstream news media in Cambodia, ranging from the newspapers *The Phnom Penh Post*, *Rasmei*

Kampuchea (CEN), *Kampuchea Thmey*, and *Koh Santepheap*, to television stations (National Television of Kampuchea (TVK), Cambodia Television Network (CTN), Bayon are employing social media as a new means of relaying their programmes to the world. This new possibility allows reporters and editors to use social media as a platform for presenting news to their readers and viewers cheaper, faster and regular.

With all of these positive results for workflow, journalists are now more open to social media use than ever before. However, their openness does not suggest that their mindsets are changing. There are several reasons for this and two main impeding factors – the first relates to workflow and the second relates to mindset.

Workflow change: the impediments
Five factors have been found to hinder workflow change in current Cambodian newsrooms.

Firstly, although the number of Internet users in Cambodia is on a constant rise every year, Cambodia is still one of the four countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) with the lowest number of Internet users in the region[4]. This low number makes a social media-fuelled revolution unlikely.

Secondly, low Internet connection capacity is a problem. Despite network improvements over the last few years, the connection capacity is still limited to only the capital city and some provincial towns[5]. This limitation has not encouraged newsrooms to depend on the Internet for news sharing. A new development shows a number of Internet service providers can now offer countrywide network coverage, but a drawback is that service speed is remarkably slow. As a consequence, journalists in the provinces are still relying on traditional practices, whereby news is gathered from local areas

4 Loo, E. & Hang, D.T.T (2007). Effects of ICTs on media transformation, education and training in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
University of Wollongong, Research Online Website. Retrieved from http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=creartspapers

5 Sary, S., Chea, L. & C Peou. (2010). Fun, friendship and socialization: Facebook by Cambodian users. In C. Peou (ed.).Cambodia Communication Review.
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and the finished product has to be sent via taxi or bus from the provinces to city-based newsrooms. This poor communication capacity is still seen to be a problem, and has occasionally spoilt primetime news bulletins. Breaking news is certainly impossible for some newsrooms, and hence reporting via the phone is used as an alternative.

Thirdly, high connection costs have deterred journalists from getting connected to the Internet for personal use. Although the price of home Internet connection has noticeably dropped from around US$196 in 2005 to around US$30 in 2011, this rate is still not commensurate with journalists' monthly salaries. Loo and Hang[6], claimed that with an income of around US$100 per month, journalists were not able to get access to personal Internet, and Internet cafés were still their best choice for going online. With new government policies to boost technology development, and fierce competition amongst Internet service providers, people may get personal Internet for around US$5 per month. However, even with this offer, journalists are required to own at least a computer or a smart phone with an Internet browser, which they can hardly afford.

The lack of ICT (Information Communication Technology) human capital has been identified as the fourth hindrance for smooth social media integration in newsrooms. In their research on "Effects of ICTs on Media Transformation, Education and Training in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia", Loo and Hang[7] asserted that most of the surveyed newsrooms expressed an urgent need for highly qualified ICT workers to manage their network facilities, improve security systems, and increase bandwidth and networking capacity. Yet, the need for experts could, on the other hand, be a dilemma for newsrooms as it would be an additional burden, where existing staff are already low-paid and inexperienced with knowledge of how these new technologies, particularly social media, could help them in their work. This issue has led newsrooms across the region to ignore, where possible, the adoption of social media into their newsrooms while the existing practices are still working adequately.

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6   Loo, E. & Hang, D.T.T (2007). Effects of ICTs on media transformation,
    education and training in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
    University of Wollongong, Research Online Website. Retrieved from
    http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1033&context=creartspapers

7   Ibid.

Last, but by no means least, poor communication technology is typical for almost all newsrooms in Cambodia. Such conditions are said to be a major obstruction for social media growth. Poor attention to technology from management, together with low annual newsroom incomes, and little money earmarked for upgrading technology are the core issues amongst all these newsrooms. Software and hardware upgrades are carried out only if requested by journalists. A systematic procedure of keeping track of an organization's ICT development needs is not apparent[8].

Mindset change: the impediments
Even though some newsrooms acknowledge the powerful impacts that social media has on their traditional workflow, many of them resist change for various personal reasons.

Once going online, the first obstacle for them is the English language. Many are from the old regimes where French, and then Vietnamese and Russian languages, were taught at school, and find it hard to understand or do basic research using the available literature, which is mostly in English. Although the number of Internet users and websites in Khmer (the country's national language) keep increasing, valuable resources in this language are still scarce on the web. Also, the absence of Khmer commands in social websites, and on new communication devices, make them hard to understand and use properly. This limited capacity is discouraging, and hence provides them with no reason to discard their traditional practices. Khieu Kanharith, Minister of Information, argued that in five years, social media will not have any influence or impact on the Cambodia media industry. He added that traditional media will still have a considerable role.

Inadequate technological skill is seen to be another problem for journalists. Loo and Hang[9] claimed that about three quarters of the surveyed journalists had very poor, or no skills at all, in the following areas: (a) using the Internet to blog (73%), (b) facilitating discussion groups (58%), and (c) publishing stories online (56%). Journalists' poor capacity in using new communication technologies is clearly an obstacle for them in adopting other new technologies and skills needed for their daily work. Pen Samitthy,

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8   Ibid.

9   Ibid.

editor of the main Khmer language newspaper, *Rasmei Kampuchea*, says most of his journalists do not use the Internet for research or email[10]. To them, computer-assisted writing takes them more time than writing by hand, as they are not skilful in using computers. Loo and Hang (2007) added that the medium of choice for communicating or contacting their news sources, was the office phone (46%), followed by mobile phones (33%) and emails (22%). Ky (2008) concluded that social media is only beginning to emerge in the country and will take time to bring about change and progress.

While political factors are not seen to be a threat to the adoption of social media into current newsrooms, personal awareness of how important technology is in their daily work could be the reason for carrying on traditional routines. Loo and Hang[11] claimed that the majority of journalists were not worried about being monitored by the authorities, as web content is not subject to restrictions now, or for the foreseeable future. Besides, media regulations, particularly press law has yet to be applied specifically for Internet communications, although it is being used for print and broadcast media. The main problem is, therefore, that journalists themselves possess low awareness of how new technology can improve the productivity, creativity and quality of their work. Once asked if news websites helped them to write breaking news, the answer was 'evidently, not', noted a KAF's report on media and democracy in Cambodia (quoted in Loo & Hang, 2007).

Room for mindset change is seen to be very narrow in Cambodian newsrooms. As most senior positions and decision-making powers are still in the hands of those who retain old practices, little change can be expected. Huy Vannak, former editor of the Cambodian Television Network (CTN), said he experienced many difficulties in his life as a journalist, working with older people who saw new things as threats rather than opportunities. Such situations will certainly make those in power provide fewer incentives for younger staff to adopt new things. Huy explained that CTN's newsroom is a successful one because its superiors understand the importance of social media. Their willingness to adopt the tools into the

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

newsroom allows people under their supervision to change old mindsets and adopt new technology accordingly.

Social media: an inevitable evolution in the newsrooms
Want it or not, social media is penetrating newsrooms. And more or less, it has already affected the ways journalists do their work. Newsrooms that well understand the benefits of social media and have opted for it, are already able to benefit. And those that previously rejected outright, the presence of social media, are softening their stance and learning whether these new tools could really help them. Huy said that though older people had rigid ideas, almost all of them (in his previous CTN newsroom) are now more positive towards social media. As the youngest editor, Huy said, he chose not to tell, but show, how social media could help them in their news reporting processes. "We showed them in a way that they could not avoid, in the future, using social media in their work", added Huy. As a result, most of them now explore why and how social media can change their old practices and what they should do to adapt to changes.

Market forces make social media evolution, if not a revolution, in Cambodian newsrooms inevitable. As noted earlier, people these days are no longer passive receivers of news. Enabled by new technologies, they want to have a share in it – that is, to be news framers. The decline of newspaper readership is due to the fact that traditional newspaper formats provide no room for two-way communication, and consequently neglect their audiences' meaningful participation. This situation is unsatisfying, and makes them less participative. Keo Kounila, an independent blogger, said 'letters to the editor' that some Cambodian newspapers have used, do not seem satisfying for readers seeing only a few are selected, while many others are left out. But with the emergence of multi-media platforms, which incorporate social media as a tool for dialogue with the public, it is seen that almost all mainstreams newspapers, radio and television stations across the country have opted for websites to circulate their news reports. While *Rasmei Kampuchea*, one of the leading newspapers for almost 30 years, can attract only around 20,000 readers from across the country, a newly-founded online newspaper, *Deum Ampil*, attracts around 80,000 readers on a daily basis. This trend is indeed inevitable, and newsrooms must do whatever they can to service the needs of this new generation. The lack of a dialogue venue is clearly bound to contribute to failure.

Another move seen in newsrooms today is that staff is being sent out for further training on the use of new communication technology. Unlike in the past, when these journalists were paid by the organising institutions for their studies, many of them now are paid by their respective news organisations, or are willing to pay for the studies themselves.

Under the sponsorship of the American Embassy, the Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) has established an 'Internet Café/Journalist Corner' where computers and Internet are provided free to journalists for their daily use and reporting purposes. As a result, many of them are committed to visiting the place regularly, for they see it as beneficial to their work. This move is obviously a new evolution, though not really a substantive one. In another move, staff recruitment policies in certain newsrooms have prioritised the recruitment of prospective journalists who are computer and technology capable.

The need to integrate themselves with other Asian newsrooms in the region is the push factor for Cambodian newsrooms in adapting to modern technology and changing their mindsets. The integration of the *Rasmei Kampuchea* newspaper into the Asian News Network (ANN) has reflected, not only its endeavour to exchange news reports between member countries, but its determination to improve its newsroom in all areas, so as to catch up with other members. This indeed pushes the journalists working in the above institution to try their best to learn new things, regardless of difficulties.

Conclusion and recommendation
Even though social media integration into newsrooms is a new phenomenon for Cambodia, its evolution is obvious. Market pressures, the emerging of a young and able workforce, and the openness of older people toward social media use, are some factors that contribute to this inevitable evolution. However, many problems are also identified as obstacles that make the social media revolution in Cambodia impossible. These include high Internet connection costs, inadequate infrastructure support within media organisations, and the lack of ICT staff and development plans. Though the political factor is not perceived to be a critical impediment to the process, social media use is still largely a mystery for the majority of older journalists, and adoption is being done cautiously.

To put it in a few words, a change from the traditional workflow of newsrooms to a more interactive media platform in the Cambodian media industry is more of an evolution of our times, than a revolution. That is, because social media seems not to have had a big impact on journalists' current practices.

This chapter finishes with a recommendation for future researchers. If a similar topic is to be researched, concrete surveys on the level of technology used in current newsrooms should be conducted. Such findings will certainly give a more realistic view on how, and to what extent, social media has integrated and impacted the newsroom's workflow. A study conducted by Eric Loo and D.T.T. Hang[12] on the "Effects of ICTs on Media Transformation, Education and Training in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia" is, for this purpose, recommended as a model study.

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The Other Side of Social Media: Indonesia's Experience

by Edi Utama

Social media has played a pivotal role in bringing down the Mubarak regime in Egypt[1]. In China the Internet is so well firewalled that there is no way people can have easy access to social media, especially those from the outside, such as Facebook or Twitter. For Indonesia, the third largest democracy in the world after India and the United States, the spectre arising from the existence of social media does not cause political apprehension. Indonesia has had social media since May 1998 when thousands of short messages were sent out from mobile phones persuading people to take to the Jakarta streets en masse in demonstrations that toppled the Suharto regime[2].

Discussions on social issues in Indonesia are in fact most relevant, because Indonesia is the world's second largest Facebook nation. Facebook was first available in the country in 2006, but only really gained widespread attention from 2008. There were less than one million Indonesian users on Facebook in January 2009, and as of mid-October 2011 there were 40,515,180 – this is an increase of more than 4.7 million users compared to March 2011. Some 89 per cent of Facebook users in Indonesia are under the age of 35, with the majority coming from the 18 to 24 year old age range, at 41 per cent. The greatest growth of users between July 2011 and October 2011 also came from this 18 to 24 year old age group[3].

As preferences for online activities worldwide are shifting, social networking has been gaining ground due to the popularity of Facebook and Twitter.

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1 Wallstreet Journal. Retrieved 15 November 2011 from
   http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703786804576137980252177072.html

2 Phillips, Howard N. Inside the Cyberwar for Iran's Future. Retrieved 22 November
   2011 from http://www.psmag.com/culture/inside-the-cyberwar-for-irans-future-6535

3 http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/indonesia#chart-intervals

Research from Firefly Millward Brown describes social media in Indonesia as a tool for establishing one's social status in the form of recognition and admiration. Social media is also used for sharing and bonding[4].

Almost half of all Indonesian Internet users access the net via their mobile phones and this number is set to increase, as more significant numbers intend to use this device to get online in the next twelve months, according to a report released by global insights and measurement company, Nielsen, on 11 July 2011. The report, a pre-release of data from Nielsen's inaugural *Southeast Asia Digital Consumer Report*, to be made available on 30 September, found that 48 per cent of regular Internet users in Indonesia use a mobile phone to access the Internet, making Indonesia the most reliant South East Asian country, on this form of Internet access. This trend is set to continue, with 53 per cent of users indicating they will access the Internet via their mobile phone, and 30 per cent via an Internet-capable handheld device, within the next 12 months[5].

Recent research by Nugroho[6] on civic activism and use of new social media in Indonesia, has discovered that civil society in Indonesia is obviously a vibrant sphere. This upbeat situation is apparently not only a result of the engagement of Indonesian civil society groups and communities with global civil society, but is also shaped by the internal dynamics of civil society. The growing civic space is also attributed to the use of the Internet, and lately, social media, in Indonesian civil society. This is probably the first comprehensive study on the issues of social media that indicates the dynamism of the Indonesian social media landscape. Both as an online sphere and as a market, it is seen to be big, growing and highly active. Social networking media such as Facebook and Twitter have become very popular for various reasons: the affordability of mobile phones, the strong sense of community in the Indonesian culture, and trends that spread quickly. Indonesian civil society groups and communities are also active

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4 http://www.zdnetasia.com/social-media-most-evolved-in-spore-62206580.htm

5 AC Nielsen-Indonesia. http://id.nielsen.com/news/Release110711.shtml

6 Nugroho, Yanuar. 2011. *Citizens in @ction: Collaboration, participatory democracy and freedom of information – Mapping contemporary civic activism and the use of new social media in Indonesia.* Report. Research collaboration of Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, University of Manchester and HIVOS Regional Office Southeast Asia. Manchester and Jakarta: MIOIR and HIVOS

users of the Internet and social media. The characteristics of new social media make it convenient for civil society groups to use, and assists them in achieving their missions and goals. Yet, not all civil society groups and organisations use it strategically. A strategic use of the Internet, therefore, cannot be seen as just a direct output of using the technology.

The study argues that a strategic use of the Internet and social media in civil society should go beyond technology. Rather, it should be about widening the interaction between civil society groups and communities, and the beneficiaries they work with and for. Only when civil society can maintain a dynamic interaction with the public through strategic use of popular new social media, can the impact of civic activism be expected to be more significant. The diffusion of the Internet and social media in civil society itself, is not, and never will be, a straightforward process. Here, at the core, is a process of socio-technical alignment underpinning the diffusion of technology that puts the agency, not the technology, at the centre.

The growth of civil society activism is found to be in tandem with the ever-widening use of the Internet and social media. The difficulty lies not in the way the growth of each is understood, but rather the link between them. The dynamics of civil society in Indonesia, and the impact that the use of the Internet and social media has had upon it, is found to be interrelated. Civic activism in Indonesia is characterised not only by the use of technology (one-direction), but also by the co-evolution between technology use and the development of civic activism itself. There is a two-way relationship between how civic activism is shaped by the Internet and social media use, and the role that the Internet and social media play as a platform for civic activism.

It is suggested that the Internet and social media in Indonesia should be utilised for strengthening social cohesiveness, widening participation in socio-political life, and for fostering economic activity. The Foresight exercise was found to be useful, but should not stop there. There is a need to follow up this exercise, to evaluate how it would direct the future trajectory of the use of the Internet and social media in civil society, and also to build the capacity of civil society for future thinking about its involvement in the information society.

The results of the study on the role of social media in a relatively new democracy like Indonesia should not be a surprise. The character of social media, in particular Facebook, is one that may readily bring people closer together – something that arguably has led to negative results. According to Lampe et al[7], social media has a number of diversified orientations: from a workplace context (LinkedIn.com), to exploration of romantic relations (the initial aims of Friendster.com), sharing interests in music or political fields (Myspace.com) and the congregation of students in universities (Facebook).

However, on the other side, and in what was probably the world's first revelation of the role of social media as a driving force for underage marriage, the Islamic Court of Wonosari Regency, Yogyakarta Province, disclosed in March 2011 that the number of underage marriages between teenagers of 14-16 years had risen almost 100% in the previous two years[8]. The court registered the soaring number of underage marriages, based on requests for underage marriage consents, beginning in 2010 when Facebook started making massive inroads into villages in the rural areas of the regency.

Siti Haryanti, the court registrar, confirmed that the sharp increase in underage marriages at the regency had something to do with the existence of Facebook, which was now easy to access, even in rural areas, and has led to teenage girls getting pregnant outside marriage. In the hearings, the court asked repeatedly whether couples had got acquainted with each other via Facebook. The answers confirmed that social media had been the first channel bringing them together. The relationships continued and eventually resulted in out of wedlock pregnancies.

Despite Indonesia's 1974 Law on Marriage stipulating that a woman can only marry after 16 years of age, and men must be at least 19 years old, the court had been forced to permit younger teenagers to get married. The decision was considered to be better than leaving the teenagers in

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7 Lampe, C., Ellison, N. and Steinfield, C. (2007) *A Face(book) in the Crowd: Social Searching Versus Social Browsing*. Proceedings of the 20th Anniversary Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work. Banff, Alberta Canada. pp. 167-170.

8 *Kompas Daily*. Retrieved 12 November 2011 from http://health.kompas.com/read/2011/03/31/10382586/Facebook.Picu.Pernikahan.Dini.

the socially unaccepted situation in Indonesia, of having an out of wedlock pregnancy. Dispensations in this regard were given to teenagers of 14-16 years old – categorised as juveniles in accordance with the prevailing laws in the country.

Data on marriages at the court indicate there were 16 underage couples given dispensation to marry under the lawful age rule, in January and February 2011. The drastic increase in underage marriages can be seen from the comparison between a total of 19 underage marriages during 2008, 60 in 2009 and an increase of almost 100% in 2010 when the court gave consents to 112 underage marriages. Facebook gained huge, fast popularity in Indonesia from early 2009 – a phenomenon that even sneaked into remote areas of the country.

A warning was previously issued by Indonesia's Child Protection Monitoring Foundation (YPHI), on underage marriage issues, in a statement on 29 March 2010. It emphasised that children must be given protection from underage marriage. Antarini Arna, YPHI chairperson, underlined the issue by saying that misunderstanding by children could lead to their wrongful treatment, which would eventually bring impacts on society as a whole. Citing the international convention on children's rights, whose definition of children stipulates that a child is a person under the age of 18 years, the YPHI chairperson confirmed that a similar rule is adopted in Indonesia's Law No. 23 Year 2003 on Children's Protection.

The law specifically determines that parents hold the obligation and responsibility for avoiding underage marriage. The same law emphasises that girls have the right to be protected from underage marriage because the process of child bearing and birth delivery can physically and mentally affect them. YPHI maintains that girls are at a disadvantage in underage marriage.

Syaripuddin et al.[9], observed that the negative effects of the use of social media among teenagers, include laziness to communicate in the real world. Their level of linguistic comprehension is also disturbed. The excessive

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9 Syaripuddin Acep et al. (June 2010). Internet Sehat. 3rd Edition, Creative Commons, Jakarta. p. 33.

communication that they establish in cyberspace reduced their knowledge on aspects of real world communication, such as body language and tone of voice. Social media drives small children and teenagers to be egotistical and unaware of their close environment. It is also found that these age groups do not have a good understanding of spelling or grammatical rules of language and this may severely affect their writing competence. In addition, social media is believed to be fertile ground for predators to commit crimes because someone known by a juvenile on the Internet may not be using their real identity.

The dismaying impacts of social media in Indonesia is in line with Quinn and Kierans[10], quoting Ben Lorica, a San Francisco-based senior analyst, of the research group at O'Reilly Media. They claim that, in Indonesia, the 13-25 year age group was growing much faster than all other ages, as social networking users. By contrast, in the United States, the fastest growth rates are now with people 35 years old and over. Most recent data from SocialBakers show that 89 per cent of Facebook users in Indonesia are under the age of 35, with the majority coming from the 18 to 24 year old range, at 41 per cent. The greatest growth of users between July 2011 and October 2011 also came from this 18 to 24 year old age group (Indonesia Facebook Statistics)[11].

Data from the Indonesian National Commission for Child Protection showed there were 100 reports of missing children in 2010, whose cases linked to the role of social media, especially Facebook. These included 21 cases in Surabaya, East Java, which were later discovered to be missing teenagers who had been made sexual slaves in local brothels. The commission has confirmed that social media has frequently been used by syndicates to trap teenagers into prostitution. According to the data based on its own research, in 2010, roughly 53% of Facebook users in Indonesia were under the age of 18 years.

The daily newspaper, *Tribun Pekanbaru*, in Riau Province reported on 20 November 2011 that 10 teenagers had gone missing and never returned home since going on dates with people they met on Facebook. The story

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10 Quinn, Stephen and Kierans, Kim. (2010). *Asia's Media Innovators Vol.2*, Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. p.23

11 Socialbakers – Heart of Social Media Statistics. Retrieved 20 October 2011 from http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/indonesia#chart-intervals

was based on the official report of missing women and children from the province's Integrated Center for Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A). Quoting the Center's head, Risdayati, the newspaper revealed that the teenagers had gone missing after being abducted by Facebook 'friends', based on reports filed with the center by the parents of the missing teenagers.

The Indonesian National Police (Polri)'s Cybercrime Division, announced in October 2011 that it had discovered and stopped massive frauds by criminals using social media, notably Facebook. The criminals committed the crimes by posing as sellers of electronic gadgets, such as mobile phones, cameras and laptop computers, for excessively low prices, to unaware potential customers. To lure their victims into transactions, the criminals had signed up accounts with Facebook, or broken into other people's accounts. Using these hijacked identities, the criminals then established transactions where the buyers ordered the products they wanted and paid by credit cards. The buyers were told that the products they ordered would be dispatched through courier service companies. After this, the criminals again contacted the buyers informing them that their transaction had been mishandled and two items instead of one would be sent. The buyers therefore needed to pay extra for the unordered items, by money transfer. Police arrested the mastermind of the scam residing in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and his gang members. Despite residing in Sulawesi, the mastermind controlled his criminal operations, involving financial transactions of billions of rupiahs, nationwide.

In addition, in November 2011, the police announced the dismantling of a high-profile prostitution ring in Jakarta, which catered to orders coming in through the social media accounts, Friendster and BlueFlame. Women were ordered and dispatched to hotels in Jakarta after being selected by customers from pictures in social media accounts. All transactions, including the price to be paid by the customers, were agreed upon via communication in the social media accounts.

The most phenomenal case regarding the role of social media in Indonesia was one involving Indonesian top singer, Ariel Peterpan, whose real name is Nazriel Ilham. In June 2010, the 28 year old man was arrested by police, and then sentenced in January 2011 by the Bandung Court, to 42 months in prison for alleged appearances in pornographic videos, paired with top TV stars. At least two videos starring someone whose face "much

resembled" Ariel, with women whose physical identities resembled those of Luna Maya and Cut Tari, were uploaded onto YouTube on 8 June 2010. During a series of lengthy court hearings, the three denied the acts and never pleaded guilty to the charges. Indonesia has at least three different laws dealing with public pornography, where offences are categorised as crimes. On 31 January 2011, however, the court finally sentenced Ariel to 42 months' jail and a fine of Rp250 million (about US$24,000) after finding him guilty of making and distributing pornographic videos, featuring himself and the two artistes.

Ariel, Indonesia's number one male singer until his arrest, was lucky because the prosecutors had previously called for a jail term of five years. A panel of three judges was unanimous in ruling that Ariel was guilty under the republic's anti-pornography law. The distribution of the videos last year, which spread like wildfire on the Internet and reached the masses through mobile phones, shocked the nation, with many social media users calling him "Ariel Peterporn". The videos were powerful and although they were amateurish, were still of high production quality. In a hearing of the case in December 2010, an expert sent by the Indonesian National Commission on Child Protection, Hadi Supeno, testified that his commission had registered 59 children as victims of sexual offences arising from the impact of the videos. Evidence presented to the court stated that between 14 June 2010 and 30 July 2010, victims had been reported to the commission on that particular case. The period of 14 June to 30 July 2010 was said to be the peak time of the distribution of the videos on the Internet.

After the first news of the distribution of the videos via YouTube, on 9 June 2010, Indonesian Minister of Communication and Informatics, Tifatul Sembiring, reacted strongly by saying that the distribution of the videos was just like stage four cancer and impossible to stop. Interestingly, the minister also posted this news on his Facebook account[12]. Referring to the law regulating the use of electronic communication, Minister Sembiring made it clear that matters of morality and decency, including pornography, should not be distributed via social media, as this was against the law in Indonesia. He also called on the public to refrain from making use of

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12 Tifatul Sembiring's, personal Facebook account.
    http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=471629898008

social media for negative purposes and in violation of the law, as well as deviating from the intended use of the technology.

Minister Sembiring used the Ariel case as a strategic platform to control cyberspace pornography, as he ordered local and international providers of Internet and mobile services to put firewalls in place to block pornography, just two months after Ariel's high profile case[13]. Despite strong opposition, the policy of pornography control has steadily gained acceptance and the powerful player, Research In Motion (RIM) of Canada, has given in to the demand. This BlackBerry supplier agreed to filter web content to ensure no pornography could be accessed, as of January 2011, after the government called for the revoking of the smart phone maker's operating licence in Indonesia[14].

For Indonesia, growth of Internet usage will only increase[15]. Dr. Suprawoto, an expert advisor to the Communication and Informatics Minister for Social Cultural Affairs, announced during a public discussion in Gorontalo, North Sulawesi (13 November 2011), that the Government of Indonesia had set a target of providing the whole archipelago with Internet connection during 2012. Embracing a vision of ushering Indonesian society into an information familiar community, the government aims to give people easy access to information and the added value of education and people's empowerment. This vision springs from the belief that poverty, or the existence of marginalised segments of society, are not necessarily so because of financial weakness – more so due to lack of information.

The Ministry of Communications worked on the construction of telecommunications infrastructure for 5,874 districts nationwide during 2011, to provide the required infrastructure for telephone, radio, television and Internet links to remote places. This telecommunication infrastructure was to be completed at the end of 2011. The government will begin

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13 http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/porn-ban-for-phones-a-case-of-moral-panic-20110121-19zyu.html

14 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1346096/Blackberry-stay-Indonesia-thanks-anti-porn-pledge.html

15 http://kominfo.go.id/liputan/detail/1935/Kominfo+Targetkan+2012+Seluruh+Pulau+Terkoneksi

providing Internet access to the rest of Indonesia's 17,000 islands in 2012, and by 2016 the whole nation should have broadband Internet access. The backbone of this endeavour is the on-going work of laying inter-island optic fibre lines on the bigger islands and this reached Papua, the country's eastern-most province, in November 2011. As the infrastructure for broadband Internet connection is rolled out, it is expected that by 2018, Indonesia will enter a full digital era where all information media will be digitally available.

With the prospect of increasingly advanced technology being used by social media to engage audiences, the challenges ahead include how positive impacts of social media conflict with the negative impacts, and are not light concerns for Indonesia. Especially if we consider Marshall McLuhan's book, *Understanding Media*: The Extensions of Man, in which he discusses the role of the media in the future, and how the media is the message. McLuhan regards media as an extension of man and there are different kinds of media, representing a diversified array of messages. Media also affects the relationships and activities of man. Media has evolved from the individual to wider society, allowing for every corner of the world to be connected into a global village.

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Paper Chase – Information Technology Powerhouse Still Prefers Newsprint

by Anisha Bhaduri

A legend in the English language, under the masthead of the Malayalam daily, *Mathrubhumi*, reads: "The national daily in Malayalam". According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) for the first quarter of 2011, this newspaper, headquartered in the south Indian state of Kerala, has a 6.8 million daily readership. This is the tenth highest in the country. With fellow Malayalam daily, *Malayala Manorama*, at fourth position and commanding a daily readership of 9.9 million, such a front-page assertion from a vernacular daily is perhaps not too ambitious. In a country of 22 official languages and 398 living languages, nine out of India's 10 most read newspapers are regional and the top 10 account for a readership that represents 34 per cent of a population of 1.2 billion.

While newspaper circulation is waning across the world, in India it has grown from 126.96 million in 2000 to 207.10 million in 2008. Most of the growth has been spearheaded by Hindi – described by one media scholar as a presumed national language – and other vernacular papers. In this former British colony, Hindi newspapers lead with 84.9 million copies daily, while English newspapers come a distant second with 31.5 million copies. Yet, English remains the country's unofficial 'lingua franca' and although the vernacular press rules, daily newspapers such as *Mathrubhumi*, must take recourse to English to assert their pan-Indian ambitions. This is a typical Indian irony.

The irony becomes more pronounced when the English press is perceived as elitist even when the country is breathlessly embracing social media. For example, Facebook, Twitter and Orkut (all requiring more than a nodding familiarity with the English language) are the top three social networks in India, with Facebook alone boasting 35 million users in June 2011. According to a June 2011 report, titled "State of The Internet with a Focus on India", compiled by digital media measuring company Comscore, India

has 73 million Internet users and social networking is central to Internet usage in India. The Comscore report says that social networking sites reach 84 per cent of the web audience in India, and take up 21 per cent of all time spent online. The report also points out that the Internet audience in India is "dramatically young: three-quarters of the web audience is under the age of 35, compared to 52 per cent of the global average and 57 per cent of the regional average".

Ravindra Kumar, editor and managing director of India's most respected English-language national daily, the 137-year-old *The Statesman*, said: "Social media too is elitist, when you consider the Internet penetration in the country. The numbers suggest that the same people who read English newspapers also embrace social media. Elitism in both cases is defined by opportunity, or the absence of opportunity, and not by a higher intellect."

With more than half of Indian people under the age of 25 and two-thirds under 35, this piece of information should ideally give the print medium sleepless nights, especially when the same Comscore report points out that 58 per cent of Indian web users visit news/information sites. It put the growth of these sites at 16 per cent during 2010, outpacing Asian growth of two per cent and global growth of three per cent. In fact, Facebook claims 43 per cent of news sharing happens through social media and not through TV or newspapers. Enough to get doomsayers to predict the end of newspapers in India? Not really.

According to a report titled, "The new rules of the game", by Sayantani Kar, published in the Indian business daily, *Business Standard*, on 21 November 2011, 78 per cent of the 88 Indian chief marketing officers (CMOs) surveyed by the global business division of IBM said they were unprepared for social media even though they considered it critical. The report quoted Ms Virginia Sharma, vice-president of marketing and communications, IBM India and South Asia (who conducted the study's Indian and Sri Lankan phases) as saying: "Despite the high regard for social media, my Indian counterparts feel more unprepared than CMOs anywhere else. This is unexpected because at any marketing forum, we talk about social media all the time."

Between 2000 and 2010, India posted a social media user growth of 1,520 per cent, but, according to a report titled, "Where print makes profits", in *The Economist* (23 September 2010), during 2009 and 2010 alone the amount spent on newspaper advertising in India increased by 30 per cent,

the swiftest increase in the Asia-Pacific region. The report also quotes the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (a trade body) and KPMG (a consultancy), to suggest that in the next four years, the Indian newspaper industry's revenues will grow by nine per cent a year, to $5.9 billion. With such fantastic projections and circulation growth rates, it would seem that print faces no immediate online threat, as only seven per cent of Indians use Internet regularly and the broadband penetration rate is no more than one per cent.

Sam Rajappa, veteran journalist and founder-director of Statesman Print Journalism School said: "Indian people always valued printed matter – be it a book or a newspaper. Quality of newspapers in India has improved vastly in the last two decades."

The printed word
President of the Indian Newspaper Society, Ashish Bagga, listed "rising literacy, our buoyant economy, growing consumerism and faster urbanisation", as the principal drivers of newspaper circulation growth in India. "Also, the phenomenon of nuclear families, more family members working, more and more women in work and above all a greater level of awareness and hence the need to know."

Manash Ghosh, editor of the Bangla daily, *Dainik Statesman*, thinks the spurt in literacy over the past two decades has vastly contributed to increased newspaper sales. Sam Rajappa thinks literacy in regional languages, rather than English, has registered greatly. According to provisional 2011 Census data, India's literacy rate has risen by 9.2 per cent to reach 74.04 per cent. The data also revealed that literacy rates have improved remarkably among females. While the literacy rate for males rose from 75.26 in 2001 to 82.14 per cent in 2011, signalling a rise of 6.9 per cent, it increased by 11.8 per cent for females pushing it up from 53.67 per cent a decade ago to 65.46 currently. The provisional totals of the latest census suggest that 74 per cent of the total population aged seven and above, are literate. While this is still pitifully low considering more than six decades have passed since India gained independence in 1947, things have improved vastly in the past four decades – as only 35 Indians, of every 100, could read and write in 1976.

The *Dainik Bhaskar* experience would perhaps illustrate best how rising literacy has played a stellar role in expanding newspaper circulation in

India. The 2001 Census indicated that the west Indian state of Rajasthan had experienced the greatest increase in literates, out of all Indian states. In 1991, there had been 13.6 million literates, that is about 39 per cent of Rajasthanis over the age of seven. In 2001, there were 28.1 million – an addition of roughly 14 million literates. In 1996, the *Dainik Bhaskar*, a Hindi daily newspaper headquartered in Bhopal in the Central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, decided to start an edition in Jaipur (the capital of Rajasthan) with the express objective of selling to "new" readers, as opposed to trying to, and as media scholar Robert Jeffery, who first spotted the trend, puts it, "capture readers from other papers". By 2002, *Dainik Bhaskar* was the leading Hindi daily, not just in Rajasthan, but in India, with a daily circulation of 1.4 million. As per the IRS survey for the first quarter (Q1) of 2011, Dainik Bhaskar, the second most read newspaper in the country, now has a daily readership of 14 million.

Mrinal Pande, former chief editor of the Hindi daily, *Hindustan*, the third most read daily in the country, that commands a readership of 11.8 million (IRS, Q1 2011), writes in the English daily, *The Hindu*, (18 November 2009), that between 2002 and 2005, readership in the Hindi-speaking Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand recorded a phenomenal annual growth of 14 per cent. More importantly, she writes: "Over two-thirds of these readers were based in small towns and rural areas. Despite continuous political turbulence, poverty, rise in crime and a near-breakdown of law and order, or perhaps because of these, the poor but news-hungry readers in Bihar were ready to spend five rupees (Rs) a copy for a slim Hindi newspaper, almost three times the price of the (considerably thicker) English dailies."

Bagga said: "Indian-language dailies have grown using the micro-coverage they offer, in addition to state and national news. There is a strong need for national news, as well as regional and local news. Typically, newspapers offer a blend of both. Some more and some less. We now have editions of language newspapers after every 100 kms or so… On the other hand, English-language newspapers also have pages devoted to city and neighbourhood news, besides local supplements."

Wobbly English press
The rise of the vernacular press is particularly phenomenal. For nearly 50 years since independence, the English-language press that has catered to less that 10 per cent of the country's population, has been considered

representative of national aspirations. Also, owing to its urban-centric focus, ownership and readership, it collected a larger share of advertising revenue because advertisers invariably thought that English newspapers were read by a relatively affluent and educated class. In fact, before independence, and for decades after, the English press remained, as media scholar Tara S Nair puts it in an article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, "the major site of the 'integrative ideological discourse', that was led by the traditional intellectual class and dominated by English, the 'language of civilisation and cultural prowess'." But that started to change slowly after the 60s and dramatically over the past quarter of a century.

Ravindra Kumar said: "Traditionally, the 'national' tag has been used by newspapers that publish from New Delhi and other centres. It is a bit of a misnomer because a national newspaper ought to be one that, (a) has a national, as opposed to a regional, perspective and (b) offers opinions considered by audiences nationally, regardless of publication centres. Language of publication has nothing to do with the 'national-ness' of a newspaper. The English press, which theoretically offered a product that could be read by some people in all parts of the country, appropriated the tag because language newspapers in a country with several national languages were defined by the territories they circulated in."

According to data released by the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) and quoted by Nair, the English press' share in national circulation declined from 26.99 per cent in 1964 to 22.84 in 1978, to 12.85 in 1991, and to 12.64 per cent in 1997. But English still remains the language in India in which the second largest number of newspapers and periodicals (10,530) were registered with the RNI during 2008-2009. In fact, *The Hindu*, an English-language daily, remains the largest circulated newspaper published from a single centre (Chennai, the capital of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu), with a daily circulation of 1.4 million.

Manash Ghosh feels that the decision of many state governments in federally-structured India, to abolish instructions in English and even scrap English lessons at the pre-primary and primary school levels, robbed at least one generation of the level of comfort that their educated parents and grandparents enjoyed with respect to the English language – a natural corollary of more than three centuries of British colonial rule. He feels such reverse elitism, born out of an exaggerated desire to get over a colonial hangover, not only dealt a body blow to the English-language press but

strengthened regional press at the cost of the English press. "But that will change. At least one political lesson has been learnt from such an academic misadventure. The communist government that ruled West Bengal (eastern Indian state bordering Bangladesh), from July 1977 to April 2011, paid the price of banning English at the primary level for decades, only to reverse the decision with the information technology boom. Other states are waking up to the benefits of teaching English in schools with increasing globalisation. As new readers are added to the stable, the English press will definitely see a revival," Ghosh said.

Rajappa, who does not consider English newspapers elitist, said: "Language newspapers are able to relate better the problems readers face. Some language papers present news in such a way that even neo-literates can follow easily." And he is not perturbed by the findings of the IRS Q1 survey for 2011 that cites *Times of India* as the only English newspaper among the top 10 most read dailies in the country. "The *Times of India* under its younger management team has succeeded in converting it from a quality newspaper to a 'product' hawked by salesmen rather than distributed by circulation managers," he said. Kumar too rued such "dumbing down" of editorial content. "There has been a conscious effort in almost all states to promote the local language, sometimes at the cost of English. It is only natural, therefore, that language newspapers will be the most widely read. The English press once enjoyed the advantage of claiming the intellectual high ground; by dumbing down products it is losing that advantage," he said.

Bagga said: "English is still the language of a smaller sub-set of the total newspaper reading community, and it will continue to be that way. In fact, as Indian-language dailies grow in influence, readership of English newspapers as a segment will reduce in share, despite showing some growth! Consumption of printed newspapers in English will also get impacted by digital platforms in time to come, albeit from the same newspaper brands." But Kumar doesn't think the Internet is that big a threat yet. "Internet news uses conventional media as its primary news source. Until it develops its own credible news sources – and I don't count social media as a credible news source – the Internet will hurt conventional media, but not fatally."

Value for money

The dramatic rise in the circulation of vernacular newspapers has a lot to do with a spurt in readership in rural India. The National Readership Survey of 2006 revealed that newspaper readership in rural areas had grown so fast that it paralleled the readership in urban areas. "As a proportion, however, press reach has stabilised in urban India at 45 per cent. The reach in rural India has also stayed the same at 19 per cent, needless to say, on a much larger population base. The number of readers in rural India (110 million) is now roughly equal to that in urban India (112 million)." The rise in readership is invariably tied to increasing purchasing power in rural India, following the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. Sixty per cent of India's population has always lived in villages and according to the Economic Survey for 2011, the share of agriculture and allied services in the gross domestic product (GDP) is 14.2 per cent, with the sector accounting for about 58 per cent of employment in the country. During the last quarter of 2008-2009, manufacturing shrank by 1.4 per cent; in contrast, agriculture expanded by 2.7 per cent.

With farm income not taxed in India, villages have a higher disposable income than urban centres. According to a paper published on 18 June 2009, in *India Knowledge@Wharton*, the rise in rural purchasing could be mainly attributed to, (a) better procurement prices offered by the government for agriculture produce, (b) government initiatives such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which guarantees 100 days of employment to one member of every rural household and the Bharat Nirman programme with an outlay of US$34.84 billion for improving rural infrastructure, (c) reduced rural underemployment, (d) increased wages, and (e) waiver of agricultural loans to the tune of US$13.9 billion. The paper quotes Pankaj Gupta, practice head, consumer and retail, of Tata Strategic Management Group as saying: "Total income in rural India (about 43 per cent of total national income) is expected to increase from around US$220 billion in 2004-2005 to US$425 billion by 2010-2011, a compounded annual growth rate of 12 per cent."

But more than urban India, rural India wants value for money. But this is probably true for almost all educated Indian households where a subscription is paid for more than one newspaper. With cover prices among the lowest in the world, and the information technology revolution decentralising newspaper production and, therefore, making newspapers more accessible to the interior parts of India, it is natural for competition to increase as more players enter the market.

According to RNI, 3,835 new newspapers were registered during 2008-09 and the per centage of growth of registered publications over the previous year was 5.5 per cent. No wonder the past two decades have seen some extensive price wars that have kept the average news-stand price of an Indian newspaper less than Rs 4 ($0.09). This apart, newspaper marketers tried brand branching – for example, offering two or more publications from the same stable to readers for the price of one, offering discount coupons, discounted yearly rates and other incentives to boost paid-for circulation.

Ravindra Kumar thinks it is the low cover price that has helped the Indian newspaper industry buck global trends." A single edition costs less than Rs 3, which is about one-tenth the cost of a similarly-sized newspaper in say, Thailand. While cost of the main raw material – newsprint – is identical across markets, this artificially reduced price makes newspapers accessible to readers in India. However, circulation growth figures are unreliable because some publishers have been known to artificially inflate sales to extract higher advertising revenues."

The two most documented price wars in the past decade involved the country's largest selling English-language daily - the *Times of India*. The first war was waged when *Times of India* tried to break the monopoly of another top English daily – the *Hindustan Times* – over the National Capital Region (NCR). A 14 July 2002 report, published in *The Hindu* reads: "The two big dailies are slugging it out once again. Both *Times of India* (ToI) and *Hindustan Times* (HT) have slashed the masthead prices to Rs 1.50 on weekdays between Monday and Saturday for Delhi. And the price reduction was also extended to the Sunday edition. HT brought down the cover price of its Sunday edition to Rs 2.75 from the earlier Rs 3.50, while ToI cut the price from Rs 2.90 to Rs 2."

The turf war was replicated when the *Hindustan Times* started an edition in India's financial capital of Mumbai in 2005 and an English daily promoted by the owners of *Dainik Bhaskar*, called *Daily News and Analysis* (DNA), was also launched. Before HT and DNA entered the picture, ToI had a market share of 80 per cent in Mumbai's Rs 15 billion market and was enjoying a premium price of Rs 4 on weekdays and Rs 6 on weekends. HT and DNA tried to break this monopoly through line sales. Multi-location subscription routes and news stand sales and reports say HT even offered a year-long subscription for Rs 398. The pricing did make a difference. According to a

report in *rediff.com*, post-competition surveys indicated that ToI sales had dropped by around 35,000 copies a day because a casual buyer liked to pick up a Rs 2 newspaper from the stand instead of one that cost Rs 4, and that ToI had reversed its policy of not taking back unsold papers, in order to stay on top of the numbers game.

However, cover price alone does not keep a newspaper afloat. Tara S Nair quotes James Curran to point out that "any paper exists on a 'concealed subsidy'. The press adapts itself to the marketing needs of advertisers in its pursuit of this subsidy. It is the large papers which benefit the maximum as the advertisers' patronage is extended almost exclusively to them. For the advertisers, a single large advertisement that requires a large initial outlay is cheaper per customer than small localised ones." Rajappa says: "Newspapers in India are heavily subsidised by advertisement revenue. In no other country in the world can a reader receive a quality daily of 24 to 36 pages for as little Rs 2 or 3. More than half the cover price can be realised by selling old newspapers for re-cycling." Manash Ghosh said Hindi and other large-selling vernacular dailies set the terms when it came to selling advertising space.

One important outcome of the price war has been a spurt of acquisitions and another has been the dissolution of territorial borders for publications that have been held sacrosanct for decades. But such fierce competitiveness rarely caused a publication to shut down. Competition for readers invariably strengthened the competition for advertisements. And, thereby hangs a tale.

Sale! Sale!
Print media accounts for 48 per cent of the total advertising spend of Rs 137.5 billion in India. According to a report compiled by the consultancy, PricewaterhouseCoopers, the print industry was expected to grow from Rs 128 billion in 2006, to Rs 232 billion by 2011, at 12.6 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR). While all newspapers have rate cards for advertisers, where they charge per line or according to the size of the advertisement, and a premium price is charged for flexibility in the modular size, during the early years of the last decade an English newspaper showed the way on how to expand the "concealed subsidy" by selling editorial space. The regional newspapers quickly caught on while growing more powerful each day with increased democratisation of the country, and as single-party politics in parliament gave way to coalition compulsions

and regional considerations. Just as rate cards for advertisement were devised, these newspapers started charging fees for publishing news, publicity notes and pictures, with the product packaged in news pages as nothing else but news. The difference between advertisements and news is that advertisements are not verified, whereas news invariably is. Any newspaper's credibility hinges on publishing news that has been verified and evaluating the implications of such news for readers and society on its editorial pages. This is the manner in which newspapers have traditionally preserved and strengthened their informational and adversarial roles.

With a leading English-language newspaper turning over its editorial space to advertisers and publicists (whether for politicians or products) for a price, without informing readers of this transition, a line was crossed. While opinions and reports abounded in the media about this sordid practice, an editorial in the *Economic and Political Weekly* pointed out as far back as in 22 February, 2003: "In recent years while there has been much said about media rights, its responsibilities have been severely neglected". The extent of the rot became apparent in the run-up to India's fifteenth general election in 2009, and during election to the assemblies of the states of Maharashtra and Haryana that took place in October that year. "Paid news" had arrived and as parliament's Leader of the Opposition, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, pointed out, the menace had "started out as an aberration, went on to become a disease and is now an epidemic".

In what is known as "paid news", newspapers, magazines and television channels present political candidates in a favourable light, for a consideration, while masquerading the puff as objective news. Describing how the game had been played ahead of the assembly election in Maharashtra, Magsayasay award winner, P Sainath, wrote in *The Hindu* on 26 October 2009: "The deals were many and varied. A candidate had to pay different rates for 'profiles', interviews, a list of 'achievements', or even a trashing of his rival in some cases. (With the channels, it was 'live' coverage, a 'special focus,' or even a team tracking you for hours in a day.) Let alone bad-mouthing your rival, this 'pay-per' culture also ensures that the paper or channel will not tell its audiences that you have a criminal record." Sainath wrote that the lowest-end "package", promising a profile and four news outlets of the candidate's choice, came for no less than Rs 4 lakh (US$8,000). No wonder India fought its most expensive general election in 2009!

Following extensive censure from the section of the media that had not sold out, the country's electoral watchdog, the Election Commission of India (EC), identified paid news as an "electoral malpractice" and in a circular issued in 2010, pointed out: "The practice of 'paid news' has to be seen as an attempt to circumvent the provisions of Sections 77 and 123(6) of the (Representation of the People) Act which prescribes accounting and ceiling of election expenses and makes exceeding such prescribed limits a corrupt practice in elections." It also advised: "When there is disproportionate coverage to the speech/activities of a candidate on television/radio channels, which is likely to influence the voters and yield electoral benefit to a particular candidate, and the same coverage appears in several channels, then the candidate should be served with notices by the DEOs (district election officers) to explain her/his stand as to why the coverage should not be treated as advertisement, and (the) matter should be reported to the Commission."

Also in 2010, a perturbed Press Council of India (PCI), whose watchdog role is merely recommendatory in nature, appointed a two-member committee to probe complaints of "paid news". But curiously, it chose not to release in its entirety, the tell-all report titled "Paid News: How Corruption in the Indian Media Undermines Democracy", compiled by the committee, until prodded by the Central Information Commission to make it public as part of 'suo motu' disclosure mandated by India's Right to Information Act. There was a reason for the PCI's reticence. Not only had the report named and shamed a number of publications, predominantly from the vernacular press, it had also pointed out that "by not accounting for the money received from candidates, the concerned media company or its representatives are violating the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 as well as the Income Tax Act, 1961, among other laws".

But what is more disturbing is the reaction of owners/proprietors. The same PCI report quotes Ramoji Rao, the proprietor of the Telugu daily, *Eenadu*, with a readership of 5.9 million (IRS Q1 2011) as saying, while denying any infraction: "…favourable coverage in the press and the capacity to spend big money in poll campaigns became the sole eligibility on the basis of which political parties chose their candidates… The so-called paid, favourable coverage by the press is one of the off-shoots of this tendency."

When asked if he thought there was a direct relationship between the staggering growth of vernacular press and paid news, Bagga said: "I don't think so. News that is paid for addresses a deeper malaise in the system that brings in commercial gains and not so much respect or readership gains. All this is so very short-term and harms the newspaper's brand image." Kumar said: "There may be some relation, but not a causal one. The language press fares well because it accommodates the first-language needs of the reader. Paid news is a matter of greed, not a function of need."

Rajappa said: "Paid news is the bane of market-driven newspapers cutting across language. It was an English newspaper that set the trend. Paid news which robs credibility of newspapers is the greatest threat to Indian journalism." Bagga could not agree more. "Paid news is a grave threat to Indian journalism!" he said.

All is not lost

But there is still hope. On 21 October 2011, in the first punitive action of its kind, India's Election Commission (EC) disqualified Mrs Umlesh Yadav, the sitting legislator for Bisauli in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The EC also barred her from membership of any legislature in the country for three years, on the grounds that she had not included in her official accounts of expenditure, the amount she had spent on advertisements in two Hindi dailies that masqueraded as news items, during the 2007 assembly election. Paid news had claimed its first political scalp!

In his autobiography, *My Paper Chase*, Harold Evans, former editor of the London *Sunday Times* and *The Times*, recounts how India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had sought the International Press Institute's help in training the country's journalists in modern methods of newspaper production in the late 1950s, because he felt they could not "reach the people through the newspapers". If a democracy is 'of the people, by the people and for the people', journalism is essentially 'about' people. According to one estimate, the reach of newspapers in India is only 27 per cent, against the global average of 50 per cent, and there are nearly 400 million Indians who are yet to pick up a newspaper. Kumar believes that loss of credibility, as a consequence of paid news, could be fatal. Not only would it give any government, impatient with the adversarial role of the press, a reason to impute motive or worse and therefore, a reason to interfere, but also persuade people that the printed word did not paint the true picture. The Indian Press, among the most free in the world, must go back to putting people first if it wants to flourish unfettered.

"Philippine's television network war going online – is the Filipino audience ready to do the click?"

by Sherrie Ann Torres

Every morning, GMA-7 Senior Correspondent, Julius Segovia, starts his day browsing the latest news on the web using his BlackBerry phone - a habit which he said began in 2006, the year he got his dream job. It is usually a "date" with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (www.inquirer.net) and the *Philippine Star's* (www.philstar.com) news websites first, followed by www.gmanetwork.com, his station's online news portal and www.abs-cbn.com, the competing network's official website.
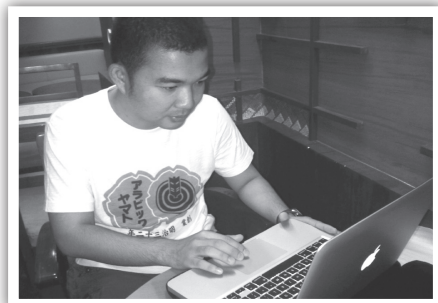
GMA-7 reporter Julius Segovia browsing the net as part of his daily morning routine
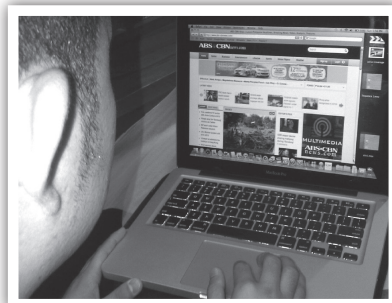
Segovia browsing the website of his network's competitor, abs-cbnnews.com "to see what he had missed"

The objective, he said, is to remain informed and competitive. "The best way to start the day is to check on the competing websites. *Para alam mo kung saan tayo butas* [so that you would know as to where, what did we miss]," Segovia said.

In the meantime, fifty-two year old migrant worker, Yeng Caguimbal, who has lived in Italy with his wife and two children, aged 13 and 15, for over a decade, updates himself with the latest news and trends in the Philippines, via ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel (TFC). But since he has several jobs – as a hotel bellboy and an on-call house cleaner – he usually works for more

than 10 hours a day. Therefore, there are times that he misses the news, which is a big deal for him, he said. At these times, he asks his children to help him browse ABS-CBN and GMA-7's news portals so he can watch news stories aired by the two leading Philippines networks.

"So that you're still aware what's happening in your country even if you're away. It's different when you watch it in video (form) instead of just reading it", Caguimbal said.

"Of course you would always like to be updated with the news, especially because your relatives are all here in the Philippines", he added.

Julius and Yeng are just two of the many and frequent, page viewers or visitors to the major existing news websites in the Philippines. Their habit of regularly visiting news websites, as well as social networking sites, such as Facebook, is becoming a normal activity of many Filipinos these days. Filipinos are known for being sociable, always curious, adventurous and eager to learn and try new things. The Internet is one of the greatest interests now for most youth and professionals.

a sample of competing internet café/computer shops in a middle-class village in Caloocan City, Philippines

These days, in almost every village or community, especially in Metro Manila and other urban areas, there will always be one or two Internet shops operating. Some malls, coffee shops, restaurants and other commercial establishments are now offering free Wi-fi access to their customers so they can browse the net using their laptop, iPad or mobile phone.

Telecommunication companies are also providing stiff competition by offering lower cellphone/internet charges to their clients. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), PC (personal computer) penetration rate in the Philippines was estimated by the ITU (International Telecommunications Unit) at 3.5 per 100 population in 2003, and 4.5 per population in 2004.

The unpublished 2003 Family Income and Expenditures Survey (FIES), conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), also said that at least four in every 100 families in the country's population (81.878 million) own at least one personal computer. "When it comes to the Internet, the NTC (National Telecommunications Commission) estimated that there were 1.44 million Internet subscribers of NTC-registered Internet service providers (ISPs) in 2005… in 2004, there were 4.4 million Internet users or 5.32 users per 100 population in the country," the NSCB said.

Filipinos' active use of the Internet was further strengthened by the result of a recent study conducted by ComScore Inc., a global digital marketing intelligence agency. It placed the Philippines as the number one country in the Asia-Pacific region for citizens spending their time browsing the net, specifically on social networking sites such as Facebook and Yahoo! (Next in line is Australia and Indonesia.) ComScore's study found that "50.8 per cent of the total online population in the Asia-Pacific region visited a social networking site in February 2010, reaching a total of 240.3 million visitors." In the study, Internet use was recorded in the Asia-Pacific region at an average of 2.5 hours per day. But in the Philippines for February alone, a regular Internet user browsed the net for an average of 5.5 hours per day. It specified that social networking site visits averaged more than 26 times in the same month.

Although internet was introduced to the Philippines in 1990, the people's interest was almost nil, as indicated by World Bank monitoring. Internet use in the Philippines increased from 1996 onwards, the World Bank study said.
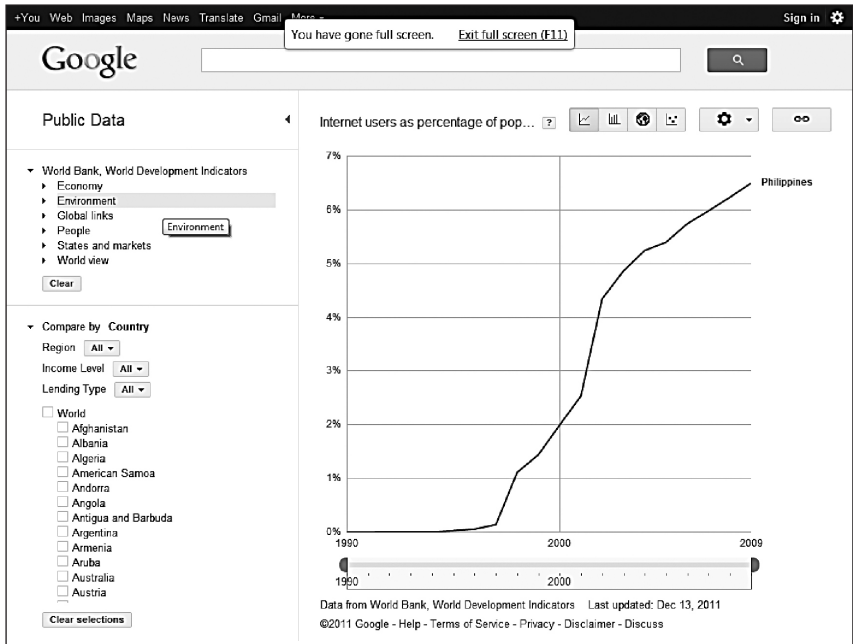
The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) data likewise indicated the progressive interest of many Filipinos, in the Internet. From almost zero in 1990, Internet users grew to 8.278 million in 2009, according to the CIA World Fact Book.

2000	2002	2005	2007	2008	2009
500,000	3,500,000	7,800,000	5,300,000	5,618,000	8,278,000

Philippines CIA entry   Source : CIA World Fact / Index Mundi

Today, television remains the "king" of entertainment and information in the Philippines. But, despite television's continuous reign over the daily lives of almost all Filipinos, a 10 March 2011 survey by the Nielsen Audience Measurement Report uncovered a decrease in the length of television viewership time – from the usual 8.1 hours in 2008 to 7.7 hours of TV watching in 2010. The survey involved some 5,400 respondents for the National Urban TV Audience Measurement and Mega Manila TV Audience Measurement (Mega TAM), with 3,400 respondents. The Nielsen 2010 survey likewise showed a decreased newspaper readership in Metro Manila, from 24 per cent in 2008 to 20 per cent in 2010. But it showed a

10% increase in Internet use – the fastest growth in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the survey.

Interestingly, there is a growing use of new media such as magazines, blogs and social networking sites. The new media or multimedia, according to *Webopedia*, is "the use of computers to present text, graphics, video, animation, and sound in an integrated way." The rising interest of many Filipinos in multimedia, as well as the availability of technology, specifically computer units/internet access in many parts of the country has slowly given rise to various online news portals in the country – resulting in stiff competition.
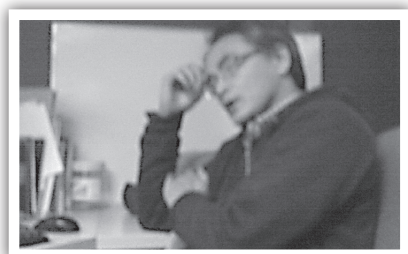
Isagani de Castro, editor-in-chief of Channel 2's news website (abs.cbnnews.com) said that it was their network that first introduced a news portal into the country in 1995. "ABS-CBN was actually the first to put up a news website but *hindi ito sineryoso* [it was not taken seriously] in terms of putting resources into it," he said. However, the public's interest in a news website was limited and it could not compete with television, radio and print.

In the late 1990s, www.inq7.net, was introduced to the Filipino public. Culled from the Inquirer and GMA-7 television network's business merger, this website was based heavily on a print style of news reporting. The partnership somehow galvanised the steady readership-viewership share of the two large media corporations. By that time, more people had become receptive to the idea of news reading on the net. However, after almost seven years of partnership, the Inquirer and GMA-7 decided to split. Inq7 then became inquirer.net while GMA-7 introduced its own website, gmanews.tv, which was renamed to gmanetwork.com in late November 2011.

Meanwhile, in February 2011, TV5 (formerly ABC-5) owned by business tycoon, Manny V. Pangilinan, came out with its own official news portal – interaksyon.com – aside from 92.3 News FM radio station, that sought to compete with ABS-CBN's DZMM; GMA-7's DZBB and other AM stations in the country. All three stations – ABS-CBN, TV5 and GMA-7 – are led by esteemed names in the journalism industry and are regarded as the giants of competing television networks. All three have about 40 field reporters for television and almost the same number of radio and online reporters – not to mention their stringers. Their reporters are equipped with BlackBerry mobile units and iPhones so they can tweet updates for their respective

news portals and social media networks, as "teasers" for what can be seen on their TV station's major newscasts later in the evening.

The Philippines is the sixth highest country for Twitter use, according to a 2010 study conducted by ComScore. Carlo Ople in his blog "New Media Philippines," estimated there are about 2.1 million Filipino Twitter users today based on another Nielsen survey. Although networks are using Twitter these days to promote their stories and shows, TV stations regardless how many followers they have, are not earning even a single centavo from its use, de Castro said. The only benefit they [networks] get from social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, de Castro said, is "promotion," bringing the station to a more competitive position.

Isagani de Castro, editor-in-chief of www.abs-cbn.com of television network ABS-CBN

Interaksyon.com Editor-in-chief Roby Alampay editing the first batch of stories for the day right after our interview

Isagani de Castro, Jr., is a well-respected veteran journalist. He used to produce political, business and defence-related stories for international wire news agencies and Newsbreak, which specialises in investigative reports. He is now the editor-in-chief of abs-cbnnews.com. He has authored several books about politics and governance along with other internationally known Filipino journalists that include Sheila Coronel and Yvonne T. Chua.

Roby Alampay, a multi-awarded journalist here and abroad, used to be the editor of a major broadsheet in the Philippines before working as a senior journalist overseas. He is now the editor-in-chief of interaksyon.com. He is a TOYM (Ten Outstanding Young Men) awardee and former executive director of the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), whose main crusade is to promote journalists' rights.

Howie Severino, another multi-awarded broadcast-journalist now heads gmanetwork.com. Severino started as a teacher and activist during the Marcos regime before becoming a print journalist. In the late 1990s, he shifted to broadcast journalism and focused more on environmental stories. A co-founder of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), Severino also hosts the award-winning programme "I-Witness" (GMA-7) and "News to Go" (GMANewstv).

Source : gmanetwork.com
Howie Severino who hosts multi-awarded public affairs program "I-Witness," is also editor-in-chief of GMA-7's media portal – gmanetwork.com

Inside their respective newsrooms, the majority of those who are working with de Castro, Alampay and Severino as editors or deskmen, are all veterans in newspaper reporting. All three networks adhere to the same journalistic principle of responsible reporting – truth, fairness and balance. All are well-equipped in the field, including their news gathering men, with the skills and gadgets needed when scouting for stories.

"Strength and manpower of the three network's media portal"

www.abs-cbnnews.com **Isagani de Castro, Jr**	www.gmanetwork.com **HowieSeverino**	www.interaksyon.com **Roby Alampay**
Less than 10 regular reporters + more than 50 stringers	8 regular reporters + less than a 100 stringers	5 regular reporters + many stringers
Reporters have laptop/ wireless broadband	Reporters have laptop/ wireless broadband	Reporters have laptop/ wireless broadband
Armed with BlackBerry for communication; tweeting purposes	Armed with BlackBerry for communication; tweeting purposes	Armed with BlackBerry for communication; tweeting purposes
Can use the story of the 40+ TV reporters of the station	Can use the story of the 40+ TV reporters of the network	Can use the story of the 40+ TV reporters of the network
Can utilise the stories of radio reporters	Can utilise the stories of radio reporters	Can utilise the stories of radio reporters
Editors/deskmen all veterans in media/print Website carries print, radio and video form stories, live streaming, access to various programmes.	Editors/deskmen all print/media veterans Website carries print and video form stories; live video and audio streaming; links to various TV & radio programmes.	Editors/deskmen all media /print veterans Website carries print, radio and video-form, stories; live audio streaming, updates to various TV programmes.

Last February, competing stations, GMA New Media and ABS-CBN Interactive, along with Philstar Global, Summit Publishing, Philippine Entertainment Portal, Inquirer Interactive and Business World New Media, signed up the services of "Effective Measure." As did Interaksyon.com shortly after. Effective Measure is a Melbourne, Australia-based company which, according to its official website: "is a world leading online audience measurement solution". The main business of the company is to closely monitor the number of "page views" (or clicks and people that have viewed a certain website), and the volume of "unique visitors" (individuals browsing the website of its subscribers or clients).

ABS-CBN's "Kapamilya" news portal

De Castro said that the main objective for subscribing to Effective Measure was to keep abreast of their industry standing. Effective Measure's main thrust he said, is to guide advertisers toward websites which have the most "unique visits" (people reading what is on the website) for eventual advertisement placement. From March 2011 to September 2011, De Castro said, abs-cbnnews.com was in the lead in terms of worldwide following (for a Filipino website).

There are times he said, when GMA-7's news portal came number two in the world for "page visits" followed by either the *Philippine Star* or *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. "It's a general website that caters to wide audience. Principally, it's media-heavy on sports and entertainment. But I'd like to point out that in Effective Measure, the ABS-CBN entertainment website is actually separate," he said. That serves as an advantage compared to other websites. Aside from that, De Castro said he and other network executives also keep tabs of their standing by using Google Analytics to monitor the per hour status of their website.

Abraham Baladad, technical production system's head of the news portal said that 40% of their regular "page visitors" were from the Philippines, 35% from North America (who are mostly Filipino-Americans), followed by Saudi Arabia, Scandinavian countries and Southeast Asia. "We have a strong Internet penetration in North America, even our videos are stronger/faster compared to others," Baladad said.

Fifty per cent of their page visitors are between 25 to 40 years old, followed by 21 to 24 year olds. The information was sourced from people who visited the website and answered the survey form that flashes on the web page. According to Baladad, the network's news and current affairs department maintains at least three individual websites for easier public access. Daily record page views of abs-cbnnews.com averages 178,000 viewers.

According to Baladad, "TV Patrol", the network's primetime newscast has 140,000 page views while its late night news programme, "Bandila", has about 100,000 page views. A closer look at their website shows that a good number of their news articles carry the byline of their television reporters. This strategy greatly boosts their following, according to de Castro.

About two years ago, De Castro said, Maria Ressa, then head of the ABS-CBN news and current affairs, issued a directive, mandating all reporters to write for the website.

The directive proved to be very favourable for www.abs-cbnnews.com, but too difficult for reporters. Aside from writing a story in Filipino for Channel 2, reporters then would have to write it in English for ANC or the ABS-CBN News Channel and its other sister-station Studio 23, not to mention the source quotes which had to be translated for the website. The directive

has since been rescinded. These days, only the reporters who are willing and have the time to contribute to the website, contribute. The rest of the material is being written, or quoted, by the website team.
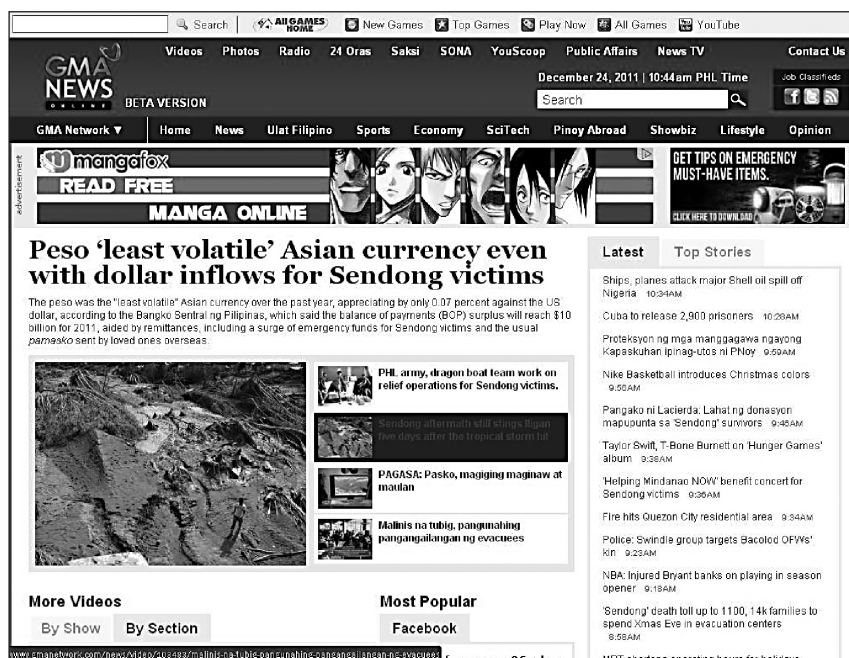
GMA-7 – 'KapusongTotoo' news portal

GMA-7's news portal used to be known as gmanews.tv. The website's dominant colour was blue – i.e. the signature colour of the network. Last November, the public was greeted by a new portal – gmanetwork.com – with a dominant red and grey background along with more sites to click. The choices ranged from "videos, photos, radio, 24 Oras, Saksi, SONA, You Scoop, Public Affairs, NewsTV, GMA Network, news, Ulat Filipino, Sports, Economy, SciTech, Pinoy Abroad, Showbiz, Lifestyle and Opinion". Respective stories from each television and radio reporter, along with their photos, could be easily clicked, and past stories could be viewed. Compared to the old site, the new portal has been faster and more interactive.

Odi de Guzman, gmanetwork.com's managing editor, explains the sudden change: "Changing the face is part of our strategy to update the website

and make the most of our competitive advantage. We wanted to highlight the multimedia aspect of our operations. Not just text, but photos, videos, graphics, etc.," he said. Although the abs-cbnnews.com website continues to dominate the race in terms of worldwide views, gmanetwork.com, de Guzman said, is still keeping the lead when it comes to nationwide "page views." Except for October 2011, which was cornered by ABS-CBN, the Filipino audience in the country remains loyal to gmanetwork.com.

The page view status from March to September, according to de Guzman, has gmanetwork.com in the lead, followed closely by abs-cbnnews.com. Coming in third is the *Philippine Star*, then the *Inquirer* and finally, the *Manila Bulletin*. De Guzman said, one strong advantage of their website is the brand name itself. "I think it's still because of our brand name. Especially, GMA – news, they already associate it to that. And then, the main objective, I'd like to think that the way that we report, or the way that we write the stories is not as sensational as the others," De Guzman theorised. A normal day he said would usually have "big stories" in video form running between 700,000 to 800,000 page views. It's also normal to have 50,000 views for not so big stories, he said. If it's a toxic day, which in media parlance means a day where so many major things/news are happening, getting a million page views is no longer surprising.

The recent recording of a million page views happened two days before the All Saints' Day. A period, according to de Guzman, which normally shows a very low page view turnout. The high turnout de Guzman said, was due to the gruesome killing of the half-brother of Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr., which according to the authorities, stemmed from the victim's conflict with his siblings. The incident was also followed by the murder of the father of international singing sensation, Charice Pempengco, returning home from a drinking spree. The arrest of Revilla's other half-brother, the discreet escape to Turkey of the senator's half-sister, the surrender of the killer of Pempengco's dad and the attempt of a wheelchair-bound former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to leave for Singapore in the following days, also registered consistently high page views.

The one-hour live streaming of United States State Secretary, Hillary Clinton's, recent visit to the Philippines, registered 4,000 visitors. De Guzman, however, was quick to point out that not all videos/stories carried on their website registered a sizeable number of "page views" or "unique visitors." There are times that a posted story may only get "one view", he said.

GMA-7's news portal considers the almost two million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and immigrants of Filipino descent as its stronghold. Fifty per cent (50%) of their browsers he said, are "outside the Philippines". About 20% of their unique visitors are from the United States and Canada. The rest according to de Guzman, come from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. There are also regular page viewers from Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Great Britain and Germany,. "If you will recall those names, those are areas where there are many OFWs…so there is a strong correlation where most Filipinos are in terms of our performance," he said.

TV5 "Kapatid's" interaksyon.com news portal

TV5's interaksyon.com news portal, in the meantime, attracts "high-literacy readers" as its stronghold in terms of page viewing. Editor-in-chief, Roby Alampay, said that an assessment of their performance using Google analytics, show that 70% of their followers are Philippine-based and the remaining 30% are in various parts of the world. They have yet to receive an assessment by Effective Measure, however. Unlike their two competitors who talked with more certainty about the behaviour of their website performance, Alampay preferred to focus much of the discussion

on the status of the online industry in the country. In their network, television reporters Alampay said: "are free to just concentrate on their TV coverage. We just report based on their content," he said.

Here, tweets of all TV5 network reporters are being monitored. However, not all those (news related) tweets are being used by Interaksyon.com. They are not requiring their reporters to tweet. "We monitor everybody. We monitor the tweets of competition, we monitor anybody who tweets," he said. Alampay sees the emergence of the new media as a requirement of the way things are going in the world, technology wise. It is part of the evolution that everyone needs to face and adopt he said, especially in getting news and information.

"New media is not even a strategic consideration, it's a given. The reality right now is that any news organisation needs a new media component… Nobody really has a choice whether you're publishing a newspaper or you're doing a small newsletter, or you're doing something for your school or you're running a major broadcasting network", he said. "Because right now, it's where the whole world is headed. This is now the primary news source for a lot of people. Media is starting, is just evolving to that point that Internet and mobile is becoming so pervasive and we just have to provide for it because that's one of the biggest ways to reach your audience," he added.

One noteworthy point about the style of reporting of the distinctive red, white and black-dominated interaksyon.com website, is its newspaper-like approach in presenting a story. News articles are longer, and more descriptive, providing the viewer with more details to digest, like when reading a broadsheet. A good number of stories are presented as features, especially those that deal with disasters such as the Northern Mindanao typhoon victims.

Alampay said, there was no such thing as specialisation or writing style on their website, as far as he was concerned. Especially, because new media is just starting in the Philippines and the medium continues to evolve. When asked about the seemingly different approach of their webpage he said: "Execution is one thing, but I don't think there's any difference in the vision. I think everybody is trying to figure out what the behaviours and habits of people are when they're reading new things online, compared

Page views, visitors to the three websites and their strongholds

abs-cbnnews.com
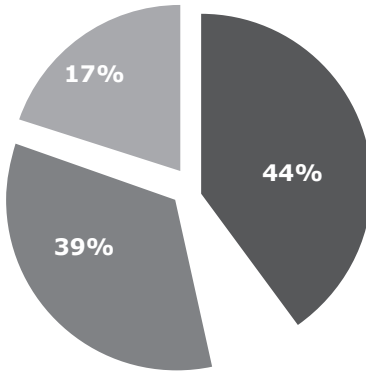
- ⬛ Philippines
- ⬛ North America
- ⬛ Other Countries

Strength : 21-40 y/o
Philippines : 44%
North America : 39%
Other Countries : 17%

Source: Abraham Baladad,
Chief Technical Production System

Interaskyon.com
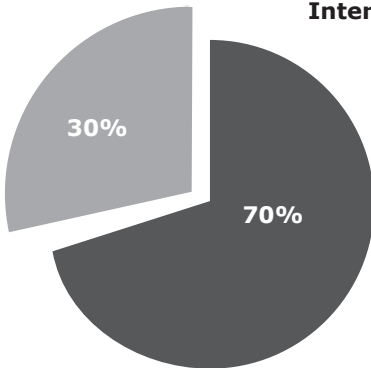
- ⬛ Philippines
- ⬛ Abroad

Strength : high-literacy readers
Philippines : 70%
Abroad : 30%

Source: Roby Alampay, editor-in-chief

gmanetwork.com
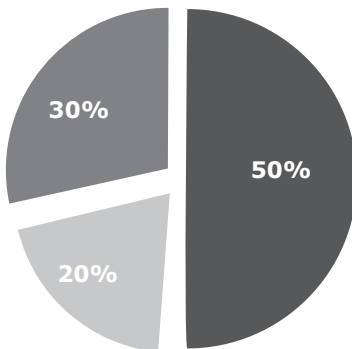
- ⬛ Outside Philippines
- ⬛ North America
- ⬛ Saudi Arabia and other GulfStates

Strength : OFWs
Outside the Philippines : 50%
Saudi Arabia and other
Gulf States : 30%
North America : 20%

Source: Odi de Guzman, managing editor

to when they view it on television or when they view it over print. I think everybody understands that the behaviour online is different; the behaviour on mobile is different. What matters I think is that we all have the same understanding, and the same lack of understanding of how the new media is changing how we deliver the news." The only difference in their website that he recognises, compared with others, is the "design".

Advertisements

Both abs-cbnnews.com and gmanetwork.com websites, boast of a good number of advertisements on their websites. These include cars, soaps, medicines, real estate, apparel and announcements for mall sales, among others. (Interaksyon.com's web page has a limited number of advertisements). Fifty per cent of the advertisements placed at abs-cbnnews.com and gmanetwork.com are called banner ads – the advertisements that a viewer sees when first clicking on a website. Some are sponsored advertisements and some are pre-roll advertisements. For this year, de Castro said, abs-cbnnews.com received considerable revenue from advertising. De Guzman of gmanetwork.com likewise disclosed an "impressive income" this year.

The competition is here

The big advantage of the news website, according to both de Castro and de Guzman, is the availability of a video format which audiences in general prefer over reading.

Despite this advantage, however, De Castro admits that the online news industry is still struggling and continues to be considered a "sunshine industry". This is because not so many people are fond of getting news from the web. And for as long as there is a limited number of people patronising news websites, advertisements will come in trickles. Therefore, a projected television network war spreading to the web will have to wait longer, de Castro said.

"The war is still with television. Because up to this day, TV is still the king. The key there is the advertiser. The web war is still far away. Online war is still in the initial stages," he said. But in terms of rivalry and the medium's future, de Castro said: "Competition is very stiff. Everyone reads it on the net. It's a classic example of what the future looks like." De Guzman shares the same thought of waiting longer before expecting energetic online news

network competition, and seeing the majority of Filipino audiences reading the news on the web. But in his mind, given the fast-pace of technology, the waiting may only be for a few more years. Their website considers the Inquirer and ABS as its main competitors. For now, many page viewers or visitors still prefer to read than watch – a preference that puts the Inquirer in an advantageous position.

Alampay on the other hand, does not see an impending network war spilling over to the websites. This is because "everybody in the internet is a competitor" and that includes "GMA, Inquirer, Facebook, Yahoo!..and all the bloggers." Given the sociable culture of Filipinos, Alampay feels that the Filipino audience is now ready to embrace the online medium. "We're very social, we're very aggressive to sourcing of information of news and gossip and we're very expressive, we're very opinionated. So I think the Internet was built for Filipinos. When you talk about readiness, it's not about Internet penetration. I think it's about culture…And we've been ready for this for a long time," he said. The "online network war" which others are seeing is not different from the overall media competition that the public is seeing now. The only change could be the availability of technology that journalists would have to use – specifically social media. "It's not a separate war, it's in the same war. The only difference now is it's in a much bigger field a new media tends to tow the line to a bigger field [sic]," Alampay said.

A good number of lawmakers and groups who have supported education in the Philippines for the past 10 years, have been pushing for mandatory training on computers and Internet use for students, especially in public schools. Colleges and universities in the country are also actively offering computer-related courses in a bid to continuously promote their importance in nation building and the nation's survival in this technology-driven world. Various training is also being given by private businesses and government offices to their employees, to help them adapt to the new systems.

Next to social networking sites, students are also being encouraged to explore the Internet and take advantage of the vast knowledge that the technology is offering. The question now is, will the public in the future, be finally able to appreciate and value the news that they can see on websites?

Time to click and take a look!

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Maximising Social Media

by Engelbert Apostol

It was a slow news day on 23 November 2009. We were preoccupied with less than spectacular stories that had been discussed in the story conference earlier that day. The day was supposed to be a day of pride for the Philippines, after Efren Penaflorida was chosen as CNN Hero of the Year. No earth shaking news or issue was developing so far. Not until a Boto (Vote) Patroller sent one picture about a story that would later jolt the world. It was hard to believe at first. And verifying the information proved more difficult.

The first email said that relatives of a gubernatorial candidate and several members of the media had been kidnapped in Maguindanao. It said the police and the military in the province were useless. The second message read: "We plead that this incident be given attention." It was more than a cry for help. It was a cry of courage – the "Boto Patroller" braved going against the Ampatuans, the ruling clan in Maguindanao and ARMM who were used to silencing their political enemies, rivals, and anyone who went against their will and caprices. Here was one brave soul, supposedly under the influence and control of the warlords, who dared to alert the world about the single deadliest event for journalists in history.

Arlene Burgos, who heads the social media unit of ABS-CBN news then, tried her best to contact all security forces in the area to confirm the reported abduction, but no one could verify the information.

The Patroller was relentless. As proof, the patroller sent a third email hours later with a very graphic image of dead bodies lying on the ground. Yet it took one full day before another source confirmed the white vehicle in the crime scene and ANC, the English news channel of ABS-CBN, was able to air the first picture of what will be known as the Maguindanao or Ampatuan massacre.

Of the 58 killed in the massacre, 32 were journalists, and the body of another, Reynaldo Momay from the *Midland Review*, remained unaccounted for.

Alerting ABS-CBN about the worst single case of election violence in Philippine history, highlights the increasing role of social media in Philippine journalism. The Patroller, who reported about the massacre, represented a group of citizens who use social media to become active contributors in the news gathering process of ABS-CBN. They are no longer just viewers. And in the ABS-CBN newsroom, social media has become an important source, channel and recipient of news, information and at times, entertainment.

The traditional newsroom
Before social media made its presence felt in the TV newsroom, the set-up in ABS-CBN was for desk editors, producers, reporters and anchors to brainstorm during story conferences, and define and drive the news agenda. The desk editors prepared the story outlook, or line-up of potential stories that needed to be discussed in the story conference, and to be pursued later by reporters. The reporters were not only foot soldiers. Their contribution in shaping the line-up of the newscast was not limited to covering events and issues. They were also required to submit story pitches, or ideas they wanted to develop either as a three-part series or a two-minute package. They needed to be in constant communication, not only with their desk editors, but also sources in and outside their beats. Contributions also come from regional network groups (RNG) and foreign bureaus or correspondents.

The reporters were also aware that those from other networks could out-scoop them any given day. With fierce competition from GMA-7, the reporters and other key members of news gathering and production already had their hands full giving the public a newscast that would keep them glued to their seats. From time to time, the newsroom people also received tips either through phone calls, text messages, email, snail mail and yes, even the so-called confidential sources, about potential stories. They likewise had the luxury of getting breaking news from stringers.

Thus, the traditional newsroom relied mainly on story conferences attended by desk editors, producers, technical supervisors and reporters, and on tips from sources and enterprise stories pitched by reporters, editors, anchors, RNGs, and foreign correspondents – until social media came along.

Election-focused citizen journalism
In 2005, TV Patrol utilised citizen journalism during the time the Internet was slowly gaining popularity. Citizen Patrol started as a "help desk" for

citizens who wanted to see their community problems, such as uncollected garbage, potholes in thoroughfares or flooded streets, solved, after public officials or private companies had apparently turned a blind eye. Citizen Patrol became BMPM or Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo (Patrol Your Vote) prior to the 2007 mid-term elections. Members of BMPM who usually reported about unfulfilled campaign promises of politicians, were referred to as "Boto Patrollers" (Vote Patrollers), which implied that they would report election irregularities, and safeguard votes to thwart rigging and poll violence. They were vigilantes of sorts, armed not with guns but cellular phones as video or still cameras. From the campaign period, to the proclamation of winning candidates, their reports sent through short messaging (text) service (SMS), multi-media message service (MMS) and email, flooded the network. Their presence was felt in many voting precincts. It was even a Patroller who reported on a voting precinct-razing incident that caused a teacher's death.

BMPM was reborn into BMPM: Ako ang Simula (Patrol Your Vote: Change Begins With Me) in May 2009 – one year before the national and local elections. Just like in 2007, the Patrollers helped safeguard the electoral process, even before the campaign period started. The Facebook or Multiply pages of BMPM became avenues where people could report poll-related irregularities and violence, as well as voice their opinions about candidates and current issues or concerns. The network's advocacy of free and clean elections got a steady boost from the Patrollers whose reports became a regular fare in newscasts, from sunrise to sundown. Their numbers swelled to more than 50,000 in less than a year. The majority were in the 18-24 age bracket, and the same group who were active cell phone users, texters and netizens. The Patrollers also utilised Twitter when it became popular, and later, the BMPM micro-site.

The Patrollers were so active that they themselves engaged in animated discussions in the BMPM-hosted pages. They voiced what they felt – reacted to news stories, raised questions and sometimes gave advice. When asked about their sentiments or position on an issue they responded quickly. It was like having a reliable focused group discussion, and survey respondents at your fingertips.

After the 2010 elections, "Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo: Ako ang Simula" was transformed into "Bayan Mo, Ipatrol Mo" (Patrol Your Country) to encourage citizens to remain vigilant about what was happening in their community or

the government. The Patrollers remained enthusiastic and responsive. At present, BMPM boasts of 75,715 Patrollers or citizen journalists, more than 101,000 participants in the Facebook page and 14,412 Twitter followers. And on a daily basis, their posts and comments range from 3,000-12,000.

Key contributions of Patrollers
The contribution of Patrollers was mostly felt in crucial and earthshaking news events. When former President Corazon "Cory" Aquino died of colon cancer in August 2009, the Patrollers did not waste any time. They expressed their grief and paid homage to the icon of Philippine democracy. Perhaps it could be considered payback time – Cory led the revolt against the Marcos dictatorship and in so doing, democracy returned to the country and along with it, freedom of expression. The Patrollers highlighted Cory's significance by sending close to 200,000 messages, videos, pictures and blog posts. They joined the nation in reminiscing about 'People Power', Cory's life and the role she played to oust Marcos. Some even shared their treasured memorabilia.

When Typhoon Ondoy (International Name: Ketsana, Category I Storm) and Typhoon Pepeng (International Name: Parma, Category III Storm) struck on 26 September and 3 October 2009, respectively, the Patrollers augmented ABS-CBN's coverage of the widespread destruction made by the two typhoons. Even before authorities or reporters could set foot in some areas ravaged by the twin disasters, the Patrollers already had images, videos or reports sent to BMPM. The reports came in by the thousands. Some reported water-submerged communities that directed relief efforts to the worst-hit villages and towns, and also called for help to rescue people on rooftops or those trapped in their houses. The reports proved to be crucial and life-saving, as authorities grappled with their meagre resources and manpower in dealing with the typhoon results. The typhoons killed more than 100 people, displaced at least 300,000 and contributed to losses of about US$ 4.4 billion, or 2.7 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product[1].

The Patrollers likewise joined the fray when ABS-CBN campaigned extensively for voter registration. They sent hundreds of messages and

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1 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPHILIPPINES/Resources/PDNAExecutiveSummary.pdf

videos until voter registration ended on 31 October 2009. To them, voter registration was crucial as the nation cried for reforms in the electoral system and change in the political landscape. Patrollers also provided many comments, questions and reactions when ANC featured United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in a forum, and when news trickled in about the possible presidential and vice presidential tandems for the 2010 synchronised national and local elections – reacting strongly about certain pairs, prompting more comments and lively discussions.

During the senatorial and vice-presidential debates entitled "Harapan", which were telecast live on ABS-CBN and ANC, Patrollers and viewers turned to social media for their questions and reactions. Every time there was a debate, Harapan became a trending topic – generating an average of 9,000 tweets, thousands joining the online chat, and 2,300 posts flooding the Facebook event page.

As expected, the 2010 elections were no different – the exercise became an avenue for Patrollers to express their sentiments about certain candidates, as well as pass information and raise awareness about specific issues and concerns, which needed to be acted upon or resolved. No doubt, they were instrumental in making ABS-CBN's coverage of the elections more comprehensive, interactive and far-reaching.

To this day, BMPM Patrollers remain active, regularly contributing information, comments and even suggestions, which eventually have become part of the network's news and talk programmes after a verification process by BMPM staff. These inputs are 'storified' by reporters, Sol Aragones, Atom Araullo and Jing Castaneda. The Patrollers serve as the voice and representatives of viewers, providing a modern way of interaction between the network and its market.

Social media-savvy
BMPM Patrollers are not the only ones who utilise social media. Forty-six of ABS-CBN's pool of 50 Manila-based reporters maintain a Facebook and/or Twitter account. Many correspondents belonging to the Regional Network Group (RNG) and bureaus in the United States, Middle East and Europe, and most TV news and current affairs anchors, are active on Facebook or Twitter. Some also use LinkedIn. Only a handful, notably the veterans who are not "techies", still have to ride on the social media wave in the newsroom due to privacy and security issues. Moreover, several

news and current affairs programmes have Facebook accounts, from the early morning magazine show, Umagang Kay Ganda (Beautiful Mornings), to the late-night newscast, Bandila (Banner Story/The Flag), and weekly programmes, SOCO and Krusada (Crusade).

Reporters and programmes find social media beneficial. For one, it serves as a rich source of information and breaking news. Viewers share what they know, providing valuable tips and information about potential stories. Sometimes, reporters ask their followers or friends if they can share something about certain topics, or if they know someone to talk to or can serve as a case study for their reports. More often than not, their inquiry yields positive results. Many reporters also enjoy a large number of followers. For instance, reporters Ryan Chua and Jeff Canoy, have 37,000 and 48,000 followers, respectively, as of November 2011. Canoy, who is fast earning a reputation as the go-to guy in times of calamities or disasters in far-flung areas, recounted how social media helped him and the flood victims in the province of Aurora when Tropical Storm Juaning (International Name: Nock-Ten) made its landfall in July 2011.

"During Tropical Storm Juaning last July, the town of Casiguran in Aurora was isolated after their bridge was destroyed by the subsequent flooding. Through social media, I was able to contact people who were trapped there and able to supply our news organisation with videos, photos, and information on what was happening. Since cellular phone signal was weak, residents depended on social media for receiving and delivering information. Through verification from authorities, we were able to build a story based on their eyewitness account while we were in Baler. Through Twitter, people who had relatives in Casiguran were also informed," he said. For Canoy, social media serves to connect the public with traditional news media. "In the end, social media empowers citizen journalists. They have a quick bridge to professional journalists who can verify, gate-keep and deliver their stories in a larger scale," he added.

Congress beat reporter, RG Cruz, who is followed by almost 22,000 on Twitter, believes ABS-CBN, as a TV network, benefits greatly from social media. "Social media help us break reports and funnel the audience into our mainstream newsroom operations. In a way it allows us to tease and lure viewers already on social media because of its increasingly easy access," he pointed out.

Cruz, however, points out the difficulty experienced by journalists who use social media to engage and entice viewers. "Limitations to characters on Facebook status messages and Twitter posts prevent us from telling the full story, which is why they're effective up to awareness only," he lamented. Just like Canoy, Cruz believes Facebook and Twitter serves journalists well in crowd-sourcing and getting feedback. "People can send us tips through social media and we can validate the story before treating it as official," Cruz said. But he also cautioned against relying heavily on social media. "Maintaining interest and analysis is to be done by mainstream media," he remarked.

Apart from Canoy and Cruz, senior correspondent and multi-awarded news anchor, Ces Drilon, also enjoys quite a following. She has 171, 268 Twitter followers as of 31 December 2011. On the other hand, Karen Davila, her fellow anchor in the award-winning late night newscast Bandila (The Flag/ Banner Story), has 389,980 followers. But social media intimidated Davila at first. "Would you believe social media used to petrify me? I was actually thrust into social media just a year and a half ago as a requirement to joining ANC for my show, ANC Headstart. I started using Facebook and Twitter, and honestly fell in love with Twitter! It's fast, quick, easy and perfect for news people like myself. I started tweeting the news when it happened, tweeted sound bites from newsmakers, public officials….and got instant feedback from my viewers and listeners. Twitter widened my base and made me closer to my public," Davila shared. Davila acknowledged that because of Twitter's huge base, fans from all over the world are able to reach her in real time. Social media also helped her keep abreast of breaking news, and she uses these updates even in her commentaries during her afternoon radio programme over DZMM (630 Khz). It also comes in handy when she is called to report on various news platforms of ABS-CBN. "While doing live reports, I am updated as news comes in through Twitter," she added.

And while Cruz finds the character limit in Twitter a hindrance in reporting all the facts of a news story, Davila offers a different perspective. "On a lighter note, I was also able to show a different side of myself through Twitter. 140 characters is a test of wit and brevity," Davila wrote.

Davila, Drilon, Cruz and Canoy's Twitter followers pale in comparison, however, with Kuya Kim Atienza's social media army. ABS-CBN's resident weatherman, who also dishes out trivia about anything under the sun, has

756,977 followers, as of 30 November 2011. Like Davila, Atienza believes social media can be a quick source of news compared to traditional media. He quickly learned of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011 because of social media. "I knew of the Japan tsunami on Twitter before it came out on TV," he said. And in his daily segment in TV Patrol, social media is a big help. "Twitter connects me to my public in a very direct way. I tweet all my weather reports and ask them to tweet me weather conditions, and sometimes, even pictures of their areas. I incorporate this in my script," revealed Atienza. But he also recognises that social media can be utilised for a variety of purposes, like SMS or text messaging. "Social media can be senseless or inspiring depending on how one uses it. It is a mirror in 140 letters, of the user," he pointed out.

Not always positive

Senseless, is not the only thing that can be said of some Twitter posts or Facebook shout outs. While the tremendous influence and reach of social media make it a tempting and deep well of information, the danger lies when traditional media picks up a popular topic on Twitter and Facebook, that later turns out to be half-truth.

In July 2011, many media outlets fell for a tale that became trending in Twitter and much-talked about in Facebook. They carried the story of the alleged sad state of animals in Manila Zoo[2]. The source of the story was the post, "Cramped Cages, Dirty Habitats: The Sadness that is Manila Zoo", of a blogger named Nix. The pictures of a hapless tiger, elephant, ostrich

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2 http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/lifestyle/07/14/11/sad-state-animals-manila-zoo-alarms-netizens
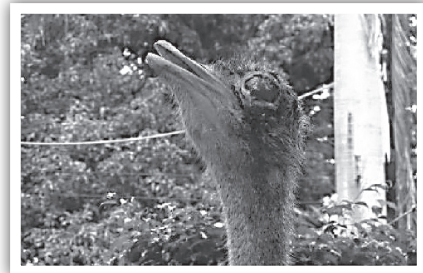
Four of the pictures that blogger Nix posted

and zebra outraged netizens and many demanded the immediate closure of Manila Zoo. Soon enough, many media organisations published, aired and discussed the story. Even the Office of the President joined the fray and directed the agencies concerned to investigate why the animals were allegedly malnourished, wounded and trapped in rusty cages.

However, some members of mass media committed a grave mistake. Only a few bothered to check the veracity of the pictures, particularly the date they were taken, or even checked the condition of the zoo animals themselves. It turned out that the pictures were shot mostly in 2008, and officials of the largest zoo in the Philippines disputed the animal maltreatment claims[3]. The featured animals were said to be suffering from a disease or had exceeded their life expectancy.

In November 2011, Facebook was again abuzz with alleged mugshot photos of former President Gloria Arroyo. The Regional Trial Court of Pasay, where the electoral sabotage case against the former president was filed earlier, ordered the Philippine National Police and the Department of Interior and Local Government not to release the pictures unless both the defence and the prosecution panels gave their express approval. But pictures of Arroyo allegedly taken during her mandatory booking procedure spread quickly on Facebook and Twitter. Again, some members of the media used the pictures, only to be rebuffed by the PNP because of some discrepancies[4].

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3 http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/327570/manila-zoo-refutes-peta-criticism

4 http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/11/22/11/published-mugshots-gma-are-fake-pnp-chief

Alleged mugshot pictures of former President Gloria Arroyo,
which were leaked by the website mugshots.com

Of course, subsequent reports claimed that the pictures were authentic and leaked to media but to date, neither the Pasay City RTC, PNP, nor the panels confirmed the authenticity of the pictures.

Media's propensity to pick-up stories from Facebook, Twitter and even YouTube, apparently emboldened some to seek their own 30 seconds of fame through the less conventional social media route. From time to time, we see all sorts of scandals, performances and talents circulating on social media. We also have publicity-hungry celebrities and starlets engaging their enemies in word wars through Twitter, PR guys deliberately feeding their client's so-called private photo shoots or untold stories, as well as "leaked" pictures or videos of celebrities and unknowns who want to prop up their popularity. Unfortunately, some of these end up even in primetime newscasts and front pages of newspapers.

Practical facebook
Good or bad, social media has become a valuable tool in the ABS-CBN newsroom. When sending stories, pictures or videos via email take longer than usual, news production turns to Facebook or Twitter. On a number of occasions, the remote team of TV Patrol had to rely on Facebook to send or receive scripts, when our acquired broadcast solution was slow or experiencing technical glitches. While in Rome covering the beatification of Pope John Paul II, we used Facebook at times to communicate with our team in Manila. Such was the case too, when our team was sent to typhoon-ravaged Cagayan de Oro City and Iligan City.

Moreover, reporters sometimes use Twitter and Facebook to deliver the news ahead of the competition. As there is already a clear-cut policy in the ABS-CBN newsroom that reporters should never tweet or post their stories on Facebook before they are relayed to the desk editors, reporters shift to social media only when they feel they need to keep their followers abreast of a big story to watch out for in ABS-CBN's newscasts. RG

The first picture of former President Gloria Arroyo when she was rushed to the St. Lukes Medical Center. Photo was distributed by the Arroyo camp

Cruz, for his part, immediately tweeted the first picture of former President Gloria Arroyo when she was rushed to the St. Luke's Medical Center.

There are also times when programmes conduct polls on certain issues through Facebook, and the feedback always produces encouraging results. Yes, it is not scientific and may be subject to manipulation by unscrupulous sectors or lobby groups who are pushing for their own agenda, but it is also easy to gauge whether there are attempts to rig the results based on the profile of voters.

Skype is also useful

Skype is also becoming a handy tool for the news team. While the debate lingers on whether it is a social tool or a social network, Skype has proven to be useful especially in times of crises or conflicts. When the quake and tsunami struck Japan, ABS-CBN used Skype to communicate with Filipinos in the devastated areas. ABS-CBN's primetime newscast, TV Patrol, employed Skype to get updates from the Philippine Ambassador to Japan, Manuel Lopez.

ABS-CBN also used Skype when contacting Filipinos in Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain at the height of the so-called Arab Spring uprisings. Most newscasts in ABS-CBN and ANC turn to Skype to get fresh updates from reporters sent to provinces or other countries if digital news gathering (DNG) equipment, or other means of live reporting, are unavailable.

ABS-CBN news programmes and reporters have also utilised Skype when interviewing guests and public officials, rather than settle for a phone patch or audio report, which can be costly.

Tapping a growing market

Facebook has grown in leaps and bounds, and more so than networking. Its users also use the site to spread news stories. Recently, Facebook revealed the list of stories most shared by its 800 million users[5]. Occupying the top spot is the satellite photo of Japan before and after the quake and tsunami, and the top 15 stories came from reputable and trusted media outlets like CNN, the *New York Times* and web portal/search engine, Yahoo. What this means is that Facebook users still trust or rely on established media organisations for news.

In the Philippines, there are 27,596,690 Facebook and 955,687 LinkedIn users, as of 29 January 2012, according to the media statistics portal, www.socialbakers.com. The same portal also reports that as of the same date, ABS-CBN's official Facebook fan page leads all media outlets with 2,062,039 fans[6]. The second most popular is music channel, MYX Philippines (1,722,376), third is broadcast network, ABC 5 (1,135,246), fourth is men's magazine, FHM Philippines (731,013), fifth is Candy Magazine (346,842) and sixth is ABS-CBN's competitor GMA Network (195.836). Cosmopolitan Magazine (129,993), ANC 24/7 (97,897), Studio 23 (46,972) and MSN Philippines (8,908) complete the 10 leading Facebook fan media pages.

What this means is that ABS-CBN remains the most sought after TV network on the web as more netizens rely on social media for updates on news and entertainment. Nielsen's Southeast Asia Digital Consumer Report 2011[7] validates the trend that Filipinos are among the heaviest users of the Internet in Southeast Asia. The new study revealed that Filipinos are online 21.5 hours a week, second only to Singaporeans, who are considered the heaviest Internet users in the region, averaging 25 hours per week.

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5   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/30/facebook-most-shared-stories-2011_n_1120975.html

6   http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-pages/media/

7   http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2011-Reports/South-East-Asia-Digital-Consumer.pdf

Malaysians spend an average of 19.8 hours per week while Indonesians usually allot only 14 hours a week. On the other hand, Filipinos stay glued to their television sets only for 13.3 hours per week, listen to radio for 6.3 hours, and read newspapers for 3.6 hours a week.

The Nielsen report, which focused on the digital media habits and attitudes of consumers, also confirmed that more and more Filipinos are going online and mostly access the Internet using a desktop or laptop computer, and at times, smartphones. The findings made Nielsen say that "rapid technological developments and increasing ownership of Internet-connected devices are revolutionising digital media usage around the region, with Internet usage in some markets surpassing time spent on traditional media such as television, radio or print."

The findings seem to indicate that online media is eating up a significant amount of Filipinos' media time. But it is important to note that TV content is also available on the net. Thus we are seeing the prevalence of simultaneous media consumption or "media multi-tasking," which means that accessing the Internet is done while watching TV. Does this lead to the conclusion that TV is no longer king in the Philippines as previous surveys proclaimed? That is difficult to ascertain given the fact that Filipinos can also watch and access TV shows online.

Nielsen also found out that Filipinos are online according to the following order of preference or importance: email, send or receive private message in social networks, put status updates or wall posts, access the news and lastly, send or receive instant messages. Among the six nationalities in Southeast Asia, it appeared that accessing the news is only fourth in the Filipinos' list of activities undertaken online. This is in contrast with our friends in Vietnam who use the net primarily to keep abreast with the news. On the other hand, the recent study of Nielsen Media Incite entitled, "Millions of Consumers are Talking – Are You Listening?" mentioned that three in five Internet users in the Philippines engage in social media largely to connect with others.

In the last quarter of 2011, The Philippine Media Landscape as reported by Nielsen Media executive director, Jay Bautista, said that TV remains king of Philippine media, although viewership went down from 95% in 2008, 92% in 2009 and 91% from January to September 2010. The report also noted the huge leap of Internet usage from 23 % in 2008 to 33% in 2009.

As far as TV watching is concerned, Filipinos spent an average of seven hours and 36 minutes a day in 2009, down from eight hours and six minutes in 2008.

Meanwhile, another study claims that more Filipinos, living in urban areas, log on to the Internet than listen to radio or read newspapers. It also noted an increase in TV viewership. The TNS Digital Life 2012[8] said that 45% of Filipinos connect to the Internet on a daily basis, up from 36 % in 2011's report, and that radio listenership fell to 36 % from 40% in 2011. Likewise, only 12 % of respondents read newspapers daily – a 10 point drop from the 2011 findings. On the other hand, 89% of those surveyed say they watch TV every day – up from 77 % last year.

Whatever survey one looks at, the continuing growth of social media is undeniable, but concerns that it will gobble up and eventually replace traditional media remains to be seen. While the trend suggests that Filipinos are spending more time on social media than watching TV or listening to radio, this is due to a change in lifestyle and not because the thirst for news of many has waned. And in this light, ABS-CBN and other TV networks in the country, are in a unique position to inform and empower people either through social or traditional media.

Testing the waters
Maria Ressa, former head of ABS-CBN News, describes this new chapter in journalism as "testing the waters", in an interview with blogger and analyst, Paul Papadimitriou.

Veteran journalist and book author, Marites Vitug, in a Media Nation forum in 2010, pointed out that new and old media complement each other[9]. She believes that "we live in an age of the hybrid, where professional and amateur journalists co-exist to bring the news, especially in times of emergencies, disasters, and in authoritarian regimes." That means no one needs to take a back seat or be rendered obsolete, as there is "a space

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8   http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/lifestyle/01/31/12/internet-overtakes-radio-among-pinoys

9   http://archives.newsbreak-knowledge.ph/2010/09/20/old-and-new-media-tis-the-age-of-the-hybrid/

for citizen bloggers, citizen journalists as well as professional journalists." Vitug also noted that no business model has been developed so far that will allow online media to thrive and compete head-on with traditional media.

In fact, social media was over-estimated in the short term and under-estimated in the long term, according to Richard Sambrook, BBC's Global News Division Director. At a social media convention which *The Guardian covered*, Sambrook pointed out that it is vital how news is produced and its source, as transparency delivers trust[10]. He also stressed that information was not necessarily journalism because not all those who shared in social networking sites underwent a rigorous process of verification, analysis and explanation, which traditional journalists could dish out.

Who would have thought that social networking sites could prove to be vital in news gathering or dissemination, and which some quarters consider as a threat to traditional media? Inday Espina-Varona, who oversees the ABS-CBN's citizen journalism desk, believes that social media does not replace traditional journalism practices, which ensure accuracy and fairness, and provide context and depth to the news. But what it does is to help provide a more comprehensive roundup of events especially in hard-to-reach areas, and add voices or perspectives, as media practitioners are forced to look beyond their traditional beats and sources. But, she pointed out, "gatekeepers are as much needed, perhaps more so, in the age of social media where the sharing frenzy could lead to major errors in news reporting."

Varona acknowledged the crucial role of social media in the traditional newsroom. Citizen journalists not only report through Twitter or Facebook, big events such as typhoons, earthquakes, landslides and outbreaks of conflicts in and out of the Philippines. They can also be counted upon to react on burning issues, and attend campaigns organised by TV networks. Varona also noted that on the part of reporters and other news production staff, there has been Varona manages, have been hacked, littered with malicious posts and victimised by poseurs of celebrities.

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10 http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2009/sep/18/oxford-social-media-convention-2009-journalism-blogs

Moreover, the well-respected editor talked about 'eager-beaver' journalists who rush to interview citizen-journalists without vetting them, and may find themselves in danger's way, especially around conflict areas. She also emphasised the need to safeguard the credibility of reporters and the news organisations they serve, at times when journalists "carelessly parrot social media reports without verifying and getting independent confirmation". Varona recalled the time most European and American media immediately blamed the Oslo bombing on Islamic militants – only to report later that the perpetrator was a fringe Christian fundamentalist. On a personal level, she narrated one incident during a long night of covering a typhoon, when she fell for a post about a man in colourful high clogs walking in the floods. She mistakenly presumed the man to be Filipino, only to learn later that it was a picture of flooding in Vietnam. With social media containing 'landmines' that can seriously inflict damage even to a seasoned journalist, Varona pointed out the need to institutionalise guidelines to ensure that the speed benefits of social media do not compromise accuracy, fairness and other standards and ethics of journalism.

Anna Rodriguez-Dela Cruz, head of ABS-CBN's news digital media, echoed Varona's views on the possibility of compromising reputation and credibility when using social media. "Journalists, being personal users of social media, may put their credibility on the line because anything they say in social media can reflect on their professional personas. The line between what is personal and professional becomes very thin," she said. She also stressed the need for a more thorough verification of information that is picked up in social media. At the same time, she considers social media as a challenge to the traditional media. "We now need to be faster than ever, more accurate than ever, and more balanced and fair as ever. Social media has created an environment of instant judgement in the court of public opinion," she added.

Dela Cruz noted that social media is a huge field with new platforms sprouting up every day, and there are many ways to integrate it into traditional workflows. To her, social media can be a source of feedback, content and community building, or a means to build loyalty. The key, she said, is understanding its power and the reality of how technology is changing the way people create and consume the news. "Mindsets will change if you allow your staff to see how they can benefit from social media, so that it takes away the threat to jobs and skills that it can invariably pose. At the end of the day, journalists need to be assured that there is still a need for trained and professional journalists to become curators and filters of news," she stressed. Dela Cruz compared social media with

Wikipedia in the sense that almost anything you search for will have an entry, yet the veracity of the information written still needs to be confirmed by the traditional newsroom.

What lies ahead

Quite unexpectedly, social media has had a two-fold impact in the traditional newsroom: it has changed the way journalists perform their jobs, and on the other hand, how people communicate and share information. Professional journalists who use social media certainly enjoy a big advantage over their peers who only rely on traditional sources of news. And because of the interactive nature of social media, it is now an excellent way to connect with the public – get their feedback and stand on issues. Now, we see viewers or readers getting more involved and in this light, social media may be considered to be helping traditional media perform two principles of journalism that are sometimes neglected: journalism's first loyalty is to its citizens by having a representative picture of all constituent groups in society; and secondly, provide a forum for public criticism and compromise through a very accessible tool.

It is not scientific, random and may be subject to manipulation by self-serving interest groups. But is not part of the job of journalists to sift through, verify, compare, analyse and contextualise raw data, to come up with at least the closest approximation of truth? With the public fed a ton of information, some of which can be considered of questionable quality, misleading, half-truth and outright sham, traditional journalists are in an excellent position to help the public form an intelligent opinion and make sense of issues and complex ideas. Pseudo-journalists may at times succeed in breaking news stories ahead of professional journalists. But at the end of the day, they do not have the training and experience to provide context, depth and a more complete picture. Besides, the tendency of most people who learn of breaking news, is to double-check or confirm it from established media organisations.

To declare that there is a social media revolution may be premature, as the full potential of social media vis-a-vis traditional media is yet to be unravelled, with more applications and new tools expected to be launched in the days to come. Professional journalists are still in the process of adapting to new media. It is more apt to say our news gathering ways are evolving thanks to social media.

Robert Picard, a fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, even said in his piece, "Blogs, Tweets, Social Media, and the News Business"[11]: "It is perhaps too early to judge given that experimentation with social media is in its infancy. It behooves all of us, however, to carefully observe and evaluate their development and effects. Then, we need to use what is learned to gauge whether and how a particular tool provides real benefit to a news organisation or if it is depleting resources – financial and human – that could be used more effectively in other ways."

But one thing is certain, social media and its tools can be maximised to benefit traditional media. We only need to provide clear parameters on how to use social media, and as we continue to experiment on how it can best fit into traditional media, the more we can define the model for this emerging symbiotic relationship. This is what ABS-CBN is doing so that we can minimise, if not prevent, pitfalls already experienced by some journalists. We do not need to compete with social media, but we have to find ways for social media to turn to us more for news and information.

The trend for netizens to be counting on social media should also spur a re-examination by the traditional gatekeepers of information. Are we faltering on our news agenda-setting function? Is traditional media not delivering the news the public needs or wants? Is traditional media not being sensitive enough about what the public is most concerned about, or simply talking about? Is there an apparent disconnect with news consumers? Before we look around, point fingers at new technology and simply blame pseudo-journalists, bloggers and rumour-mongers, why do we not take a second look at how we are doing our job? Are we still effective and relevant? Will this lead to another clash of two schools of thought – the libertarian and the social responsibility theory?

Finally, we, members of traditional media, should revisit our ethics and standards manuals to see if we are falling short of what is expected from us when we use social media tools, or as we embark on an increased presence and engagement in social media[12]. Now, more than ever, we need

11 http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101884

12 http://mashable.com/2009/06/08/social-media-newsroom/

to stay true to what we abide by before social media came into the picture: being fair, objective and uncompromising, so that our credibility remains unsullied. Because in doing so, people will continue to rely on us for news that matters to their lives. We have a very distinct advantage that new and social media can only hope to achieve in the long run – our credibility built on years of painstaking work, solid principles, adherence to ethics, training and experience.

Before social media came along, we were already "in a relationship" with the public. We didn't brag or blog about it, or post it as a status update. We shared stories – some they liked, some became a trending topic. So, accept social media as a friend and repost this or tweet it, if you are proud to be a traditional journalist.

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Making Money from Social Media: Cases from Thailand

by Bruce Avasadanond

Social media is being embraced in Thailand, as in other countries, especially by Thai youths and young adults, who are commonly referred to as "digital natives".

While social media is a normal part of the everyday life of Thai youths, incorporating social media into a veteran journalist's professional life is more challenging. According to Chutintra Wananakul, senior vice-president for new media and business, at Nation Multimedia Group, ten years ago, *Thai Rath*, Thailand's leading newspaper in terms of readership, could not convince its print journalists to go online. The paper had to hire a separate group of "online journalists" to work exclusively online. The veteran print journalists did not "accept" these "online journalists" as equals. Wananakul noted, however, that without such separations, online journalism at *Thai Rath* might never have emerged. Now, the focus of all news outlets is to merge and blend everything together, and journalists are required to be well-versed in all forms of traditional and multimedia journalism. The way a journalist goes about reporting news has changed dramatically in a matter of less than a decade.

Globalisation and technological changes have led to new ways of reaching readers, viewers and listeners. Newsrooms all over the world have had to adapt to these changes, but frequently there is a mismatch between what is invested and the return that is yielded. For this reason, news organisations have started to look at the return-on-investment (ROI) of social media. With Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube and other social networking sites, some organisations have had to set up a dedicated team to update their company's accounts and attract readers. At *The Nation*, for example, the end result is a complete shift in how news is reported and disseminated because all journalists are required to not only report in the conventional sense, but also to be engaged actively in social media. At Radio Thailand English Language News Service, social media is a very new and challenging extension of journalists' and news producers' already hectic jobs of running a 24-hour radio news service.

The bottom line is that social media is costly in terms of the required tools (iPhone and BlackBerry cell phones) and the time commitment by journalists who are already extremely busy. Both organisations, however, see the importance and the necessity of investing in these new media because readers and listeners expect it and without investing in social media, they would be "behind the times". *The Nation* even includes the number of tweets and Facebook messages as part of each reporter's evaluation, and their involvement in social media is used to determine salary increases and promotions.

This chapter will look at two case studies of two news organisations in Thailand that are actively involved in social media. Although social media helps in terms of hits to a website and helps promote a two-way dialogue between the news organisations and their readers/listeners, the benefits are intangible and do not yet lead directly to increased earnings. This paper is based on interviews with key informants at The Nation Multimedia Group (Thailand) and Radio Thailand English Language Service. It includes an analysis of how social media is helping these news organisations, and the future it holds for their financial earnings.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Earning revenue from social media is one of the main goals of an organisation when it invests its precious resources, including its people and their valuable time, into the virtual world. The truth, however, is that the return on investment of social media is still a distant dream:

> Building a social media program for an organization is hard…The truth of it is that it takes patience, long hours of intricate planning, and a razor-sharp focus on getting things right… What those friendly Twitter interactions and expertly managed Facebook walls don't tell you is that behind every corporate success story in this space is a basic operational framework that places all the right elements in the right way and at the right time. Social media success doesn't happen by accident. It is engineered. (From *Social Media ROI* by Oliver Blanchard, 2011).

Social media is still relatively new and it requires a great deal of time before news media can come up with a model that would allow it to cash in on its investment, despite the "engineered" approach that news organisations try to take. Nevertheless, social media does yield other advantages, often

intangible, which can contribute to the media outlet's bottom line. The ultimate problem is, how can the benefits be measured as there are no clear guidelines or criteria to judge the contribution of social media? For example, does a certain number of "likes" on Facebook equate to a given monetary amount? Do more tweets mean that there are more readers of a newspaper's website? And would advertisers pay more if the new outlet had more "friends"? The answers to these questions are still ambiguous.

Case Study 1 : Radio Thailand

Interview with Ms. Alexandrea Sangsnit-Oliver, editor-in-chief of Radio Thailand English Language Service

Background of Radio Thailand
Radio Thailand English Language Service is part of the Royal Thai Government's Public Relations Department (PRD), which is under the Prime Minister's Office. The PRD was established in 1933. However, radio was the first form of mass communication in the Kingdom and was used to broadcast news and programs starting in 1927 before television emerged (http://thailand.prd.go.th/about_prd/content.php?id=2).

Radio is still very important in developing countries, such as Thailand, and radio programmes reach all corners of the Kingdom as they are broadcast live from Bangkok and relayed to numerous stations in key cities of the country. The programmes can also be listened to online.

Radio Thailand targets English-speaking Thais/elites and foreigners, such as people who work for United Nations agencies, NGO's, embassies and the various multi-national companies in Thailand. The listeners are decision-makers and people from the upper echelons of Thai society. Many of them were educated abroad and have large disposable incomes. Besides English, Radio Thailand has its main programme in Thai and a number of foreign language services: English, German, Malaysian, Indonesian, Mandarin, Lao, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Myanmese.

Radio Thailand English Language Service provides news broadcasts on a 24 hour basis. There are three one-hour programmes (7am, Noon and 7pm), as well as hourly news at the top of each hour called "Newsflash".

Social media at Radio Thailand

Efforts to incorporate social media into Radio Thailand's work only began in 2011, with the entry of a new editor-in-chief who brought with her, new ideas and a drive to modernise the Radio Thailand English Language Service. In comparison to other news outlets, social media was introduced very late to Radio Thailand.

The response from listeners has also been lukewarm. Ms. Sangsnit-Oliver, the editor of Radio Thailand, said, "I don't think the use of social media has prompted more listeners to tune in but more for the current listeners to connect with the programme, especially listeners who are regularly online and use these social media outlets themselves."

She adds that, "I believe we have a wide range of listeners out there, many of whom do not use, or regularly log on to, Facebook and Twitter. We do not promote our sponsors on the page, so I don't think that has helped us gain them. Sponsors are more concerned about getting their exposure during air time."

Social media, according to Ms. Sangsnit-Oliver, is more of an auxiliary service and does not lead to increased listeners. This is partly because some listeners do not use the Internet. But those who are tech-savvy and from the new generation, have been more responsive. In general, most listeners are those who are driving to and from work, as the main hour-long programmes are during morning and evening rush hours.

Use of Facebook on Radio Thailand

Some programmes, such as Dr. Lifestyle, which is broadcast on Saturday evenings, use Facebook on a weekly basis to promote their segments prior to shows. As the segment also gives out prizes each week, listeners have to log on to Facebook to be the first person to answer the question correctly, in order to receive a prize.

Listeners have responded positively to Facebook and have posted questions to specific anchors as well as comments and praise for the programmes broadcast on Radio Thailand. News anchors and journalists then have a chance to respond to these comments, giving them a chance to engage in two-way communication with the listeners. Radio

Thailand's Facebook page also contains pictures of its news anchors, so listeners can see what their favourite news anchors look like in person.

Realities of a working radio journalist

Given the fact that Radio Thailand broadcasts news on a 24-hour basis, with hourly updates and three hour-long programmes, journalists do not have much time left to devote to social media. Radio Thailand English Language Service journalists and support staff work in shifts, with different teams for weekdays and weekends, as well as for early morning and late evening programmes. Journalists are also out gathering news and when they return to the studio, they must edit their interviews and prepare scripts for live broadcasts. Journalists also report news live from the field. There is not much time to spare, and there are numerous deadlines per day. Another comparison with working journalists at a newspaper is that radio journalists do not take photos and are not concerned about the visual aspects of a story. Moreover, radio news stories tend to be much shorter, lasting on average one to two minutes, and must include sound bites in the form of interviews or ambient sound.

Responsibility for updates on social media

The responsibility for updating social media lies with the editor-in-chief and her sub-editor. Apart from the two, no one else in the office has access to the Facebook or Twitter account. Ms. Sangsnit-Oliver says that "having too many people accessing the account may actually ruin the page content rather than keeping it looking good". She emphasises the importance of displaying uniformity and professionalism in terms of the messages and image of the organisation that are conveyed to the public. Unlike other news outlets, there is no single person dedicated solely to social media and there are no "experts" that have been hired to focus entirely on this issue.

Income from social media

As there are no advertisements, social media does not bring in any income directly to Radio Thailand. It is regarded more as a way of connecting with listeners. There is also no direct means of measuring an increase in listeners and the use of social media, but there have been more and more people who have visited Radio Thailand's Facebook page and signed up for Twitter updates, since their inception.

Advertisers are only interested in what is broadcast, and have not expressed any interest in social media at Radio Thailand. They are more concerned about their spots that are broadcast live on air, and the quality of the news stories and news announcers.

Promotion of social media on air
After each hour-long programme, the news anchors will make the following announcement:

> "Please send us your comments and suggestions. Email us at radio_thailand@hotmail.com, or SMS us at 4221980. Each SMS costs only 3 baht.
>
> You can also follow us on our fan page on Facebook. Just search for Radio Thailand English Language News or follow us on Twitter at Radio Thailand."

The same message is repeated three times every day, at 7am, 12pm and 7pm.

Future of social media at Radio Thailand
Ms. Sangsnit-Oliver says that there is great potential for social media: "It is a big deal currently and I am sure if it is utilised properly, it can be very beneficial. The listeners like to come in to take a peek at the faces of the voices they hear regularly." Social media, at the very least, allows listeners to better connect with news announcers and journalists, who work hard on a daily basis to provide the latest news and updates to listeners all over Thailand.

In the future, Ms. Sangsnit-Oliver explains: "We are planning on strengthening the team. When that is up to the standard I have in mind, we will be posting all the news on the company website so listeners can come in to follow up on what they have heard, or listen to the various scoops they have missed."

At the current moment, Radio Thailand English Language Service does not have its own website. Listeners can access previous programmes via the main Public Relations Department's website, but only the programmes from the day before. In future, listeners will be able to download any programme and scoop that they missed, even if the programme was broadcast two months earlier. There might also be special applications and functions that will allow listeners to make comments and give feedback directly to each news announcer and journalist.

Case Study 2: The Nation Multimedia Group

Phone interview with Ms. Chutintra Wananakul, senior vice-president new media and business.

Background of The Nation Multimedia Group
The Nation Multimedia Group consists of newspapers (Thai: *Bangkok Biz News, Kom Chad Leuk*; and English: *The Nation* with a circulation of 60-80,000); TV (Nation TV and ASEAN TV); radio; and a new Nation University which offers training programmes and bachelor's degree programmes.

With such diversity in platforms, one of the group's core values is to, "Recognise the value of multimedia and synergy of various parties, both internally and externally, to provide utmost interests for customers, shareholders and employees".

This idea of synergy is also reflected in Thanachai Theerapattanawong, the group chairman's, statement:

> Every editorial work process will be reorganised under the concept 'Multimedia Convergence Newsroom' or 'Integrated Newsroom', where editorial staff of all media types converge to produce news content to be distributed through various channels to readers, regardless of time and place.

The Nation Multimedia Group's strategy is to make both print and online work at the same time. As a result, journalists of all ages have had to adjust and accept these new changes. This does not mean that there was no resistance as "older" journalists often found it difficult to work with the new technological requirements.

Given the new media environment, in which there are constant technological changes and the emergence of subsequent new requirements, if journalists cannot change with the times, they are not likely to be able to survive. This is especially true with the increased presence of newer and younger journalists, who feel completely at ease working on multiple platforms and with using a variety of media, as they grew up accustomed to working with computers, tweeting

and updating their Facebook pages. All of this comes second nature to them.

To overcome the challenges, the group set examples, gave clear policies, and offered ample support to everyone involved. This was one of the key strategies they employed, as the group did not simply dictate and expect everyone to follow. For example, Suthichai Yoon, the editor-in-chief of *The Nation*, made it mandatory for all journalists to use mobile journalism (or "MoJo"). This means that journalists not only write stories, but they also must take photos and video clips, and know how to edit in the field and send news in different formats to social media sites as well. He emphasised that speed was key and that journalists must be able to tweet live from the scene. Yoon himself is a good example of a veteran journalist who has fully embraced MoJo and has led his news organisation to be one of Thailand's leading media outlets with an active online and social media presence. Yoon also is available to train and guide his 500 or so combined journalists from the Nation Multimedia Group, especially those who need assistance and feel uncomfortable working in such new territory.

In terms of training and skills development, the group has a strong culture of learning, mentoring and support. They offer training sessions every two months, on an ongoing basis. The sessions do not cover basic skills such as how to tweet (which the group expects journalists to already know), but rather will delve into strategy and more advanced topics so that their journalists' skills are enhanced and strengthened on a regular basis. The sessions also give everyone a chance to share and to learn from one another.

They did not, however, allow veteran journalists to escape from having to work on multiple platforms and they did not set up a separate "online" group of journalists like *Thai Rath* did ten years ago. All journalists were "forced" to comply with this new mandate, and essentially they were slowly pushed into a "sink or swim" situation.

In reality, despite the new policies regarding social media and encouragement from company managers, not everyone uses social media. The number of posts on Facebook, for example, varies greatly

among journalists. The policy was dictated from above and is more of a top-down approach. In order to measure this policy quantitatively, journalists are evaluated by how many tweets and Facebook messages he/she has posted. This also forms part of the journalist's key performance indicators (KPIs) and affects his/her salary increases. The approach is a "stick and carrot" one which motivates some journalists, but not all.

The group utilises three types of social media:

- Twitter - current news. All journalists must tweet whenever they are out researching news;

- Facebook - to build a community with the readers; and

- Weblog (www.oknation.net) - in-depth analysis and details of selected "hot" issues.

The group requires all journalists to be active in all three types.

Apart from making it a necessity for the group's journalists to be involved in MoJo, they also provide opportunities for readers, listeners and viewers to become citizen journalists and to produce user-generated content. The Weblog also allows readers to post messages and to interact with the group's journalists in a two-way dialogue.

Social media editor
At the group, all papers and channels have their own individual social media editor. This is to ensure that everyone is involved and all papers proceed in the same direction. The editor sets up a structure and links journalists with a particular story. This story is then linked on the group's fan page. With a social media editor, journalists will be guided and supervised so that they do not just do what they would like to. The risk of acting independently is that their actions might reflect negatively on the organisation. The editor is the one who makes the decision as to what will be posted and tweeted, and gives direction on how the story should be presented across the various platforms, ensuring uniformity in the message that the group conveys to its readers, listeners, viewers and followers.

To support social media, the group gives journalists 4000 baht (US$133) towards the purchase of an iPhone and/or BlackBerry, and the rest of the amount can be paid in monthly instalments. For the purchase of a notebook, the group contributes 30 per cent of its total cost. In addition, there are 100 iPhones available for office use, which journalists can borrow when working on a story in the field, so that they can send photos, videos for the group's website and tweet as the story develops.

Benefits of social media
The Nation Multimedia Group views social media as another distribution channel for its news. Through social media, it can reach its target market: the tech savvy and digital natives, both of whom have big purchasing power.

With social media, there has been more traffic to the group's websites. Normally, there are on average about 60,000 hits for video clips per day, but this number increases with hot news, such as stories about the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) or the Red Shirts and their protests. Links from social media sites have also contributed to increased hits at the various sites for the group's online newspapers.

In addition, social media allows readers new ways of accessing news and following news. Readers can now choose to follow their favourite journalists on Twitter, Facebook and OK National Blog.

Sample tweets from the group's journalists:

> **suthichai** (@suthichai 8/12/11 9:26 Read my English-language blog on the latest political talking points in town, http://suthichaiyoon.blogspot.com/

> **tukky_nt** (@tukky_nt) 8/12/11 10:01 The Nation's today Front Page: http://yfrog.com/hs54sjcnj

By doing so, the group's journalists can develop a following and ensure that their "followers" will obtain the latest news and updates via a number of different channels (depending on the reader's choice).

Return on investment

With the "investment" that the group has put into social media, be it in terms of equipment, time to train journalists and the journalists' devotion of time to update their social media sites, is it worthwhile for the Nation to invest so much?

The answers are not clear given the fact that there is no way for the benefits to be measured. While traffic to their websites has increased, there is no clear connection between increased hits and increased revenue. There is, as of now, no clear way to determine a correlation between the two. Instead, the group views social media as more of a way to engage an audience. Journalists use social media to choose interesting stories to discuss and lead the discussion as an "opinion leader". The journalists, in this case, act like "gate-keepers" because they can choose the news that will hopefully attract and sustain the readers' interest online.

Furthermore, the group believes that they are able to secure a strong reputation among their readers. For news, readers can connect instantaneously with the source, give comments and also share the news, video clips and/or pictures with their friends and colleagues. There is no need to wait for the newspaper the next day.

Regardless, Ms. Wananakul emphasised that social media does not help increase the group's circulation. It is clear that the new generation does not read traditional newspapers, and there has been a decline in circulation in the last few years. Instead, the new generation prefers to read stories online, such as e-papers on their iPads and iPhones. For this reason, the group must go after this new segment and follow the new trend.

Future of social media at the Nation Multimedia Group

Ms. Wananakul states that the group will focus on digitising more content and creating more digital readers. In order to achieve this goal, they will create more apps and focus more on Internet TV. For websites, they will not only rely on text, but also on photographs and video clips.

The group has also produced an e-version of *The Nation* newspaper, which is based on a subscription. The results so far show that it has not been successful, but the group sees that it does not have a choice and must "jump on the bandwagon" in order to follow the trend. As of 2011, there were only around 3-4,000 subscribers to their digital magazine. The group believes that consumer behavior in regards to the iPad and digital readers is still uncertain. However, the group knows that it cannot stay still and must innovate and provide as much content as possible in digital format.

Conclusion

From both case studies, it is clear that at the moment, it is difficult to make money from social media and there are no clear indicators or criteria to measure the link between the use of social media and income.

The benefits of social media are more intangible and help enhance a news outlet's reputation. News outlets also choose to use social media in order to catch up with prevailing trends.

Despite the lack of concrete financial benefits, the future is full of possibilities. Social media, at the very least, gives audiences a "value-added" experience and helps attract and retain readers and listeners, especially those from the new generation or the "digital natives".

Will all of their efforts equate to more revenue? The answer to this question is still unknown.

Social Media: Engaging Audiences – A Malaysian Perspective

by KY Pung

Introduction

This article was originally prepared for the 6th Emerging Leaders' Forum on Social Media: Engaging Audiences, organised by KAS/ACFJ in Beijing on 17 Aug 2011, at which I was one of the panel speakers. It discusses how social media has been effectively utilised to engage targeted audiences to mobilise popular support in Malaysia; as seen in the case of Bersih 2.0[1], a mass protest movement in Malaysia clamouring for clean and fair elections. It examines this online phenomenon as a potent communication tool for shaping public opinion; pervasive in our daily lives, yet has the uncanny ability to act as a double-edged sword. It can be similarly used to mobilise and carry out a campaign with negative intent, such as character assassination of a person from either side of the political divide.

This is not an academic paper. What it seeks is to illustrate an aspect of how social media has been adopted; cleverly put to efficient use and to serve as an alternative medium to effectively circumvent the mainstream media's "black-out" of news about Bersih 2.0[2]. This article also incorporates the latest developments relating to earlier observations made in the article, at the time it was written. And, it also observes how in its current form and practice, social media has yet to command a strong impact in the commercial arena, although the potential for marketing consumer products is huge.

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1 http://www.facebook.com/BERSIH2.0OFFICIAL?sk=info

2 BERSIH was formed in 2006 and comprised civil society organisations and political parties with the objective of campaigning for clean and fair elections in Malaysia. BERSIH's first public demonstration in November 2007 saw thousands of ordinary Malaysians taking to the streets in support of clean and fair elections.
The impact and changes were felt in the 12th General Election in March 2008.

A Malaysian perspective

Malaysians have outdone other nationals in social media networking. With increasing broadband penetration and information communications and technology (ICT), the number of Malaysians with a smart phone or access to the Internet, has multiplied. They have embraced social media and Facebook with fervour. Studies have shown that Malaysians have gone ahead in leaps and bounds in social media networking, well ahead of Americans, although it was Mark Zuckerberg who invented Facebook. There are 11.5 million users in Malaysia with a population of 28 million people. This represents a high 40 per cent penetration of the population[3].

In a BBC report[4] accessible online, it was reported that Malaysia is the most cyber-sociable country with the largest average number of 'friends' on Facebook, e.g. 233, compared to 12 in Japan and 68 in China. The report quoted a 2010 survey, conducted by the global market research firm, TNS, which interviewed 50,000 consumers in 46 countries to investigate their cyber-socialising habits. Malaysia's average number of digital friends was closely followed by 231 in Brazil and 217 in Norway. The results of the survey could suggest "a culture that embraces fewer but closer friendships" – the report quoted TNS's chief development officer, Matthew Froggatt, on the findings. The same report also mentioned that besides having the most friends, Malaysians were also the heaviest users of social networking sites, spending a whopping nine hours per week on average communicating with their hoards of online friends. Russia came in a close second, with its nationals spending an average of 8.1 hours per week online, and Turkey third with 7.7 hours a week.

More statistics on social networking were found on the Social Bakers website, touted as the authority on social media statistics. The statistics showed Facebook penetration in Malaysia was 45.17%, compared to the country's population and 69.91% compared to the number of Internet users. The total number of Facebook users in Malaysia has reached 11,816,200 and grew by more than 651,360 in the six months before November 2011[5]. The user age distribution showed that 75 % were between the ages of 18 and

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3 http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/malaysia. Retrieved 14 December 2011.

4 http://newsfeed.time.com/2010/10/11/the-most-cyber-sociable-country-malaysia%20 Retrieved%20%2014%20December%202011.

5 http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/malaysia.%20Retrieved%2014%20 December%202011.

44. The largest number of users is currently in the 18 to 24 age group with a total of 4, 017, 508 users, followed by users aged 25 to 34.

Pie chart: User age distribution on Facebook in Malaysia

13 - 15	11%
16 - 17	10%
18 - 24	34%
25 - 34	28%
35 - 44	11%
45 - 54	4%
55 - 64	1%
65 - 0	1%
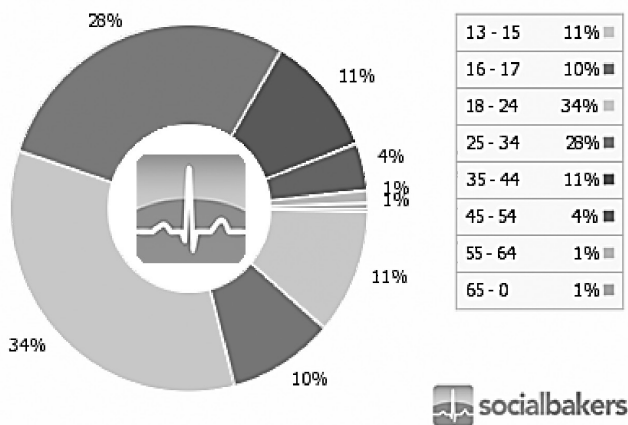
In Malaysia, there are more male users than females. But the reverse is true in the United States. There are 53% male users and 47% female users in Malaysia, compared to 48% and 52% in Thailand and 51% and 49% in Taiwan.

Pie-chart: Male/Female User Ratio on Facebook in Malaysia[6]

male	53%
female	47%

6   http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/malaysia
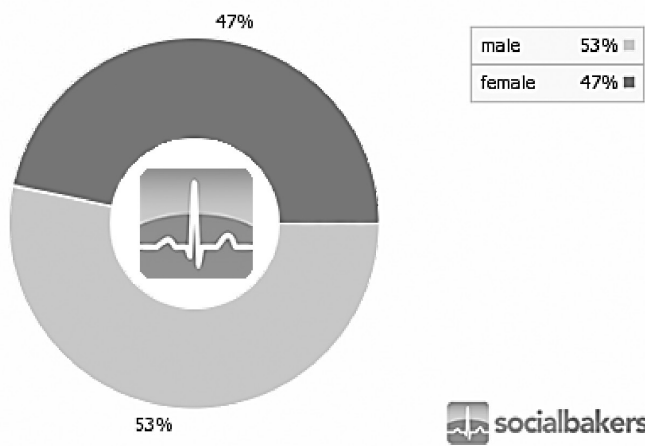
From the statistics, we can infer how Malaysians use Facebook. In terms of hours spent on social media sites, younger Malaysians are spending the most time. The survey also found that rather than using email, consumers were now spending more time on social networking sites.

Apathetic? Not now

Young Malaysians were previously apathetic and not inclined to be interested in politics. Social media networking has changed all that. From messages posted on their Facebook pages and email exchanges, more of them are politically conscious of what is happening in the country. There appears to be a strong co-relation between Facebook users and voting demographics. The Malaysian Election Commission has noted that more people between 18 and 24 (34% of users in the pie-graph) have registered themselves as voters, in recent years[7].

Young people look to the Internet, especially social media, for information about political events and developments. This is partly because news is available on demand; from news alerts to news feeds in search engines. YouTube is bringing news to their laptops and capturing and engaging their attention.

Is social media turning into a social revolution?

Worldwide, social media has aided in changing the political landscape. The extensive use of Facebook in electing the 44th United States President, Barack Obama, in November 2008, has been well-documented. We have read how Obama mobilised his fundraising campaigns using Facebook, to reach the younger voters and turned the tide in his favour[8].

In recent months, social media networking has fuelled regime unrests in the Middle East and North Africa. In Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia and Bahrain, prime ministers and presidents have stepped down, while protests continue in Syria. The most graphic televised conflict was during the civil war that engulfed Libya and led to the downfall and death of Muammar Gaddaffi.

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7   The Malaysian Election Commission said that 70% of the 4.2 million unregistered voters were aged between 21 and 40 and an average of 450,000 Malaysians turn 21 each year.

8   Obama has a Facebook page for his 2012 re-election presidential campaign. His fan base is 24,280,429 as at 18 December 2011.

The riots in England, in August 2011, were also triggered by information shared on social media. Father-of-four, Mark Duggan, died after being shot in the chest by police. Outrage over police high-handedness sparked the Tottenham riots, which spread around London and to several cities nationwide. In Malaysia, the video clip of the Malaysian citizen, Muhammad Asyraf Haziq[9], robbed by a mob during the riot, went viral and was the most viewed video clip of the ugly riots and lootings. Three million views of this clip were logged. The British prime minister blamed Twitter and BlackBerry messaging and spoke strongly about taking action to shut down these two messaging services.

B2C

According to Malaysian statistics in Socialbakers, social media has certain appeals to specific businesses, but generally there is limited social media reach in the area of business to consumer (B2C). The top five brands, with the largest fan base, are Air Asia with 1,301,104 fans, McDonald's Malaysia (919,154), One Malaysia (802,448), Golden Screen Cinemas (582,498) and Pizza Hut Malaysia (530,498).

All top brands are product-based, except for One Malaysia. This is the personal website of the Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. A check of Najib's Facebook at the time of writing showed that the fan base has increased to 909,488 and soon will overtake McDonald's Malaysia as number two. What it infers is that Najib is actively engaging an audience (the people), albeit for his own political agenda and as the premier of the country. It also shows that Najib is aware of the tremendous impact of Facebook for helping him to reach a broad cross-section of the people.

Mobilisation tool – great potential?

In Malaysia, the use of social media to communicate with protestors led to the successful staging of Bersih 2.0 on 9 July 2011. Bersih 2.0 was a coalition of 63 NGOs (non-government organisations) which initiated a protest calling for electoral reforms to ensure clean, free and fair elections. During the protest about 20,000 people (some say 50,000) took to the streets in Kuala Lumpur.

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9   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNh-fTv1Gm8

Large crowd in yellow shirts turned out on the streets of Kuala Lumpur to support Bersih 2.0 and clamour for a clean and fair election.

In a foreign news article, it was reported that social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, had played a major role in motivating demonstrators to take part in the rally, which went ahead despite a police ban and lockdown imposed on sprawling Kuala Lumpur, on the eve of the 9 July protest.

The rally organiser, Bersih 2.0 – calling for changes such as updated electoral rolls and a longer election campaign period – has its own Facebook page, attracting a similar number of "likes", as another Facebook page urging Prime Minister Najib to step down. At the time of posting, there were 190,000+ fans[10].

With the 13th General Election expected to be held next year, Bersih has stepped up its crusade for clean and fair elections. When Bersih was re-launched as Bersih 2.0, it did not want to be aligned with any political party. Its aim is to monitor both sides of the political divide[11].

Real time tweets and updates
A lot of fans followed development of the protest, almost in real time, as it happened on the streets in Kuala Lumpur. They checked out Bersih's website, http://bersih.org. A total of 203,676 people have "liked" Bersih 2.0.

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10 http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2011/07/social-media-plays-major-role-in-motivat-ing-malaysian-protesters199.html

11 Bersih 2.0 is led by lawyer, Dato' Ambiga Sreenevasan, as chairperson. She is past-president of the Malaysian Bar Council.

As at November 2011, the official Bersih Facebook page has 203,302 members. The table below is a comparison of Facebook memberships for different fan pages of mainstream newspapers.

Name of Page	Current Membership
Official Bersih	203, 302
The Star	43, 559
New Straits Times	1, 949
Utusan Malaysia	8, 890

The Bersih 2.0 Facebook page contains information about the online activities prior to the day of the protest, on the day and post-protest – recording the active participation and involvement of fans. There were more than 8,689 tweets by Bersih 2.0 activists on its Twitter account, describing what was happening on the ground at the various spots where groups of protestors had gathered in a running, and sometimes violent, confrontation with the police. 1,667 protestors were arrested. Some 16,995 followers of Bersih 2.0's Twitter page were kept abreast of developments during the protest, by live reporting.

Blogger Joshua Ong, in his blog[12], provides interesting statistics about social media usage for the Bersih rallies.

Statistics on social media usage during the Bersih rallies[13]

Statistics on July 9
- **191,190** Twitter users with **853,373** tweets
- **2.656** users tweeted, **1,316** photos
- **1,600** videos uploaded on YouTube

Statistics at time of writing
- Currently more than **2,000** videos uploaded on YouTube
- More than **120,000** users changed their profile pictures to include the Bersih yellow logo through six different PicBadges
- **169,000** fans on the Bersih Official Facebook Page

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12 http://joshuaongys.com/2011/07/bersih-2-0-rally-malaysia-9-july-2011-online-social-media-statistics-youtube-facebook-twitter/

13 Ibid.

- **17,000** followers on Bersih Official Twitter Account
- 6 Bersih videos in the top 50 most viewed videos on YouTube for Today (15, 22, 30, 38, 42, 43) – http://bit.ly/ckeOx6
- **2,774,812** total views from top 50 Bersih rally videos which were uploaded in the past two days based on the single keyword "Bersih 2.0" on YouTube.

Several studies have been conducted since 9 July, on the impact of social media. Suffice it is to say, the Bersih organisers have had such overwhelming support they have registered a new Facebook page, Bersih 3.0, to step up their preparation for a clean and fair election for the coming 13th General Election expected next year. Similarly, opponents have used the same medium of social media, to demonise Bersih.

Tricia Yeoh, a former research officer for the Selangor state chief minister, who currently works at a research consultancy, wrote on "Lessons in social media from Bersih 2.0"[14], in the online site http://www.thenutgraph.com.

> "Thanks to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, users had a platform to share information in a continuous virtual conversation. This was a fundamental feature of the Bersih buzz online. There are variations in each of these social media platforms. Facebook allows lengthier exchanges, while Twitter provides quick updates on the go. YouTube allows users to share videos. The combination of these three was a powerful tool to garner support for as well as to vehemently criticise Bersih.''

Battle line drawn
The line has been drawn in the battle to win the hearts of Malaysian voters. The Facebook page campaign to call on Najib to step down has attracted more than 220,920 fans, surpassing its target of 100,000 fans. And it is vying for competition with Najib's One Malaysia Facebook page that has attracted almost one million fans. This is certainly a peculiar phenomenon in Malaysia; where the ruling political party under the Barisan Nasional

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14 http://www.thenutgraph.com/lessons-in-social-media-from-bersih-2-0/

(National Front) banner, the opposition under Pakatan Rakyat (People's Coalition) and civic groups, are employing social media to push their civil rights and political agendas.

A double-edged sword

The death of Mark Duggan during a British police operation last August triggered a wave of violent riots across the United Kingdom. British Prime Minister, David Cameron's, call for a shutdown of Twitter and BlackBerry messenger services is a classic case of "killing the messenger" rather than taking responsibility. On the flip side, Cameron's words are a huge endorsement of the marketing potential of social media. Statistics have showed a third of mobile phone users in Britain, own a BlackBerry.

On the political scene, it can be utilised for political subterfuge, as has happened with an opposition leader in Malaysia. A sex video clip was purportedly linked to a top opposition leader, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, and went viral a few months ago. Anwar has vehemently denied involvement, saying the person in the video clip[15] was not himself. This clip can be accessed via YouTube.

Video: Purported sex video clip linking Anwar that went viral

The most significant impact on Malaysia's political scene

Arguably, the biggest impact of social media has been in helping Malaysian voters to have access to information not available from the mainstream media[16]. Such access has led to voters making informed choices, leading to the outcome of the 12th General Election on 8 March 2008, being described as a political tsunami. Malaysia's National Front coalition, which had ruled for 50 years, lost its two-thirds majority in the parliament, and also lost control of five out of the 14 states that make up Malaysia. This political watershed was aided by information provided through blogs, emails, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and alternative online news media.

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15 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdvcA249oVM

16 Almost all mainstream media are controlled by proxies of the ruling National Front coalition regime.

Something good and nice to know!

An awakening happening in your own backyard – is China. A news report from Reuters carried this headline: "Insight: China's micro-bloggers rattle the censor's cage", by Chris Buckley and Melanie Lee. Datelined from Shanghai, the report detailed how a Chinese journalist circumvented Chinese Internet censors to investigate a rape incident that involved a local provincial official. He described how with help from a micro-blogger, who posted constant updates of his stand-off with the police, he was saved from being detained or harmed. Read on:

BEIJING/SHANGHAI | Fri 12 Aug 2011

(Reuters) - When Chinese journalist Wang Keqin found himself cornered in the countryside two years ago by police who were trying to stop him looking into a rape case involving local officials, he looked online for help.

Wang, one of China's most dogged investigative journalists, and his colleagues called a friend who posted constant updates about their stand-off with encroaching police, to a Twitter-like microblog site. Authorities in Badong County, central China, were soon flooded with phone calls from citizens warning them not to detain or hurt him.

"The county public security bureau was overwhelmed by all the calls. It was like a wave of pressure. Weibo saved me that time, and I've also used it to save people being chased by officials," he said, using the Chinese term, "Weibo," for the micro-blogging services that have bloomed as platforms for sharing news, views, gossip and public outrage.

"For Chinese people, Weibo is creating an arena that is much freer than traditional media," said Wang, who is well known for his painstaking reports on corruption and official misdeeds.

The latest stand of the Malaysian Government

The on-going Arab Spring uprising, and recent local developments, have prompted the Malaysian Government to take a re-look at the country's media censorship laws. According to Prime Minister Najib, current laws

are not effective, meaningful or relevant[17]. Quoting him: "The very act of censoring it made more news than the actual story." The government found that it was counter-productive to censure, and now has decided it will sue the media for defamation. It has come to realise that media censorship may not work in this age of globalisation, the ICT phenomenon, and higher education levels of the people[18].

With the 13th General Election due in 2013, Najib has started to take pro-active measures to liberalise the tough censorship laws. He announced sweeping changes to media laws in October 2011, to provide greater civil liberties and democratic reforms, during his speech to mark Malaysia's Independence Day.

Najib announces major changes in controversial laws as Malaysia Day gifts

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians received a significant Malaysia Day present in the form of greater civil liberties and democratic reforms under sweeping changes announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Saying that the country is evolving and the people wanted more freedom, Najib outlined the historic announcement in his Malaysia Day eve address that was telecast live on TV.

The changes, he stressed, were to accommodate and realise a mature, modern and functioning democracy; to preserve public order, enhance civil liberty and maintain racial harmony.

All these changes will need to be tabled in Parliament.

Six of the best
• The Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 will be repealed.

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17 http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-censorship-no-longer-effective-needs-review/

18 http://www.asianewsnet.net/home/news.php?id=20814&sec=1

- In its place, two new laws will be enacted to safeguard peace and order the detention period will be reduced and can only be extended by the courts, except in cases involving terrorism.

- Three remaining emergency proclamations to be lifted are:
  - Emergency 1969, Emergency 1966 (Sarawak) and Emergency 1977 (Kelantan).

- Banishment Act 1959 will also be repealed.

- The annual licence renewal requirement for newspapers and publications will be replaced with a one-off permit by reviewing the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.

- Reviewing the Restricted Residence Act 1933.

- Allowing greater freedom to assemble by reviewing Section 27 of the Police Act 1967 by taking into consideration Article 10 of the Federal Constitution which guarantees every citizen with the right to freedom of speech and assembly[19].

Conclusion

The digital age, globalisation and ICT, have shrunk connectivity in the world. Information is available a click away, for 24/7. Social media has revolutionised the socio-political landscape in Malaysia. Social media networks have been translated into action in the area of political activism. It is fast being monetised in the commercial and business arena.

The social media psyche is spreading through the younger generations and as they grew older, this phenomenon will sweep over and cover all age groups. From a fan's pastime, it has morphed to become an engaging medium dictating our shopping habits and consumer choices.

With the 13th General Election looming, it remains to be seen how the use of social media by political parties on both sides of the political divide, will impact on voting patterns of the Malaysian voters, and bring about a regime change.

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19 http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?sec=nation&file=/2011/9/16/na-tion/20110916070850

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Social media - a cash cow or communication tool? Malaysian impressions

by Susan Tam

Abstract

Malaysians are living in a society that relies heavily on online connectivity. About 17 million Malaysians (60 per cent of the total population) spend most of their time online, either surfing the Internet or using social media to communicate and research. Malaysia also has nearly 12 million users subscribed to the popular social networking tool, Facebook, ranking the nation as one of the top five countries that have the largest number of Facebook users. These numbers are significant, not only in terms of world ranking, but for consumer-based corporations, which seek out new markets and tools to drive revenue and profits. The large user-base from social media such as Facebook and Twitter, offers corporations advertising opportunities and platforms to either communicate to new customers, or turn social media users into potential brand ambassadors. This paper will examine the feasibility and complexity of using social media, both as an advertising platform and as a tool to communicate branding messages to online communities. The paper will also discuss how corporations are looking at different ways to monetise social media. Critics have argued that it is not simple to measure return of investments from using social media to market products and services, due to the lack of tangible results or sales. This paper will also examine the successes and failures of Malaysian companies using social media, as both an advertising and communication tool.

The first thing that Clancy S.N. does each morning is to scroll through her Twitter feed. Before reaching for her toothbrush, she first reaches for the BlackBerry and then logs into her Twitter account to find out the traffic updates for the day. "I need to know the traffic updates so I can plan my journey for the day. Without Twitter or Facebook, I'm lost, I wouldn't know what's happening in the world," she said.

Clancy is your typical connected Malaysian. She spends most of the hours in her day online, surfing Facebook and Twitter to read news updates and finding out what her friends are having for lunch. Clancy admits she has stopped making phone calls. When she needs to be in touch with her friends or colleagues, she sends them a message on these social media platforms. "I can't imagine how my life was before using social media. Social media is my oxygen," she said – a description that perfectly sums up the importance of online connectivity for the average Malaysian.

Global competition, infrastructure development and government support

Just five years ago, Clancy would have felt differently about staying connected, and she, like other Malaysians, would not have relied on this technology as much. The strong demand for online connectivity and access to the Internet has been the result of technological advancements, which have made daily routines much easier for people. From paying utility bills to putting in grocery orders through a virtual grocer, the Internet has changed the Malaysian consumer's life. The convenience of running basic errands, communicating with global clients, and closing business deals, has contributed to a high demand for quality telecommunication services. With more benefits to reap from the development of Long-Term-Evolution or 4G technology, it is no wonder that Malaysia strives to be the next smart city like South Korea, where all public amenities, financial systems and education facilities are interlinked for the convenience of the consumer[1].

Malaysians have been able to access the Internet and use the country's telecommunication services with relative ease, compared to some of their counterparts in the region. This development is due to private investments and public sector support in setting up the infrastructure for the telecommunications service and information communications technology (ICT) sectors. An example of a public sector investment is the launch of a multi-billion dollar project in 1996, called the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). Malaysia aimed to attract foreign investors to set up ICT facilities in the country, as well as encourage local companies to boost their ICT usage across all sectors of the economy. Another factor that

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1 Hassan, N. (21-27 November 2011). The fight for 4G, *The Edge Malaysia Weekly.* Selangor: The Edge Communications Sdn Bhd. pp 84-87.

has driven ICT usage in Malaysia is the legislative support, which assures Malaysians have access to a censorship-free Internet under a special law known as the Bill of Guarantees. Besides the MSC Malaysia project, the Malaysian government is working towards achieving a national broadband penetration target of 75 per cent – an increase from its current record of 50 per cent. This means Malaysia should have over five million household broadband subscribers by 2015[2].

The targets and increase in consumer use of ICT, clearly reflect the demand for seamless connectivity in Malaysia. According to Australian-based internet and telecommunications market research consultancy, BuddeComm, Malaysia has seen a surge in growth of mobile phone users, recording almost 35 million users by early 2011, up from six million subscribers in 2000. This means that most people living in the country own at least two mobile phone subscriptions. BuddeComm also found that while the country had started slowly with broadband take-up, it achieved 50 per cent household penetration by early 2011. To date, over 60 per cent of the 28 million people living in Malaysia have an internet subscription, and according to Nielsen Media Research, Malaysians spend at least 16 hours daily online[3].

Social media and the new consumer
Clancy is one of the millions of Malaysians that have taken advantage of easy access to the Internet and broadband services, allowing her to remain connected 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Spending time online does not mean she only conducts online transactions or reads the news. She has literally moved to the Internet. The growing popularity of social media in the form of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Twitter, have led many Malaysians like Clancy to stop having one-way relationships with the Internet. Using social media, Clancy chats with her colleagues, friends and family, and as a consumer she offers feedback to service providers, government agencies and private corporations. "It's a place where I can share my thoughts about my daily life and talk about what juices I like or books I want to read. Everyone is

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2 http://www.mscmalaysia.my/topic/12073057908129.

3 http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Malaysia-Key-Statistics-Telecoms-Market-Over-view-Infrastructure-and-Forecasts.html

online these days, so this is the place where I'm heard," says this 35-year old professional based in Kuala Lumpur.

Statistics show that Malaysians are hooked on social media like many of their counterparts in other parts of Asia. As of June 2011, Malaysia ranked as one of the top five countries in the world having the highest number of Facebook users – close to 12 million. On Twitter, Malaysians make up half a million users out of 100 million Twitter users globally, according to the Internet market research firm, Sysomos[4]. For professional social networking site, LinkedIn, Malaysians make up over 600,000 of its total 65 million users, based on data from social media statistics firm, SocialBakers[5].

With millions of Malaysian consumers spending hours on social media, it is no surprise that marketers from various industries have shifted the focus of their marketing strategies towards this new medium, in order to leverage on the trend. "One of the greatest phenomenons that has happened with social media is that people now are more than willing to publicly share about themselves, what they like, where they are and who they are with. This data, when mined, structured and trended, can produce deep insights and be a means for generating leads," said Benjamin Koe, the chief executive officer of JamiQ – a firm that specialises in monitoring data from social media. Koe explained that the fact that this type of media was known as "social media" and not mass media, indicated that its purpose has evolved into a multi-way communication channel. Technology consultant, Oon Yeoh, has equated the popularity of social media to "an elephant in the room", as experienced by corporations' marketing and sales teams. "It is a trend that can't be ignored. There is a high degree of awareness about social media amongst Malaysian companies, they know that Facebook and Twitter are the "in" thing right now." However, he does feel that Malaysian companies are not very savvy about using social media as a tool to spot trends, or market their products and services.

New mediums often present new challenges. Traditionally, companies "speak" to their consumers through flyers, newsletters and advertisements,

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4 http://www.greyreview.com/2010/04/20/105779710-million-users-and-new-esti-mates-of-twitter-users-in-asia/

5 www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/malaysia

on conventional mediums. Since more Malaysian consumers have shifted their "eyeballs" to the Internet, this advertising strategy has evolved. Nielsen Media Research recorded US$20 million in Internet advertising spend by Malaysian companies in 2010 (up 30 per cent from 2009's expenditure[6]), out of an advertising industry that is worth US$2 billion[7]. Many Malaysian companies are experimenting with advertising on social media to tap into the large pool of potential customers, but are not necessarily yielding results.

Using social media as an advertising and marketing tool, and expecting instant monetisation or sales, is tricky, said Gerald Young, the founder of news and entertainment website, Fooyoh.com. Young explained that social media advertising and marketing faces the same cycle as older mediums such as television and radio. "When television first came out, no one would have thought that placing commercials would be effective. The same philosophy applies to all other new mediums which are now part of the marketing circle and our lives," he said. Young explained that advertising on social media and the Internet would be effective over time, as Malaysians watch television and drive past billboards as much as they check tweets, and update Facebook statuses and frequent favourite websites. Young finds that while it is a smart move for a marketer to place display advertisements on social media, the marketer has to understand the basics of how Internet marketing works. Young explained that banner advertising works like most advertising, and click-through advertising offers marketers a chance to measure the success of their campaign if a user clicks on the said advertisement. He said that adopting one-type of advertising does not work – it has to encompass a campaign with more than just advertisements on Facebook or Twitter. "It would be hard to monetise your clicks should your products be RM20 dresses from Thailand and you're selling them for RM200 when your only marketing strategy is to post on Facebook with no added creative content and spam tagging your friends," he added.

One way street no more
Due to the nature of Internet and social media, these platforms do not function as an information board or act as a single data resource for

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6 http://www.nielsen.com/my.html

7 http://www.elioe.com/franz/malaysian-market-for-marketing-advertising/

Malaysian consumers. The internet offers a variety of information, be it junk or useful data, and users are more discerning about what they want to consume. "Advertising may not work as people are turned off by the advertiser's 'in-your-face' type of tactics," remarked Edwin Yapp, the founder of inSight Editorial Service. He explained that the age-old model of targeting people through "one-way-down-your-throat" campaigns might only work when products were new and if the company's target audience was already receptive to what the company was selling.

To use social media effectively, Malaysian companies must rethink the way they use this medium as part of their marketing strategy. Koe argued that as much as companies want to use social media to reach out and make their product messages viral, the content on social media was a powerful means of talking back. "Because there is so much data online created by consumers, everyone who talks about your brand is a potential customer. Everyone who talks about your competitor is a potential customer. Use social media to power loyalty programmes, recommendations on engines in e-commerce stores and also drive a more targeted advertising campaign," he said.

And this is exactly what Young is doing. He finds that using social media networking sites like Facebook, offers him an added strategy for reaching his audience. "For our campaigns, in addition to content on the website, we set up a Facebook page for our regular supporters and new customers with more elaborate information, and allow them to have conversations about our product or service," he said. He finds that the success of a social media marketing campaign depends on how active the company or marketer is in maintaining the website to engage with users. "In most campaigns we are running now, we blend these types of communication, turning into what may seem like a website content into branded content and promoting it on social media sites to generate conversation, in hope that it will generate sales," he said.

Communities, credibility and sales
Social media networks function like virtual communities, which share ideas, criticisms and recommendations. Most of these networks are built on existing networks of friends and families, which add credibility to the content shared. Yapp points out that Malaysian companies must realise that using social media to reach consumers does not offer instant sales or monetisation. "What it does offer is the opportunity to influence consumers'

choices through the conversations by these communities," he said. Yapp finds that shared data or information on social media is usually based on trusted sources and thus, carries more weight than information from a stranger or directly from a company. "You would rather visit a restaurant that is recommended by a friend than to visit one that you've learnt about through a television commercial," he added.

For Young, he finds using Facebook and Twitter helps his management team understand the consumer through their conversations and feedback. "At Fooyoh.com, we have to understand the timing of our messages on social media, and to do that, we have to understand the psyche of the normal surfer – this includes taking into consideration their criticisms or conversations within their networks," Young added.

Vernon Chan, founder of the technology website, VernonChan.com, finds that it is more effective for companies to use social media as an engagement tool. "What we used it for is to build rapport and long-term relationships with our customers. Social media is more personal compared with traditional media and offers the opportunity for customers to exchange feedback and ideas about our products," he explained. Chan said, in addition to finding out what his customers want through these exchanges, he has discovered that using Facebook and Twitter help with word-of-mouth advertising and viral messaging at virtually no cost. Chan points out that the Malaysian budget airline, Air Asia, is a home-grown brand that has succeeded in using social media as an advertising and marketing tool. "I find that with Air Asia there is a good mix of building rapport, engaging customers and selling their products through social media exclusive promotions," Chan added. Air Asia's popularity on the Internet resulted in this global airline being placed first as the brand with the highest digital presence across Malaysia, according to market research company, TNS Global, beating well-known brands such as global fast food company, McDonalds, and telecommunications firm, Nokia[8]. Through direct or indirect engagement with their consumers, it can be said Air Asia's marketing campaign on social media has successfully contributed to its passenger growth, seeing the airline catered to some 26 million passengers in 2010[9].

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8 http://www.tnsglobal.com/press-release/tns-uk-appoints-new-head-digital

9 http://www.airasia.com/iwov-resources/th/common/pdf/AirAsia/IR/AA_4Q10_Analyst_Presentation.pdf

There are differing opinions on how social media can be effective as a marketing tool, to drive sales. Like Koe, Yapp and Young, rather than employing a hard-sell tactic, "listening" in on conversations within social media communities and monitoring feedback from loyal supporters, are ways to understand consumer behaviour, engage them and "softly" sell products and services. But some argue that there are companies that have succeeded in using social media to obtain direct sales – for example, using an e-commerce model with direct payment gateways helps the marketer track sales. Social enterprise venture capital fund, Tandem Fund's chief operating officer, Kal Joffres, said there are airlines that use social media to sell distressed assets such as last-minute seats for flights. "Through specialised Twitter accounts, the airline tweets information about last minute deals on seats, to enable people who listen in on to this fast medium to take advantage of them," he said. Alexis Ditkowsky, who works with Ashoka Changemakers, concurred with Joffres and pointed out that American airline, JetBlue, has a Twitter feed devoted to cheap flights. "As a follower, I know exactly what I'm signing up for. JetBlue is letting me know when it has travel deals. It is not pretending to be an aggregator of cool things to do, or offer tips on how to travel light. The feed just does what is says it will do and it doesn't over do it," she explained. She finds that there is a place to do more overt sales on social media but companies must be upfront about it and to position themselves as insiders, without bombarding the consumer with information.

Social media also functions as an alternative publicity tool. Non-profit entrepreneurial initiative, StartupMalaysia.org, replaced traditional advertising with customised content for its Facebook and Twitter accounts. StartupMalaysia.org, was unveiled at its first event called, "Silicon Valley Comes to Malaysia", a conference for entrepreneurs to meet and network with Silicon Valley iconic entrepreneurs. The promotional campaigns and publicity work of "StartupMalaysia.org" and "Silicon Valley Comes to Malaysia" were done without spending a single cent on advertising. We focused on uploading promotional material on Facebook and Twitter and responding fast to questions from the users," said StartupMalaysia.org founder, Dhakshinamoorthy Balakrishnan, or Dash as he is known. Over 800 entrepreneurs signed up for it through Facebook and Twitter, beating the team's initial target of 300 entrepreneurs. "The response was overwhelming. As a not-for-profit initiative, we wanted to leverage on the power of social media and it clearly delivered results for us," he said.

Muddy waters in social media

In any new medium, whether Malaysian companies and organisations use social media as a publicity tool or to monetise marketing campaigns, positive results are difficult to achieve and outcomes are rarely clear. Branding consultant, Muhammad Zain, explained that consumers now have more choices than they did 10 or 15 years ago. "As easy as a company can set up a Facebook page or Twitter account, it is also as easy for the user to block it. Unless you truly understand what people want, chances are you will not be given the time and day," he said. Zain, who also runs the branding firm, ImpakStrat, argued that in the past, Malaysians were dependent on television and radio for information and it was easy for marketers to target their audiences."Today, on social media it has become very "noisy". Everyone is trying to talk to the consumer."

Technology correspondent, Tun Kai Poh, agrees with Zain, as he feels that active social networks are filled with chatter and constant updates, making it difficult for a single voice to be heard. "A company's social media channel needs to be updated often to successfully capture customer's attention, or it could be easily lost in the crowd," Tun said. Meanwhile, Yapp finds that social media is not a direct tool for companies to monetise from because the platforms have more to do with building brands and relationships through engagement. "Social media platforms are excellent tools to promote the participatory elements of the Internet, so when consumers gather there, companies will also need to be aware of this to meet their customer's need or potential customer," he said.

Companies then have to just adopt basic techniques and avoid simple mistakes to make their social media campaign a success – use social media to engage customers. Online magazine, TechCrunch, reported that in a study by research firm, Wildfire, it found that most of 2009's top 50 fast growing technology firms ranked by Deloitte, failed to use social media platforms effectively, despite having a presence on two or more social networking sites. United Kingdom-based Wildfire, found that 74 per cent of these companies have a Twitter account but close to half of them had never replied to a single tweet. Overall, the study revealed that 57 per cent had used Twitter for one-way marketing activities only. The survey also showed that 20 per cent of these companies have set up accounts on social networking sites, but only 25 per cent replied to comments from

their Facebook accounts and 60 per cent of them used Facebook purely as a distribution channel[10].

Technology correspondent and former editor of technology publication, InTech, A. Asohan agreed that social media is about creating and disseminating content and not for companies to "blow their own trumpets". Companies need to build communities, but the problem is not many companies know what to do with the data from these social media campaigns. Not enough companies pay attention to the details, such as number of tweets or re-tweets and how to track it to measure revenue gain," he added. Koe and Joffres point out there are a number of services that offer metrics measurements and tracking solutions for social media campaigns, which are slowly being adopted by companies. Data such as user demographics, frequency of keywords and positive or negative feedback, can be tracked to help with studying consumer behaviour. Joffres explained that music corporations could measure the number of music recommendations on a specific social networking site by using a social graph – a tool to track keywords and suggestions. He finds that music firms use this tool to target users in the consumer's network to recommend albums for purchase.

So noisy, so little focus

As social media evolves into a more complex tool to gather consumer data and offers targeted advertising, these online platforms could potentially be intrusive and some argue that they should be used primarily as a communication tool and not to sell products and services. Social enterprise expert, Ditkowsky, found that companies need to respect their users by maintaining relationships and trust. "If you keep that in the forefront of your outreach while finding a balance between your goals and customer's interest, you'll have laid the groundwork for future market research." She said that in emerging markets in Asia, she found there were corporations or organisations that did not value the "permission-based marketing" the way companies do in the United States, where there are laws to prevent multiple emails or spam marketing.

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10 http://eu.techcrunch.com/2010/08/05/is-anybody-out-there-tech-companies-fail-at-social-media-says-study/

However, Ditkowsky found that social media had a place in marketing and commerce. "The key for companies is to respect the kind of communication that your followers are expecting. Most people don't appreciate a barrage of marketing messages throughout the day. They'll just unsubscribe from the company's feed and have a negative association with the company." Zain shares the same sentiments with Ditkowsky, explaining that social media must be used as a tool to communicate and build a company's brand. "You have to understand your consumers and give them what they want, maybe they will let you in on their 'conversations' which can influence revenue. Unless you're offering something new or unique, the space in their conversation is already taken."

Therefore, companies planning to run sales campaigns or improve public relations, have to stay focused. Entrepreneur and founder of 360 Vision, Jimin Lai, said using social media would depend on the type of business that a company is involved in. Sharing sentiments with Zain, Lai explained that, "Social networks are like huge gatherings of mini clubs. For corporations to penetrate these clubs, they must provide interesting content to their target audience." To illustrate this point, environmentalist Anthony Tan, said he makes social media work for him by being specific about its goals and desired outcomes. Tan is the executive director for non-profit organisation, Centre for Environment Technology and Development Malaysia. "We use social media to publicise our events and create awareness on environmental sustainability. On Facebook, we update our supporters on activities such as the Organic Day and in turn they will share the information with their friends.

Global retail player, Groupon, is another example of a firm staying focused in their social media strategy. The company's business model uses collective buying and bargaining power. Consumers who go on the company's website would sign up for a deal they were interested in. For example, they can sign up for a discounted spa treatment or a meal at a restaurant. Once a minimum number of users have signed up for this deal, of usually 100 users, the deal is then activated and the consumer can enjoy the product or service. Groupon relies on users to "market" these deals to their friends on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. With this strategy, Groupon guarantees local businesses the customers they want, and users

the product or services they need. Lai cites Groupon as a successful model: "Groupon reaches out to their consumers on social media in a short time, by setting up a Facebook page, using online advertising and tapping into blogs," he said. As a result of this viral reach and targeted social media strategy, Groupon's global sales hit over US$300 million in the third quarter of 2011[11].

The key for Malaysian companies to achieve a successful campaign, is to stay focused and be aware of the many benefits and disadvantages of using social media in their business operations. As Malaysian consumers become more savvy and demanding in today's competitive environment, companies have to be quick on their feet to come up with strategies that capture consumers' attention and in return, meet its business goals. Many would agree that the role of social media in people's lives is still evolving, with many more lessons to be learnt to fully tap the potential of this new medium. Social media is not purely a marketing tool, but is a platform to communicate and understand consumers better in this complex and connected world.

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Social Media And Investigative Journalism

by Syed Nazakat

Investigative journalism is crucial for a healthy and vibrant democracy. It acts as a watchdog, holding those in positions of power and authority accountable, by exposing wrongdoing, misuse of power and standing up for the public interest and common good. Investigative journalism can be defined as a form of journalism in which reporters do not merely pass on 'news' that already exists. It refers to news, which would not be available without any journalistic intervention. This can be done by searching and collecting new information, facts and also through re-interpretation of facts already in the public domain. James S. Ettema and Theodore L. Glasser, in their book, *Custodians of Conscience*, explain that investigative journalism does not mean that investigative journalists should decide how everyone else should behave: "They are not the guardians of some superior moral knowledge. Rather, these journalists have the means to report and disseminate stories that can engage the public's sense of right and wrong" (Ettema/Glasser, 1998).

From Ben Bradlee to Bob Woodward, to Seymour Hersh and the wonderful tribe of investigative journalists around the world – journalists crusading for truth and bravely defending human rights, freedom and democracy from the incursions of corruption and undue influence. In many ways they have changed the way we think about governance, politics and justice. At the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, we have seen how reporters from the paper cooperated with other international journalists to expose the multi-national oil trading company, Trafigura, which illegally exported chemical waste from the Netherlands to the Ivory Coast. Tens of thousands of people in Ivory Coast suffered from breathing problems, sickness and other diseases because of the hazardous nature of the waste.

Revelations about the torture in Abu Ghraib prison, allegations of sexual exploitation of Congolese women by United Nations peacekeeping troops, match-fixing in cricket, Pakistan's intelligence agency's clandestine connections with terrorist groups, corruption in Indian politics and the

phone hacking scandal in the United Kingdom, as well as other outstanding watchdog stories – have demonstrated that investigative journalism is very much alive and kicking. The impact of investigative stories has improved lives and governance, strengthened democratic institutions and helped building of accountability.

Since the rise of the Internet in the early 1990s, journalism has been transformed. It has changed the process of news gathering for general and investigative reporting in particular – in the way it reaches out to audiences and the way news and information is gathered and distributed. Social media is largely defined as a group of Internet-based applications built on the web, allowing the creation and exchange of content. The Internet has not replaced getting out, gathering information and documents, and talking face-to-face to people during research, but in a time of information overload, Internet has made readers and viewers a part of the news gathering process. In newsrooms, reporters use web-based and mobile technologies like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Second Life, text messaging, email, and the like. The aim is to use social media as a platform to bring in information and at the same time make media more interactive, informative and entertaining.

Web-based tools, like blogging and data digitisation, have added further possibilities for news gathering. In 2010, *The Telegraph's* investigation into the expenses of British members of parliament (MPs) was made possible by digitisation of data, which eventually helped to make sense of the massive corruption in the British government. It was a story which revealed how British politicians – from Gordon Brown's Cabinet to backbenchers of all parties – exploited the system of parliamentary allowances to subsidise their lifestyles. As a part of its investigation, and for the benefit of readers, the paper designed a special web page called, The Express Files, to explain the story. The page included options for searching for a particular member of parliament, the claims they had made or a constituency they belonged to. The web page, taking advantage of the social media, also posted a Green Book – which contained details about every claim and every piece of correspondence between British MPs and fees office staff – some four million separate pieces of information. Though the main investigation work was carried out in a traditional way, the use of social media supplemented the story and helped to spread its impact. The story generated huge web traffic to the paper's website, Telegraph.co.uk, and also lifted the paper's circulation by 93,000.

Similarly, some publications collaborated with the whistleblower website, WikiLeaks, to take advantage of war logs from Iraq and Afghanistan, and hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables, which revealed blunt assessments of world leaders and a behind-the-scenes look at how the United States (US) wields its influence. WikiLeaks was a global journalistic phenomenon in which the *Guardian*, the US *New York Times* and Germany's, *Der Spiegel*, made history by simultaneously releasing stories about this huge, classified US military archive. At *Der Spiegel* the editors extensively used social media tools to explain where the majority of the cables originated from, and where they had the highest level of classification. Later, at the 18th World Editor's Forum, *Der Spiegel* editor-in-chief, Mathias Müller von Blumencron, admitted that the magazine's editorial and technology processes were not adequate to deal with the large amount of information, despite the strong culture of investigative journalism at the paper.

The success of WikiLeaks has generated a debate within many publications about whether they should have their own leaks website where whistleblowers could send information directly to the editors. The *Guardian* investigations editor, David Leigh, believes that WikiLeaks' story had three things that could never have happened before the Internet age: "One, that the US army had built a huge database with six years of sensitive military intelligence material in it. Two, many thousands of US soldiers had access to this electronic archive, and some had been able to download copies. And thirdly, WikiLeaks now had one copy which it proposed to publish immediately online." The war logs, in David Leigh's words, were a unique collaboration between newspapers and a 'stateless' website.

The growth of the Internet and a changing media landscape raises immediate questions for media and journalists: How should we use and integrate new social media technology, like Facebook and Twitter, into investigative reporting, and what are the new models for web-based newsrooms?

On 13 October 2011, around 500 investigative journalists from more than 50 countries met at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. They discussed the use of cross-border investigative stories, undercover reporting, multimedia and new storytelling strategies. All agreed that social media platforms have changed the way people interact with the news, and that more than ever, people are eager and capable of responding to news. While some shared how useful the

social media could be in investigative reporting, others were forthcoming about the limitations of social media. However, all agreed that social media tools are an aid to old-fashioned shoe-leather investigative reporting and if reporters are not currently benefitting from the different tools of social media, they are missing out on something very important. Almost all of the participants at the Kiev conference had Facebook and Twitter accounts.

At the conference, I saw journalists watching with apt attention as Lauren Keane of *The Washington Post* demonstrated in two or three minutes how we can locate a remote place with the help of Google Maps and how it can give us all sorts of information such as distance in kilometres, postcode, and so on. At the *Washington Post*, Lauren is responsible for the online part of the paper's long-term investigative projects. She convinced many veteran reporters that social media was indeed a helpful tool.

From my own experience about how useful social media could be in investigative reporting, I recall that in 2010 I was working on a major investigative story about the US' intelligence agency, the CIA's, covert operations in India. It was a complex story as there was nothing in the public domain which could provide a lead. It was hard to get the right people to speak, and particularly those who had worked or dealt with the CIA. While I was working on the story I received an email alert through a social media network about a conference on the US Strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, which was being held in Washington. One of the speakers at the conference was Robert Grenier. He was introduced as an intelligence expert. I "googled him" and found that Grenier was one of the most experienced spies to run the far-flung US intelligence network and he had also served as the CIA station chief in Islamabad, Pakistan. Within the agency he was known by his nickname, Bob. In an email I asked him whether he would be available for an interview with our magazine. Bob, who is retired and lives in Virginia, agreed to an email interview. It was a scoop for our magazine. Thanks to the Facebook community, it was perhaps the first time that a top CIA official had spoken to an Indian publication.

Facebook helped me again in another cross-border major story. It was early 2011. I was planning a reporting assignment on the Al-Qaeda rehabilitation camp in Saudi Arabia. I wondered how it might be possible to break through the net of silence and mystery, and whether I could tell the story of young Arabs who were returning to normal life after joining a global terrorist organisation. I wanted to interview someone who had

seen, met, or been close to the Al-Qaeda chief, Osama bin Laden. I made a number of email requests and phone calls to my friends in Riyadh, but there was no news. My Arab fixer also failed to find any former Al-Qaeda men. A journalist friend in Riyadh said that he knew one such fellow but he was unable to be traced. Later I approached the Saudi Arabia ambassador in Delhi, Faisal Al-Trad, for help. He kindly helped with the logistic support in Saudi Arabia but he too could not provide a contact. Exhausted by weeks of hunting, I was feeling disappointed. Then, I finally heard about Jamal Khashoggi through a Facebook friend. Jamal is a senior Arab journalist who had fought alongside Afghans and other Arabs, including Osama bin Laden, in the war against the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. I was pleased to find him on both Facebook and Twitter. Later, I met him in Riyadh and he spoke about his days with Osama. His views enriched our story and we were able to produce a major report on Al-Qaeda.

Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, are fundamentally changing the way we discover relevant information, and have led us to discover the power of what is called "crowd-sourcing". "Crowd-sourcing" is a technique increasingly used by journalists to obtain information. The idea behind "crowd- sourcing" journalism is that users can cooperate to generate information and find answers, which they could not find on their own. One of the successful examples of crowd-sourcing is a project called "Help Me Investigate". Founded by British journalist, Paul Bradshaw in 2008, the UK-based platform allows users to ask, as well as answer, questions of public interest that they think should be investigated. The platform makes it easier to investigate public interest questions by providing resources and support links to investigations and most importantly, it builds an Internet community across the web.

Investigative journalists such as *The Guardian*'s, Paul Lewis, have demonstrated the value of the network effect in several investigative stories. In one of his recent assignments he investigated the mysterious death of Angolan refugee, Jimmy Mubenga, on British Airways Flight 77. To find witnesses of what took place on the flight, Lewis tweeted from his account, asking for anyone who was on the flight and saw what happened. He soon received several responses, including one from a man who tweeted that: "I was also there on BA77 and the man was begging for help and I now feel so guilty that I did nothing." Then, in a breakthrough, he received a phone call from a man in Angola, who was an eye-witness to the killing. In another story, Paul investigated the death of Ian Tomlinson at

the G20 protests in London, through Twitter. Paul obtained twenty reliable witnesses who could be placed on a map at the time of the incident – and only one of them had come from the traditional journalistic tool of a contact number in his notebook.

The potential for "crowd-sourcing" information also emerged during the Haiti earthquake in 2010, when the Oakland residents launched *OscarGrantProtests.com*, a website that allowed people near the action to map incidents of violence and view reports from others. It used crisis mapping technology from a group of open-source developers called Ushahidi, who built the software to report violence in the aftermath of the 2008 disputed Kenyan presidential election. Ushahidi, not only radically altered the way we respond to disasters by placing reporting power in the hands of people who might otherwise be victims, but it also showed how innovative tools and thinking can be used for investigative journalism. Similarly, *The Washington Post* has launched Tumblr blog, @innovations. Tumblr is a blogging site that currently hosts over 14 million blogs and is being used by more than 160 media organisations including *The Guardian* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Unlike other media sites that mainly link to stories from their main websites, *The Washington Post*'s Tumblr invites readers to share their stories and photos, thereby becoming an active part of the news.

At the heart of "crowd-sourcing" is a shared understanding that journalists need to be more interactive with their readers/viewers. At the Public Insight Network, which is a more refined version of "crowd-sourcing", members of the network provide basic information about themselves and their areas of expertise, and receive periodic emails from their local newsroom soliciting their thoughts on issues that the station plans to cover. It has a powerful database of over 85,000 people, who help to shape and deepen local and national public radio news coverage, by volunteering their personal knowledge, experience and opinions. The concept of Public Insight Journalism was pioneered by Minnesota Public Radio, to meet the needs of today's open-source society, which is built on genuine partnership between news media and the public. It aims to keep newsrooms open to readers and viewers. People should feel comfortable to drop in and share information and tips with reporters. Similarly, the BBC has a committed Twitter and Facebook account. It appointed its first social media editor in 2010 and their job is to pay attention to feedback that shows how the audience relates to the broadcaster.

Yet, one of the biggest challenges for many investigative journalists is opening up to the community in the first place. Many investigative journalists do not use social media because they are convinced that if they use social media sites like Facebook or Twitter, other reporters will steal their story or source. David E. Kaplan, editor-at-large at the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, echoes the anxiety about the use of social media. "No reporter should be putting out sensitive sources or stories they're worried about losing," he said. "Sure, you want tips and public support and interest. But it's a competitive, risky, and sometimes dangerous business, and there are plenty of reasons for investigative journalists to take great care with what they're making public in the course of an investigation."

The question is then how to deal with this situation? Shelia Coronial, director of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, at Columbia University, believes social media is a tool in the journalist's toolkit and that reporters should decide what tools would fit their stories best. "There is no single rule that applies to all. This is something that should be decided on a case-by-case basis. If using social media might expose confidential sources or blunt a news organisation's competitive edge, then journalists may opt to not publicise an ongoing investigation. On the other hand, making public an ongoing project can have advantages, such as, for example, encouraging readers, experts or whistleblowers to contribute information, sources, leads, and tips."

One of the areas where social media can also be helpful is to track an individual, or a story, on the web. Following newsmakers is a key way of tracking news on social networks. Individuals provide colour and context to investigative stories. The information on their Facebook and Twitter accounts about their educational background, family, circle of friends, professional associations, their likes and dislikes, and even their travel records can add to the public knowledge of an individual's private activities. Today people are putting so much information about their private lives on the Internet, that it has encouraged intelligence agencies like the CIA to monitor social media websites to collect intelligence. It is all a far cry from the historical spy-work process, which traditionally focused on human intelligence. In terrorism-related investigative stories too, it has been often found that terrorists have a penchant for social media sites. Their postings, pictures and personal information on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms may provide an important breakthrough for a story.

More importantly, when individuals make newsworthy statements on social networks it may give a clue and direction to a story. In some newsrooms, as a part of their reporting beat, reporters are already monitoring government websites for clues about the government's day-to-day activities or subtle changes in policies that in reality may have a larger impact on the public. Who knows when a reporter might get a scoop from the world of social media that may otherwise have been overlooked or was more difficult to effectively track in the past? In India, for example, many politicians, government officials and businessmen are on Facebook and Twitter. They often tweet about their life, work and travel and their tweets often find a place on the front page of the newspaper.

The Internet also offers more access to global communities of interest, which may provide alternate sources of information. On the web, there are numbers of reliable, dedicated groups and individuals, sharing important information. The advantage with the internet also is that it is gaining more customers and users as around the world governments are going online. In India, the IT (information technology) house of the world, the government websites include annual reports, policy documents, briefing materials, department structures and responsibilities, telephone indexes, biographies, court verdicts and other important documents.

The digitalisation of government records is not limited to India. Other countries in Asia and elsewhere are also placing details and records on the web. In my recent visit to Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, I saw a widespread connectivity of Internet sites. It is estimated that by 2020, the increased Internet penetration will result in a 2.6 per cent contribution to the country's GDP and will create 129,000 more jobs. Bangladesh's business corporates, which benefit from government assistance including industrial development bonds and tax forgiveness, are posting company records, annual reports, major transactions and share releases, on the web. Then there is Google Maps, Google Earth and Google Fusion, which are useful for the visualisation of data, and for creating maps, graphs and timelines to illustrate complex stories.

Taking advantage of Google Fusion, websites of news organisations now display impressive and interactive multimedia packages about investigative stories, such as those from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and other news outlets. Online websites such as the Center for Investigative Reporting and the Center for Public Integrity, and other watchdog media

outlets use social networking sites like MySpace and social bookmarking sites like del.icio.us and Technorati, for investigative reporting. They are learning how to gather information quickly, and search digital files; how to handle large files; and how to shoot and manage digital photos; and, finally, how to write for web and create multimedia packages.

As the technology is advancing with every passing day, newsrooms keep an eye on new opportunities. Perhaps in the future, investigative journalists may take advantage of location-based tools such as Foursquare or SCVNGR, as a way to track a story subject's location. The use of Storify, a duration tool in beta and invite-only, has already generated buzz among journalists. It makes it easy to drag and drop content from Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Google or a URL into a "story stream" that includes a headline, summary and contextual text around the social content.

The role of social media does not end with the completion of a story. Today, social media is also being used to promote investigative stories and journalism. Paul Cristian Radu, executive director of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), says they are using social media sites to promote their investigative work, and to reach a wider audience. *OCCRP*'s goal is helping people of the region to better understand how organised crime and corruption affect their lives. In addition to the stories, OCCRP is building an online resource centre of documents related to organised crime, including court records, laws, reports, studies, company records and other public documents that will be an invaluable resource centre for journalists and the public alike. "At this point we're mainly using social media to promote our investigative work, to reach a wider audience. We are also using it, although to a limited extent, for crowd-sourcing information," said Paul. He believes that spot.us could be a relevant model once an investigative organisation manages to build a crowd-sourcing community.

The US based investigative news web portal, ProPublica, led by Paul Steiger, the former managing editor of The *Wall Street Journal*, is experimenting with the same formula. It wants to design and implement social efforts to deepen and advance ProPublica's reporting. It wants to grow its Facebook presence and day-to-day oversight of @ProPublica and #MuckReads, and to integrate social media with its data features. Its website claims that "our Twitter and Facebook use will challenge your ability to spot the crucial or buried bits of news stories, and present them in a clickable

and shareable manner." It is also planning to launch a blog which will be aimed at aggregating any noteworthy investigative reporting that it can find that day.

An investigative story, even when it is published, often requires some transparent finessing to establish a sense of trust and credibility in the reporting process that took place – especially with controversial or sensitive topics. Social media tools come in handy here as these are useful for opening a dialogue about the story after it is published. *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, in its recent series on digital privacy, created a Twitter account that provided information on the topic and answered questions from readers. Because the series of stories created a lot of discussion and curiosity, this was an innovative way for the journal to help address readers' questions.

The rise of social media has also created space for new business models that promote the future of investigative journalism. In response to the decline of investigative reporting at traditional media organisations, YouTube, for example, is considering launching a service dedicated to investigative journalism. It wants the California-based, Centre for Investigative Reporting (CIR), which is funded by private donations, to provide material for what it plans to call "YouTube Investigative". ProPublica is a recent and large example of using non-profit models for web-based journalism. Other non-profits – such as the Center for Public Integrity and the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting – do significant work. The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, a non-profit media group based in Manila, has also been creating major watchdog stories. It is best known for its series on the hidden wealth of President Joseph Estrada, which forced his resignation. In India, *Tehelka*, a weekly political magazine, was started as a web portal in 2000 and later in 2003 it launched a weekly newspaper, funded by 200 founding subscribers and other well-wishers who each donated US$2,500. Today it runs a website, a weekly news magazine and a daily newspaper. Also, many organisations are using pay-walls, an online device which restricts internet users from accessing webpage content without paid subscription, as a model for supporting investigative journalism.

However, regardless of different tools and models, it is hard to overlook the fact that any modern media operation today needs to have a social media element, and journalists need to be far more interactive with the public

than ever before. It is also important to remember that the Internet, by its very nature, provides free access to everybody for uploading information without much scrutiny. It therefore lacks gate-keeping rules similar to those in the traditional media, which often puts a question mark around credibility. The credibility relates primarily to the truthfulness and accuracy of the facts that journalists report. To maintain transparency, reporters are expected to use their full name and professional title in social biographies; include language to indicate that links do not equal endorsements and the news outlets must provide fact-check information on social networks in the same way that they verify any other information for print.

The point is that when using social networks for reporting, it is important that a journalist should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods, so that audiences can make their own assessments of the information. In short, I suggest that journalists should always remember the three Cs - *content, clarity and credibility*. No matter what kind of latest and sophisticated technology you use, it is the content which will remain the king. For content to have a value it should be clear, to attract and sustain the interest of readers. And at the end of day it is the credibility which separates journalism from propaganda and fiction. Remember without credibility, journalism is a lie.

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China's Social Media Revolution: Control 2.0

by Karen Yap

In 2010, about one million articles were censored every day in China[1]. Also, 2010 saw 41 per cent fewer websites in China than the previous year[2]. At the time of writing, almost 500 million Chinese citizens are online and a quarter of all social network users in the world are Chinese.

The adoption of social media in China is driven by: affordable broadband, a generation that grew up without siblings due to the introduction of the one-child policy in the late 1970s, an underlying mistrust of state-owned media, and separation from families as migration from rural to urban areas takes place.

Social media has led to a fundamental change in the way people communicate with each other. The Chinese know they can express opinions and gain access to information through interconnected micro-blogs. The use of micro-blogs has exploded in China over the last couple of years. Because government policies block Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other Western social networking sites, vibrant domestic alternatives of similar online platforms are booming. Chinese micro-blog users benefit from the Twitter-like 140 characters messaging because they can say much more with Chinese symbols, than with English letters. Coupled with the ability to attach photos and documents, Chinese micro-blogging sites increase their influence among users through information dissemination.

Micro-blogs attract people from all walks of life – ordinary people, artists, government officials, journalists, students, athletes and film stars. Like elsewhere in the world, they use these sites to talk about anything and

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1 Social Media and Censorship in China. (January 2011). Synthesio.

2 China: 1.3 Million Websites Shut In 2010. (13 July 2011). BBC.

everything from trivial matters to anything in-between[3]. It is a freedom that the Chinese have rarely enjoyed in the 60-odd years since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power[4].

More signs of control

Chinese leaders know that micro-blogging has the potential to transform China and that is why there is growing speculation, and signs, that the authorities are intensifying controls of social media. While the CCP hails the vast commercial potential of the Internet, it is also quick to weave a web of regulations to manage control over the Internet, its users, content, and usage. Realising that social media provides a platform for citizens to discuss and collaborate, Beijing has limited the full extent of Internet usage through various means of control. For example, in 2003, China's Ministry of Public Security began an attempt, dubbed "The Golden Shield Project" or colloquially referred to as the "Great Firewall of China". This was first mooted in 1998, to put controls on Internet use and prevent the sharing of information that could threaten national security, disclose state secrets, or damage the government's reputation.

However, it will take some time for social media to become a political threat in China. In the short term, the Internet may strengthen the CCP and its popularity, which now depends on continuous economic growth. Also, it provides some personal freedom and managing the Internet's risk while harnessing its potential, are effective tools for the CCP to engage the public, for now.

Local government officials have been encouraged to jump on the social media bandwagon. Overnight, personal web pages, Sina Weibo (a micro-blogging site) accounts, QQ (China's equivalent of Twitter) belonging to these officials were established and updated regularly. This is a noticeable and growing trend in China. In a report issued in April 2011, the Public Opinion Monitoring Center noted that micro-blogs for the CCP, government institutions and officials, already cover many administrative levels, from central to local, and many functional departments. As of March 2011, the centre calculated more than 400 official micro-blogs (for party or

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3 Can China Control Social Media Revolution? (3 Nov 2011). BBC.

4 Ibid.

administrative offices) and more than 200 micro-blogs maintained by individual officials.

Fast forward to a future when the Internet and social media are omnipresent in China, and where the shift in influence may surface during an economic or political crisis. In such a situation, social media will fuel discontent and could be the key player in challenging the CCP's rule. Perhaps out of fear, paranoia, or the combination of both, based on a public that is more engaged and hungry for information, the CCP, on the pretext of maintaining social harmony and stability, has started its drive to control online information, specifically focusing on social media such as micro-blogging sites.

The CCP has introduced policies and regulations to control social media through licensing, synchronising data from Weibo with the systems of Web police, hiring and training official online spokespersons, and recently encouraging officials and government organisations to have their own Weibo IDs. Released at the end of Oct 2011, a highest level directive from the CCP central committee vowed to intensify controls on social media and instant messaging tools, as a response to the extraordinary surge in micro-blogging in China. Although the high-level directive did not specify concrete actions, it was seen as a signal for everyone to watch their backs.

The state media's *People's Daily* newspaper and Xinhua news agency carried the contents of the directive. Among other directions, it said: "Strengthen guidance and administration of social Internet services and instant communications tools, and regulate the orderly dissemination of information." Also: "Apply the law to sternly publish the dissemination of harmful information."

A micro-blogger using the name, Luse Zhuren, wrote: "Good culture will all disappear if opinion keeps being guided." Wu Sanfan, another micro-blogger, warned: "I faintly feel that Weibo, this big tea house where ordinary people speak with freedom, will hang a wooden board saying: 'Don't talk about the country's politics'."

The growing boldness among users has led to discussion on sensitive topics, highlighting scandals and attacking official abuses, inefficiency or social decay. For example, the high-speed train crash in Wenzhou on 23 July 2011, led to an outpouring of fury on micro-blogs, about how officials handled the disaster. This later spilled over into mainstream media, despite

propaganda edicts telling them not to cover the story too frequently or discuss the causes of the crash. Five days after the crash, Premier Wen Jiabao – also known as Grandpa Wen to his admirers – visited the crash site and offered his condolences to victims and affected families, and vowed to get to the bottom of things, during a rare press conference at the crash site. The decision to hold a press conference, and Wen's strong comments on conducting a fair and thorough investigation, showed the government's concern at public reaction to the crash and its handling. The premier is seen as the softer side of the government and often visits disaster sites. Following his visit to the Wenzhou crash site, most micro-blog users posted photos of him laying flowers and praying at the crash site. They praised the premier for travelling to the crash scene and for his concerns expressed to the victims and their families.

According to the China Internet Network Information Centre, the number of registered users of domestic Internet services reached 195 million at the end of June 2011, triple the figure of six months earlier. China already has the most extensive and sophisticated Internet control system in the world. But censors have struggled to keep up with the flow of information on popular micro-blogs. Content is already blocked or deleted from services. But censors have found it hard to match the speed at which news can spread on micro-blogs, or the way users evade controls, by using techniques such as euphemisms or homophones to refer to sensitive issues.

Analysts believe that officials will not shut down social media sites because they are simply too popular, and closing them would create a backlash. Also, Chinese authorities have sought to use social media proactively, by launching their own accounts. Instead, they are likely to step up pressure on the operators, who have large in-house teams of staff, to monitor, block and remove their own sensitive content. This self-regulation will create a platform that is so boring that no user will want to use it.

A Change In The Offing?
Micro-blogs have defined many of the top news items in 2011 – from the charity scandal surrounding socialite Guo Meimei and the Red Cross Society of China, to the unyielding attention of the 23 July high-speed train collision in Wenzhou that highlighted safety, corruption, and cost issues riddling the Ministry of Railways.

At times, the influence and impact of social media in defining news in 2011 has felt unstoppable, and that has led to growing speculation that tighter controls are in the offing. Without a doubt, the last few months of 2011 have already seen tighter social media controls in place. Among some of the barely reported news in state-owned media was a mass demonstration in Dalian, which demanded the relocation of a chemical plant that had been operating close to residential homes of the coastal port city in Northeast China. The plant produces paraxylene (PX) - a benzene-based chemical widely used in plastic bottles and polyester clothing. Postings of pictures and text, about the mass demonstration, started to appear on Sina Weibo on 14 August 2011, but these were immediately erased. All related material was also scrubbed from Internet searches. However, while censorship of overt references and images of the protests themselves plainly dampened the social media impact, anger over the chemical project was still visible, with many users posting, "Get out Fujia PX!" messages using their mobile phones[5].

The largely peaceful and white-collar demonstration was estimated to number around 10,000 to 70,000 people – who assembled without a permit at People's Square[6]. The mass demonstration was sparked by news the week before that rain and high waves had damaged a protective dike around the Fujia factory, ahead of the impending approach of Typhoon Muifa. The mass demonstration was organised through micro-blogs and social networks, despite efforts by the authorities to remove postings calling for action. Several micro-bloggers related the Dalian protest to a similar case in Xiamen, a large oil spill in Dalian in 2010 and recent leaks from an oil field in Bohai Sea that went unreported for a month.

Qiao Mu, an associate professor of journalism and director of the Centre for International Communication Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University, told this researcher that social media is impacting hugely on China's online public opinion, but it is contained among netizens. "It works in some cases of social problems, but social media has not changed the political arena.

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5 Bandurski, David. (14 August 2011). Dalian Protests Erased From Social Media. China Media Project, University of Hong Kong.

6 Watts, Jonathan. (14 August 2011). Tens of Thousands Protest Against Chemical Plant in China. *The Guardian*.

The authority still controls social media through its regulation on Internet companies," Qiao said.

An average estimate puts China's Internet police at 500,000 but Qiao suspects the number could be higher – probably one million across 4,000 counties or district levels. The number is inclusive of police directly involved in Internet surveillance, secret technicians and agents, propaganda officials and cultural enforcement inspectors, he added.

On one hand, China has a complicated yet still effective central to local administrative system for controlling people and situations. On the other hand, authority figures enforce pressure on Internet companies by forcing them to monitor or censor users. To increase profits and avoid unnecessary political risks, these companies usually comply. In this regard, social media in the China context should not be highly regarded as a force for change, nor a public sphere for discussing sensitive issues. The Chinese authorities used to delete postings but recently have resorted to closing or shutting off the identities of social media users deemed to be "rebels".

Qiao's four Weibo IDs were closed by the authorities within a day, 24 hours before voting day for a district election in Beijing, where Qiao was running as an independent candidate. Aside from this, Qiao endured rumours, spying, the creation of unnecessary fear by his potential voters, and coercion to tow the line by government security personnel. Renowned artist, Ai Weiwei, is using his 16th Weibo ID. That ID is expected to be closed and he may soon have to use his 17th or 18th Weibo ID, if he wants the game to go on. Xiao Han, a law professor from China University of Political Science and Law, is using his 60th Weibo ID.

It is undeniable that social media has changed China. However the change is merely a scratch on the surface, as real change will only take place when there is real political reform.

Control 2.0
Because Western-style social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others are blocked in China, similar domestic alternatives are booming. Today, there are Renren.com, Kaixin001.com, Sina Weibo, Youku.com, and Jiepang.com, among others.

The Chinese Internet revenue structure is quite different from that of the United States and other Western countries, which are dominated by advertising. About 95 per cent of surveyed Chinese citizens believe brands that are micro-blogged are somewhat more trustworthy. Sixty-one per cent of Chinese social network users made a purchase because of a digital marketing campaign[7].

China's online gaming revenues at over US$4 billion, are larger than those of the United States (US). The boom in online gaming has created several US-listed, billion-dollar Chinese companies, notably Netease, Perfect World, Shanda Games and Giant Interactive. Tencent, China's largest Internet company, derives a large chunk of its profits from online gaming[8]. The Chinese online gaming industry used to import multi-player games when the sector was in its infancy in 1999. All that changed when the government offered a series of development programmes to help develop and nurture the domestic online gaming sector. It has proven successful as Chinese online gaming companies have been able to increase their revenues tremendously. These domestic champions are protected from competition, thanks to strict regulations. In the same vein, foreign gaming firms must partner with a local Chinese partner in order to sell their products in China. Recently, the authority has put in place incentives for Chinese online gaming firms to export their products, while reaffirming limitations on games made abroad.

Interestingly, a viable and vibrant online payment system in China has cropped up due to online gaming and online shopping – in a country that has low credit-card penetration and almost no concept of recurring subscription charges. Online gamers can use at least half a dozen payment channels, including debit cards, credit cards, top-up cards, Paypay-type online payment services such as Alibaba's Alipay and Tencent's Tenpay.

Naturally, Chinese companies have been attracted by the potentially lucrative online payments market. China Mobile, the world's largest mobile phone operator, with over 600 million subscribers as of March 2011, announced on 10 Mar 2010 that it had purchased a 20 per cent equity

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7   Social Media and Censorship in China. (January 2011). Synthesio.

8   Bishop, Bill. (21 February 2011). *China's Internet: The Invisible Birdcage*.

interest in Shanghai Pudong Development Bank. The China Mobile move is widely seen as a strategic investment to fast track its mobile payments service.

The biggest winner from the growth of online payments is Internet retailing, led by Alibaba's business-to-business services and its consumer site, Taobao.com. Taobao Mall, the online business unit of Hangzhou-based Alibaba Group Holdings Ltd, led China's online business market with 79 per cent of the value of all transactions in 2010.

China's Internet retailing market may overtake the US as the world's largest, with projected transactions valued at more than US$314 billion (2 trillion Yuan) by 2015, according to Boston Consulting Group Inc. E-commerce sales in China almost quadrupled to 476 billion Yuan in 2010, from 128 billion Yuan in 2008, as 23 per cent of its urban population shopped online last year, the Boston-based consulting firm said in a report released on 22 Nov 2011. Forty-four per cent of city dwellers in the world's most populous country will shop on the Internet in 2015, the report estimates. "Internet access has far outpaced the reach of the top physical retailers," the consulting firm said. "China's massive geography hampers the effectiveness of physical retailing." The traditional "brick and mortar" retail model faces problems of rising rents and difficulties in reaching some lower-tier cities, according to the consulting firm.

Consumers in China are shopping more as incomes rise. China's retail sales rose by 17.2 per cent in October, from a year earlier, and have climbed an average of 17.7 per cent a month in the past two years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Per-capita disposable income for households in towns and cities rose eight per cent to 19,109 Yuan last year, almost doubling from five years ago. On 19 Oct 2011, a Ministry of Commerce spokesperson said China plans to establish regulations for third-party transaction platforms, including Internet malls, to facilitate the industry's growth.

Taobao relies on advertisers for most of its income. China's online advertising market grew by nearly 60 per cent to US$5 billion (7 billion Yuan) of revenue, according to a report from Shanghai-based iResearch Consulting Group. While that is still a small fraction of the US market, where online advertising hit a record high of US$26 billion in 2010, it is a significant piece of China's advertising pie, and investors think it is only going to increase.

The success of home-grown names such as Taobao and Baidu, at the expense of global giants like Ebay and Google, is responsible for a popular misconception that foreigners are shut out of China's foreign Internet market. This may be true of wholly-owned foreign operating firms, but foreign investors have poured billions of dollars into Chinese Internet firms. China's big three – Tencent, Baidu and Alibaba – are entrepreneur-founded, foreign venture-capital-backed, overseas-listed firms. South African multimedia company, Naspers, owns approximately 35 per cent of Tencent. Google was a pre-IPO investor in Baidu before it exited with a handsome profit.

Almost all of China's major Internet firms are classified as foreign-invested entities, which in theory means they are subject to the same restrictions as Yahoo, Google or other foreign firms. Most foreign Internet companies have failed in China because they have been unable to compete effectively against very talented local competition, and not because they were shut out of the market[9].

Over the past few years, however, Beijing has decided to increase its controls over Internet content. Since then, certain sectors such as online video, are off limits to new investment by non-state-owned companies. The authorities launched a vigorous campaign to guide public opinion on this issue, online. In a white paper released in June, Beijing stated that the Internet must serve the interests of both the economy and the state.

While domestic Internet companies were not affected, the state-owned media outlets have been scrambling to increase their online influence as billions of dollars are at stake, as is the party's propaganda machine. CCTV, the state-owned television broadcaster, has launched an online TV service. *People's Daily*, the party's newspaper, has restructured its online division into a new unit that was to be listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in 2011. People's Daily Online launched a search engine – Goso.cn – but later in mid-2011 decided to rebrand it to Jike.com. A handful of other state-owned media firms are said to have gained approval to list their online divisions on the Chinese stock exchange.

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9   Bishop, Bill. (21 February 2011). *China's Internet: The Invisible Birdcage*.

Time will only tell if these state-media companies can achieve a critical mass, but China's propagandists are determined to give state-run media outlets a greater role in shaping online debate. Most often, the authority has justified its actions on censorship of foreign content, or the difficulty in obtaining foreign content, as a necessary measure to maintain stability and harmony in the country – rather than allowing such content to be easily available and risk being used as a rallying point for dissidents and separatists.

One can easily sidestep the 'great firewall' with a subscription to a Virtual Private Network (VPN), proxy servers and other free software. But most of China's 500 million Internet users continue to use filtered Chinese sites, partly due to cultural and linguistic reasons. Besides, circumventing the government's controls pose inconvenience. In addition, large Chinese Internet companies have to hire from a dozen to hundreds of employees to monitor content and remove any deemed sensitive or inappropriate, in order to meet government mandate pledges of 'self-discipline'. Failure to comply leads to warnings, fines, shutdowns or worse. The authorities provide guidance on restricted topics but have also added ambiguity into the system – a smart method that has often resulted in company self-censors overcompensating in their efforts to comply.

The increase in traffic at micro-blogging sites has meant that Chinese Internet companies have had to dramatically increase their filtering tasks. Those in the industry have complained that policing micro-blog content is a very big headache. Rebecca MacKinnon, an expert on Chinese Internet censorship, calls the government's approach to information control "networked authoritarianism". By allowing citizens enough freedom to draw attention to social problems or injustices, she argues, they become less likely to join a movement calling for radical political change[10]. In many ways, McKinnon explains, the Chinese government is using the Internet not only to extend its control, but also to enhance its legitimacy. It is also a tool for the government to supervise wayward local officials. In other words, Beijing has a political interest in keeping China's Internet commercially healthy.

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10 Ibid.

For those who are familiar with China and its history, the idea of a birdcage economy – that was first advocated by Chen Yun, a party elder whose career spanned overseeing the development of the Chinese economy – could be likened to China's social media. Chen Yun's version of the birdcage economy was that the birds (the free markets) should be allowed to fly freely around within the cage (the state economic plan).

China's approach to managing the Internet is similar to Chen Yun's birdcage economy: built by the state, the birdcage that surrounds the Internet has already proven far more robust and sophisticated than observers and critics expected.

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Issues In Social Media

by Michael Josh Villanueva

Since its boom about two years back - the word social media, albeit not the newest of concepts has quickly become a byword in the media industry. Everyone wanting in on the latest trend, is jumping on the bandwagon.

Almost every major product launched these days has a Twitter account, almost every brand a Facebook page. Almost every television channel, every program has its own social media presence. Celebrities, journalists, even reality show contestants are connected to an online social network. People use social media not just to connect with friends, but as a source for news, information and entertainment, while broadcasting outfits use social media to connect with their audience, push out content and promote their brands across this new medium.

For the most part the experience has been great. Technology and the Internet have revolutionised social networks, bridging gaps like never before. Information travels faster from one part of the globe to the next, users with similar interests are given the ability to converge online regardless of locality, and everyone who is online has access to a wealth of information.

But like anything good, social media comes with its own set of risks. Its emergence has brought along with it a whole new range of issues and challenges. Average day-to-day users fail, because they are not educated with the dangers of improper use, while many professional organisations fail because they lack a deeper understanding of social media and how to maximise its use.

PART 1: USER ISSUES
Young market, danger of the one click share
In July 2011 during the Facebook Video Chat launch, Mark Zuckerberg briefly glossed over the fact that Facebook had 750 million users. Unlike their announcement a year before, when they crossed the 500 million

user-mark, Facebook did not announce this new milestone. Zuckerberg explained that while the metric of the last five years was about user growth, that metric was less important. Instead, the exponential rate at which people are sharing "stuff" is what everyone should be keeping an eye out for. In that same keynote, Zuckerberg said users are sharing 4 billion things on Facebook everyday.

He is right. Social media is all about sharing content - stories, photos, videos, and links.

At the very core of both, the Facebook and Twitter experience is a question, a text box and an enter button. The question is where it all starts. Facebook's question is "What's on your mind?". Twitter on the other hand has gone through several revisions over the years.

When it started back in 2007 the basic question was, "What are you doing now?" but users soon outgrew it as tweets were not just about what people were doing anymore. Two years later they changed it again to a more appropriate "What's happening?". Today on Twitter the text box just says "Compose Tweet", a testament to the broad range of what is being shared.

From that basic premise stems the entire sharing revolution. From answering questions as basic as what are you doing now, to giving a social imprimatur for an idea or a link - people have embraced social networks and have defined new ways of using them beyond what they were initially designed for. In so doing we all have redefined the culture of sharing.

I see that most evident in the way we take and share photos. With the popularity of Facebook albums, TwitPics and mobile sharing apps like Instagram, many of us take photos, not just as memories or keepsakes, but for the main purpose of sharing them. Getting friends and followers to like or leave a comment, actually gives us a special feeling - it almost creates an addiction or sorts - so we keep on doing it.

But sharing is not just about users sharing their own content. A big chunk of users in fact, do not create any original content, but merely pass them along.

Social networking sites have made sharing much easier than ever before. Each social network offers a smart phone app for users on the go, and

thanks to special embed codes, users have access to familiar like or tweet buttons on most of their favourite sites also.

But the simplicity and accessibility of sharing brings with it a host of other problems. Whether it is a like button on Facebook or a re-tweet button on Twitter, sharing is now just one click away. While ease of use has driven sharing forward, the problem is that it also has made it easier to pass on incorrect information.

Having monitored activity on online social networks for the last 5 years, I have noticed - based on user behaviour - and to some extent, my own, that people do not always click on the links and read through articles before leaving a comment and/or passing it along. Sometimes if the headline alone is convincing or exciting the tendency for many of us is to click like or re-tweet and in so doing pass stories along through our own networks. Which is all good on the onset - ease of use is probably the reason why as Zuckerberg says, social media is growing at an exponential rate.

But when the information that is passed along is not true, it becomes a big problem. These developments in expediency have also made it easier for us to pass on a hoax or untruths. On top of that, many users tend to be too lazy to read, which is probably the reason why Twitter only allows tweets in 140 characters. Or sometimes the original post may be factual but is misunderstood by a user, and as a result succeeding posts are not.

In December 2010, news organisations had all tweeted about the results of a much anticipated lottery draw. After several months without a winner, finally the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) - the organisation behind the lotto draw, had confirmed that one winner had indeed won the entire P741M jackpot.

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* on its Twitter account @inquirerdotnet sent out this post: "#Lotto one winner from Luzon confirmed (Miko Morelos)". As per the Inquirer's standard syntax the name in the parenthesis always refers to the reporter who was the source of the news report tweeted.

Shortly after *Inquirer*'s tweet was posted, however, a local celebrity had rephrased the tweet and passed the information along. His tweet went out

to over a hundred thousand followers and their networks, "Eto na (here it is), PCSO confirms one winner -- his name is Miko Morelos. He gets to take home the P741.2M peso Grand Lotto 6/55 Jackpot! #magtagokana (#betterhide)."

Alerted by peers and followers alike, the celeb immediately corrected the tweet, but the damage had been done. In an article published in the *Philippine Daily* Inquirer a day after the incident, Morelos wrote, "With the desperate times as indicated by the surge in petty crimes in the streets, I feared for our safety." With folks still assuming he was the lotto winner, Morelos became paranoid, insecure and uneasy. Despite additional posts from the celeb clearing up the confusion, articles on the web, and even stories on TV, some people had already believed the misinformation. A Facebook page was even set up, asking people how Morelos should spend his money. Another page was created accosting Morelos for claiming he was the lotto winner. It had blown out of control.

Sometimes users are also quick to jump on hoaxes. Recently after the 2011 Miss Universe pageant where Miss Philippines finished 3rd runner up, people had been passing along rumours that queen of talk Oprah Winfrey was interviewed on TV not only praising Miss Philippines, but saying that she deserved to win the title. The alleged quote spread like wildfire, almost everyone seemed to be posting it on their Facebook walls that day. Having worked for a major news organisation at that time, my first impulse was to verify the news so that we could do a story on it, but no matter how much research we conducted, we could not get any corroborating evidence. A few days later, Oprah's camp released a statement denying that she had said anything to that effect.

It was striking that no one had bothered to verify whether the information was indeed true before spreading the news. People were passing on unverified information, oblivious of the source, and without any fear about repercussions.

Thinking along those lines, one of my social media producers at GMA Network Lian Buan wrote a piece for our "Think Before You Click Campaign". One of Lian's frustrations at that time was responding to comments people had about stories from our *GMA News* Online that were being pushed out on our Twitter account. "Sometimes users react based on what is written in a headline, but the answer is in the story itself, if they would only read

it", she said. Soon after, she wrote the piece "Read More: Why you should really click this link" - talking about the difference it would make if we all read an article in full before replying or even worse passing it around.

To a certain extent many of us are probably guilty of passing on a link, because we think the title is interesting even if we had not clicked through and read the story yet. Many of us are quick to re-tweet extract of news, because it is exciting, or controversial. Many of us have probably shared a photo without having verified the source or its credibility.

All this could be attributed to the fact that the social media audience is very young. Not necessarily in terms of age, but in terms of using these tools. Hopefully with education from lessons learned, we as consumers will become wise and use social media more responsibly.

Who to trust
The beauty of the Internet is that it gives everyone the power to publish their own stories. This has brought the rise to bloggers who tread very closely down journalist lines if not crossing them entirely.

Plenty of times the crowd has out-scooped major news organisations. One example of this is the Iran Election earlier in 2012. While most major news organisations, including CNN, were unable to cover the historic event, Twitter was abuzz with updates from Twitter users in Tehran.

When US forces attacked Saddam Hussein or when Whitney Houston was found dead in a Hollywood hotel bathroom, the news broke on Twitter. During the Japan Earthquake of 2011, journalists and people with family in affected areas used social media to get updates on casualties, damage, and relief coordination.

But with all this information floating around, the biggest problem is who to trust and how to filter content. In the age of social media, the most powerful entities are not big brands with millions of followers. The most powerful entities in social media are the individuals that influence others.

We all have people that influence our lives, whether celebrities, personalities, family or friends. These "influencers" are people we idolise or people whose opinions matter to us. When stories are shared via social media, it is the content shared by those who influence us that can be the most

powerful. We are more likely to press on a link that was shared by one of our "influencers", than on a link posted by a brand or news organisation.

Speaking of news organisations, while many people say social media will never completely replace broadcast and print, now, more than ever is the time, when people need someone to trust in this new space. When it comes to evaluating news stories that have been spread on social networks, I first check out my trusted news sites to see if anything has been written about it before I jump to conclusions. Users will come to us, read our papers, visit our websites or watch our newscasts, because they need us to make sense what is true and what is not. Mainstream news organisations, if they play their cards right will not lose their purpose, but instead serve as a reliable organisation that cannot only report, but provide context and perspective to stories.

When in doubt, users most likely, will be smart enough to know when to approach people they trust for assistance and clarification. This could pose as a major advantage for news organisations in the future.

PART 2: MEDIA ISSUES
Dealing with mistakes
Twitter is fast. So fast that in September 2011 after an earthquake hit Virginia, some users of the social network in New York had read about it first on Twitter - seconds before they felt the quake itself.

During Whitney Houston's death in 2012 the first tweet about the incident was posted a full hour before the first media agency took notice.

Because of its speedy nature at which posts are made on the Internet, at one point or another, mistakes are inevitable. The general rule most social media teams should follow is to quickly admit and correct the mistake. There is no use in covering up the mistake or just deleting it and pretending it did not happen. This is even more important as it applies to journalists, who are supposed to follow a code of ethics requiring journalists to be transparent.

> The *Denver Post* in its Social Media Guidelines states: "If you do publish something on a social media service that is incorrect, and realize it instantly, delete the tweet or Facebook post. Issue a correction tweet or Facebook post thereafter. Do not repeat the error."

"If you realize it much later, also issue a correction. Don't try to hide the error by deleting the original message and then re-issuing the news. Many Twitter clients, for example, download tweets and store them on users' computers or hand-held devices, so they won't be deleted from someone's stream even if you delete the tweet. The same applies for Facebook."

The *Denver Post*'s Social Media Guidelines raise a good point. Even if you hide the error and remain silent about it, it is very likely the tweet will live on online. Some Twitter clients do not immediately remove tweets that have been deleted. The culture of taking screen shots is also very much prevalent online. If screen shots of inaccurate tweets fall into the wrong hands, it could lead to a public relations disaster.

One of the most famous mistakes in social media history is that of a Red Cross employee in February 2011. The tweet read: "Ryan found two more 4 bottle packs of Dogfish Head's Midas Touch beer...when we drink we do it right #gettngslizzered". The employee, Gloria Huang, had intended for it to be tweeted from her personal account @riaglo, but because she was logged in to the @RedCross account, her tweet had gone out to the Red Cross' 270,000 followers. But the company was quick to admit the mistake and turn it into a good PR win. One way to address problems likes these is to use humour to correct the mistakes. Playing the humour card, the Red Cross responded with "We've deleted the rogue tweet but rest assured the Red Cross is sober and we've confiscated the keys." Huang was allowed to keep her job.

Humour worked. The fans of the beer brand Dogfish Head were impressed by how the Red Cross dealt with their mistake and launched a blood donation and fundraising drive using the hash tag #gettingslizzered. Soon thereafter, Dog Fish Head via its Twitter account @dogfishbeer launched beer-for-blood campaigns raising money for the Red Cross.

Later on in the Red Cross Blog they wrote: "While we're a 130-year-old humanitarian organization, we're also made of up human beings. Thanks for not only getting that but for turning our faux pas into something good."

In June of 2011, the Philippine news organisation ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) tweeted: "suddenly craving for a choco chip muffin. yung taas lang kakainin ko (i'm just going to eat the top part). Shortly after it admitted the mistake saying, "sorry folks for the obvious mistweet."

Personally, I have made similar mistakes while managing the @gmanews account, the official Twitter account of GMA News in the Philippines. In our early days, I once tweeted about coming home from a long day at work, and having much more work to do at home, on our official account. It was an easy mistake to make, because I had both the @gmanews account & my personal account @michaeljosh, both signed into my Twitter desktop client TweetDeck. While it may seem a best practice to use one account at a time, I resisted the urge, because the amount of people I follow from my personal account allows me to have a better grasp of what is happening in the Twitter world. GMA News only follows its reporters on Twitter - our way of verifying if a reporter's account was official or not. I immediately caught the mistake and deleted it, but people had already started re-tweeting it and/or making comments about it. I had to address each of these followers personally to admit my error.

At the end of the day, followers are smart enough to know that there are human beings managing corporate Twitter accounts, while some will be quick to attack (there are bullies online), most will be forgiving if you step forward to admit your mistakes.

If you are managing a social media team, the following precautionary protocols are advised.

1. Do not use the same Twitter suite for work and personal accounts.

2. Read your tweets over at least 3 times before you send them out.

3. Get someone else to check and read over your tweets (either an editor, or a colleague).

Gaining Company Support
To be on the cutting edge of innovation, requires that companies embrace it, fund it and support it.

This kind of support, however, is a luxury in an industry where formulas have been tested by time. Television companies for example wield such power and are able to draw in ratings and ad revenue despite any clear social media strategy or social media integration in their products. This self-sufficiency weakens the case for investing in manpower and logistics to set up teams to develop and execute in-house social media strategies.

On top of that, there are no tried and tested business models for social media. Because social media is seen mostly as a cost centre and does not bring in any revenue for the company, it has taken a back seat in terms of funding.

As a social media manager under GMA Network, one of the biggest and most time-consuming challenges I face is trying to convince management to do certain things. So much of my time went to metrics, proposals and meetings to get top management to sign off on hiring decisions, unconventional activities, strategic plans and more funding for equipment and personnel.

On top of that, we had to convince upper management to allow us enough elbow room to pursue matters that did not immediately translate into results. Management wanted us to focus on driving ratings and hits back to our website, but I wanted to focus on growing scale and relationships first. The latter being an initial investment in order to deliver the former. Eventually after 6 months, results started coming in and from that we were able to make a case for what we needed to do.

But while I was restricted in terms of personnel and equipment and push hard to try out unconventional methods and/or to make difficult decisions, thankfully I had enough leg room to be able to push for certain innovations inside the newsroom.

Scenarios, however, may change from company to company, but it is essential to understand a company's organisational structure in order to come up with the results you desire. Organisations will need what I call a "lobbyist" to push difficult ideas like this forward - someone who believes in innovation, and is willing to swim against the current if necessary. This person must also be willing to do the reform work inside the organisation. Pushing ideas around and getting people to try out new technology and experiment.

Most important though are metrics. You need to measure everything and document everything. Measure new follower counts, un-follows, new likes, active users, number of comments, number of re-tweets. This data is meaningful and with that data you will be able to plead your case for more funds.

Journalists who tweet

I recently finished teaching a class at the Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University. My students were all journalists from Asia, some of them old timers in the social media space, some trying it out for the first time. One of the issues in social media that my students wanted to discuss were issues related to journalists who tweet. One of two questions they asked was that if a journalist re-tweets a story does it mean that he or she is endorsing the story or at the very least agrees with its contents.

Our discussion spurred from the *Associated Press*' revised social media guidelines. Updated in November 2011, the new guidelines read:

> "Re-tweets, like tweets, should not be written in a way that looks like you're expressing a personal opinion on the issues of the day. A re-tweet with no comment of your own can easily be seen as a sign of approval of what you're relaying."

The reaction to this updated policy was not too optimistic. David Carr of the *New York Times* tweeted: "AP to staff: Don't re-tweet anything with an opinion. Good luck with that." Although *AP* spokesman Paul Colford was quick to respond saying. "Not true. New RT guideline gives ways to do just that."

But the question remains, when you re-tweet something, when you pass it along in the intent that others read it, are you saying that you agree with that thought or even worse do others think that you are agreeing with the source? The question becomes more important given the fact that journalists need to be careful about a perception of bias or slanting towards a certain topic.

My personal opinion on the matter is that journalists can never really fully separate themselves from a story. And to be completely objective is a tall order. I try my best to remain balanced in the type of stories that I re-tweet, but if I feel strongly about an issue I would not hesitate to leave a comment along with a link to an article. My recommendation for journalists is to add a comment when they re-tweet an article - not just clicking the re-tweet button. That way they can be assured that they are not taken out of context. Journalists however still need to be very cautious about what they post on social media.

CNN for instance once fired a reporter/editor over a controversial tweet. In July of 2010, CNN in Atlanta fired journalist Octavia Nasr over a controversial tweet on the death of Hezbollah leader Mohammad Hussein Fadallah. Nasr tweeted: Sad to hear of the passing of Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah...One of Hezbollah's giants I respected a lot." Nasr's tweet made the rounds of the social media space with pro-Israel groups criticising her for being a Hezbollah supporter.

Even tweets sent out from a personal account are not spared. In February 2012, CNN Contributor Roland Martin was suspended after posting a supposed homophobic tweet during the Super Bowl. Martin tweeted: "If a dude at your Super Bowl party is hyped about David Beckham's H&M underwear ad, smack the shit out of him! #superbowl"

CNN responded saying: "Roland Martin's tweets are regrettable and offensive. Language that demeans is inconsistent with the values and culture of our organization, and is not tolerated. We have been giving careful consideration to this matter, and Roland will not be appearing on our air for the time being."

In this age of social media faux pas, news organisations need to put together social media guidelines for their staff to follow. I advise against putting too many restrictions on what your staff can follow, otherwise its goes up against what social media is all about. Basic guidelines however should be put in place to protect both the journalist and the organisation.

Turned off?

You do not have to be. In the context of both users and news organisations there are more social media issues that this article leaves out, for users there are issues of privacy and cyber bullying that one needs to learn how to deal with. For organisations there is also the issue of changing workflows, completely different ways of measuring success, a whole new style of writing for social media that needs to be learned, the issue of getting technophobes on board and probably more importantly the search for a business model. But taking these drawbacks into account, none of these issues should stop you or your organisation from taking on social media and making it work for you.

After all, the benefits far outweigh the issues and it looks like social media is future-proof. One day, if that time has not come already, you will not be able to leave home without it.

Social Media in TV News: The Philippine Landscape

by Michael Josh Villanueva

I signed up for Twitter in January 2007. Back then, the social network was largely unknown. Most of the people I followed were tech experts based in the United States - podcasters, technology bloggers and a handful of industry mavens. There were only a handful of Filipinos, so few that we all knew each other.

Twitter was growing, but without a business model and the occasional fail whale, I was not sure if the startup would survive in the foreseeable future.

It was not until two years later, when US-actor Ashton Kutcher challenged CNN to a Twitter race, I started believing Twitter could become something mainstream. Kutcher, one of, if not the first high-profile Hollywood celebrity to join Twitter, challenged the news network to race towards one million followers.

Kutcher had joined Twitter just four months prior, but was already just 50,000 followers behind CNN, when he posted his challenge on the video sharing site YouTube on April 14, 2009. Three days later on April 17 at 2:13am (US Eastern Time), Kutcher crossed the one million follower mark, a full 29 minutes ahead of CNN - making him the first person with over a million followers on Twitter.

This milestone in Twitter history was perhaps the tipping point, when Twitter made the transition from geek tool to mainstream addiction.

The tipping point, however, for Filipinos did not happen until November 2009, when telecommunications company Globe Telecom started offering unlimited Facebook and Twitter prepaid services to users. Previously, users had to pay staggering data fees to get online on their mobile devices. But this new plan now allowed people to subscribe to a one day "Facebook & Twitter all you want" data plan for only P20/day ($0.50 US). This prepaid data offering was the bridge that brought the millions of mobile phone-owning Filipinos, online.

By 2010, with plenty of high profile US celebrities including Oprah Winfrey and Ellen de Generes joining Twitter, many local celebrities had followed suite slowly, bringing in their mass fan base. Twitter offered a wonderful proposition, even for a tech-savvy person like me, getting personal updates straight from people that I admire. The closest thing fans could get to a service like this would be those text services where you could signup and get the occasional celebrity update delivered to your mobile phone via SMS. The company that I worked for had a subsidiary called GMA New Media that was responsible for a service called FANATXT. With FANATXT, fans could pay to get personal updates from the celebrities they were interested in. This soon lost its appeal with celebrities posting all sorts of personal details on Twitter, and even replying to some fans' messages from time to time.

While Twitter by no means represents the social media landscape, I remain fascinated with how the masses have joined the network as they did with Facebook, and before that Friendster. Twitter from its early beginnings was really a tool for the tech elite - it could be characterised as a specialised service. Nonetheless, since Filipinos have embraced it, dominated it and worked it into the fibre of their culture, it is worth taking a look at how the media has shaped "Pinoys" into the social media consumers that they currently are. Today's Philippine social media landscape looks like this.

Facebook: As of April 2012 there are 838 million users on Facebook. 27 million are from the Philippines making it the 8th largest Facebook nation in the world. A 2011 ComScore report says that the Philippines is the top Facebook Market in the world. The Philippine Facebook page with the highest number of likes belongs to the ABS-CBN noontime television show Showtime with 2.5M likes. The celebrity fan page with the most likes belongs to Showtime's host Vice Ganda, who currently has over 3.8M likes.

Twitter: While Twitter has remained silent in terms of revealing how many people are registered for the micro blogging service, in March 2012 they disclosed the information that the site has 140 million active users. ComScore data from 2011 reveals that the Philippines is also 8th in the world in terms of Twitter reach vis-a-vis the online population. Anne Curtis is the most followed Philippine celebrity with over 2.6M followers - she is ranked 190th in the world. In terms of media, GMA News leads with 721K followers.

The GMA story

In 2009, I was a Manager at GMA News working primarily in Digital News Gathering operations. We did not have a social media team back then or anything to that effect, but it was very clear to me, early on, that we needed to establish a social media presence. I took the initiative to secure corresponding usernames for our brand, registering about 10 in total, knowing that we would one day need them. A few months later, I got the permission to begin populating one of those accounts as our official news account (now @gmanews) - it became my pet project.

Our rival network, ABS-CBN, had already begun posting on Twitter and Facebook as early as October 2008. Incidentally, similar to what I had done for GMA, the ABS-CBN Twitter account (@abscbnnews) was registered by one of their website's writers/producers KD Suarez, a month prior, as a personal initiative in case the account would be needed.

GMA was a bit late to the game admittedly, and while the market was not quite ready for social media yet, it was to our disadvantage to not have started as early as they did.

In social media, however, more important than being first, is knowing how to use it. At that time, lots of organisations were jumping on the social media bandwagon, creating accounts for the sake of having them, but not necessarily with a goal in mind and/or strategies on how to utilise this new media. You have an account? Great, what next?

As a long time Twitter and Facebook user, I think I placed an extra burden on myself to provide answers to those questions as I campaigned internally within the organisation to give social media a chance. My vision for social media was to go beyond the logical first step to use it as a publishing platform, and instead use it as a platform to interface with our TV audience in ways we never did before. In this sense, social media served as a channel for two-way communication, as it was not only aimed to receive feedback but also to speak back to the users, responding to their queries, engaging them in discussions and using them to crowd source content for use on our news programmes.

Doing all of this required a team and resources. However, to get these, I first had to prove that social media could benefit TV news.

Our first test case came in our third month, on August 1, 2009, when former President Corazon Aquino lost her fight to cancer. In the month leading up to her death, journalists were on the edge of their seats, everyone was on standby and I remember several false alarms, where we would get called to the office. As insensitive as it may sound, big news events like this always guarantee a draw, and I knew it would be a great opportunity to come out strong in terms of social media coverage. I had hoped to break the news on Twitter and had pre-written tweets ready to go out as soon as we confirmed the news of her death. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to do so upon request of the Aquino family. Twitter was relatively fast, however, with people talking about Mrs. Aquino's death hours before an official announcement was made on TV. As soon as that announcement was made, we began live tweeting developments - possibly the first by any news organisation in the country. We then took reactions from the Twitter community and had our anchors read the tweets on air as content fillers during our special coverage in the early hours of the morning of August 1st.

The TV exposure gave us a great boost. I recall seeing our Twitter followers grow by as much as 1000 followers an hour - and it appeared that some users were creating accounts just so that they could participate in the discussion. We continued covering the events surrounding Mrs. Aquino's death on Twitter, matching television coverage as much as possible. During Mrs. Aquino's funeral procession for example, we live tweeted with pics and video, the entire 8-hour trip from the Manila Cathedral to the Manila North Cemetery from inside the Aquino family van.

The 2010 elections
The next major event were the 2010 Presidential Elections, one of the biggest milestones in terms of social media and Philippine TV news.

In the year leading up to the election, ABS-CBN.com staff met and decided to populate their social media accounts. Suarez says he was assigned to handle both Twitter and Facebook accounts - which he maintained alone until the creation of a social media desk for the May 2010 elections. Also a year before the elections, the ABS-CBN News Channel, as a separate and independent effort started their own social media presence on Twitter and Facebook, calling it ANC Alerts (@ancalerts). ANC was probably the first news organisation to set up a social media team of its kind around June 2009. ANC Head, Glenda Gloria, assigned social media functions to existing

writers/producers, each of them responsible for populating the account and coming up with social media strategies. ABS-CBN had a third account, for their citizen journalism initiative Boto Mo iPatrol Mo (now @bayanmo).

Back at GMA, I finally was able to convince management to allow me to set up my own social media team that would not only handle the social media and citizen journalism requirements of our election coverage, but also have some influence in the News and Public Affairs Department. I started off with a team of 6 interns a week before the election.

In terms of TV execution, the 2010 Elections were all about the use of technology in presenting the news. Both GMA and ABS-CBN had purchased high tech graphics systems, had touch screens in various sizes, and were battling it out in terms of holograms and other forms of augmented reality. GMA also started using iPads to present social media comments on air with anchors using them to swipe through tweets as they read them. Meanwhile on ABS-CBN, anchor TJ Manotoc would read tweets of a 103-inch multi-touch display. Both networks aggressively pushed for users to send their comments via social media and were both finding ways of using them on air. Social media was changing the face of TV news, giving consumers a more interactive feel.

Maria Ressa, then SVP of ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs, was a strong proponent for Citizen Journalism and Social Media within her organisation. In a 2008 speech at the Asian Media Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Ressa described this evolution as merging traditional media with the participatory nature of new media. "Rather than saying media producers and consumers occupy separate roles, we are starting to see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules we are all just defining."

Both networks also used social media to crowdsource content. ABS-CBN was an early player in the citizen journalism space starting with a segment called Citizen Patrol in 2004 and then, eventually, their in-house citizen journalism programme Bayan Mo Patrol Mo (or its election variant Boto Mo Patrol) in 2007. GMA 7's Citizen Journalism Program YouScoop meanwhile re-launched in time for the elections in 2010. Social media played a big part in citizen journalism efforts in 2010, given both TV network's audience on Facebook and Twitter. Regular call outs were made for tips, photos and videos, and submitted content was presented on special segments during the 48-hour long news coverage.

The first major TV network "hashtag war" also happened during the 2010 elections with ABS-CBN's hashtag #halalan2010 going head-to-head against #eleksyon2010 of GMA 7. ABS-CBN won this war, attributable to the size of their Twitter community, a stronger base on "influencers" and/ or on-cam talents with a large Twitter following, and what insiders tell me was a secret Twitter Army working behind the scenes.

Post election boom
Everything grew faster after the 2010 elections. Packaged reports that were aired, would often include tweets from personalities in lieu of sound bites, and occasionally posts by personalities on social media, or trending topics would become stories on their own.

I tried hard to push for social media segments on GMA 7, especially on our flagship newscast 24 Oras, but could not get any commitments for regular use. I am told ABS-CBN's flagship newscast TV Patrol had similar issues, particularly the lack of airtime for a separate segment.

I was however able to get commitments from newscasts on our second station QTV-11. My social media team's first client was the evening news News On Q, and soon thereafter the noontime newscast Balitanghali. For both newscasts we would post daily questions on social media, harvest the best ones and have them read by our anchors on air with a call out to join our growing online community.

For its part, ANC, the ABS-CBN Cable News Channel, began live tweeting all their news programmes. Being a 24/7 news channel, they would often have guests over and post sound bites from important personalities on Twitter. Similar to what we were doing on QTV-11, they launched the hashtag #ANCAsks and would post daily questions to be read on their afternoon newscast "On The Scene". Requests to join their online community would be done at the end of each newscast and bulletin.

In November of 2010, the ABS-CBN late evening newscast Bandila relaunched with a new format. The anchors of the show sat around an anchors desk with different gadgets. Anchor Karen Davila had an iPad, Julius Babao had a MacBook Pro, and Ces Drilon was using a Windows laptop (although she upgraded to a MacBook Pro soon after). At the end of each story, anchors would read tweets from viewers who were watching the newscast live and sending in comments via the show's social

media channels or via the anchor's own twitter accounts. It was the first newscast, aired on one of the top two local television networks that offered a truly social experience. Bandila still airs, with much success, using the same format.

The race to the top
With both networks, social media operations in full swing, the next apparent challenge among rival TV stations would be the race to the top or better put, complete social media dominance.

Both networks were doing their best to use social media creatively in terms of both online execution and by integrating it into their programmes. We both had different strategies, however.

By October 2010, @ancalerts was the dominant news organisation on Twitter with about 90,000 followers. A distant second was @abscbnnews at 79,000 and @gmanews third at 78,000. From 2009-2010, everyone's goal was to build user base. If this came close to a real war, then whoever had the largest army would win.

The appeal of larger numbers, bragging rights aside, is the exponential power of social media. More followers on Twitter, for example, meant a higher exponential probability that stories would be re-tweeted or - if on Facebook - shared. More eyes on your stories could also translate into higher referrals to each organisation's respective website. A thriving community also meant a loyal band of viewers to participate in discussions, sending in contributions and aiding in marketing efforts. This does not even cover contributions to public perception and value to stockholders.

Overcoming the 12,000 follower margin of ANC was one of the first major challenges of my social media team. At that time, 12,000 was a substantial amount - it represented 15% of our total follower count. To do the impossible would require hours of meticulous planning, a well thought out strategy, and attention to metrics.

There is so much more to metrics than just a follower count. If analysed the right way, one can better understand user behaviour and can also identify triggers that would affect the goals you set out to achieve. After several months of studying our metrics, my team was able to identify key areas on which we needed to focus on, and we moved closer to our targets.

In late December 2010, we set off on an ambitious 45 day "overtake ANC plan". Ten days later, our strategy took effect, and by day 22, we had overtaken ANC in terms of Twitter followers.

The formula continued to work, and GMA was growing at an exponential rate. A year later in October 2011, @gmanews had grown to 471,000 followers and was ahead of @ancalerts by 154,000 and @abscbn by 192,000. At the time of writing, @gmanews is closing in on a million followers.

Strategies
While many factors contributed to @gmanews' sudden growth, 2 key points stand out - personality and execution.

Personality
I found it interesting that the New York Times decided to wait until 2011 to abandon its automated tweets model and began experimenting with human posted tweets, when Twitter accounts in the Philippines were already doing this as early as 2009.

Human posting is the way to go when managing a social media account, whether for a news organisation or a company. While to a certain extent there will always be some automation involved, manual tweeting is necessary if one is to give personality to a Twitter or Facebook account.

This reinforces an earlier point about creating an account on social media just for the sake of having one, instead of knowing from the onset what to do with it to achieve one's goals. While automation is the easiest, most cost effective way of managing a Twitter account, it is frowned upon by social media strategists. Twitter, by its very nature, is primarily a tool to grow a social network or community whether you are an individual or an organisation. Taking this into consideration, a good Twitter account needs to not only push out content, but also engage.

An Internet debate inside GMA whether or not to automate tweets was one of the first battles I had to fight. My goal was to give our account a personality and make it as "real" as possible. We tried to reply to every comment, question or criticism, and we posted tweets in real time. Doing so was labour-intensive, required additional manpower, but it was one of the secrets to our success.

We would answer inquires from students asking questions related to their school homework, do Christmas countdowns, greet followers on holidays and weekends, post daily questions related to the news of the day and mobilise users to send in news tips and multimedia content as often as possible.

Over time, as relationships with our audience became stronger, we could count on our followers for a lot of things. They would re-tweet our stories more often, click on our links, participate in discussions, send us photos and videos, and more importantly pull in the power of their own networks.

Execution
Television has a unique power to push out a message to a mass audience. Therefore, the key to our execution was to utilise the power of the television network we were a part of. Integrating social media into our news programmes in creative ways was always a challenge. Each newscast wanted to do things differently, so my team had to come up with different executions for the various newscasts.

Two newscasts, News on Q and Balitanghali, had adapted our iPad segment where anchors would read through the best answers culled by the social media team earlier in the day. But it was executions on our highest rating primetime newscast 24 Oras that would deliver the attention we needed. Of note was our #Top10sa2010 segment that aired on 24 Oras in the last 10 days of 2010. #Top10sa2010, translated as Top 10 of 2010, was a daily poll on Facebook and Twitter about the top trends of the year 2010. We would poll users throughout the day on topics such as top local vacation destination, favourite band, and Filipino who made the country proud. The results would be read on air during 24 Oras with instructions on how they could participate the following day. Despite it being a holiday where web traffic is usually down, this campaign represented a major push in terms of follower count. This campaign was a contributing factor to @gmanews overtaking @ancalerts less than a month later.

The future
2011 brought with it new players in the TV and/or online news space: TV 5's Interaksyon backed by businessman Manuel V. Pangilinan and social news network Rappler founded by veteran journalist Maria Ressa.

While Interaksyon has yet to make an impact in the social media sphere in terms of delivering the news and crowd sourcing & engagement, TV 5's Facebook page is the largest among TV networks in the Philippines with over 1.2 million followers.

Rappler on the other hand, in a field of its own as a social media news organisation, forms the core of its business. I joined the organisation in December 2011 and have signed up for the challenge of redefining the way a news organisation uses social media. Unlike mainstream television networks, Rappler does not have the backing of an established brand and user base and will have to rely exclusively on social media to create brand awareness.

But the bigger challenge for Rappler is to live up to the term of a social news network to fully embrace the potential of social media. What would that entail? Rappler's main thrusts are to promote smart conversations and a thirst for change - by engaging users in discussions online, and using social interaction to crowdsource, what it calls, digitally fuelled action. With conversations going on all across the social media sphere, Rappler will need to consolidate these conversations in one way and provide a platform for users to come up with next action steps towards a cause or advocacy.

Embracing social media is not only a challenge for Rappler, but for the entire industry. While the Philippines is ahead of many of its Asian neighbours in terms of using social media in news, for it to stay ahead, it will need to figure out the next steps.

In the social media space there are plenty of avenues for growth. Several news organisations have already ventured out into other social networks including Tumblr, Google+ and Instagram. TV 5 and Rappler have also begun experimenting with up and comer Pinterest, a pinboard-style social photo sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, hobbies and more.

As GMA 7 and ABS-CBN amass Twitter followers and Facebook fans into the millions, their challenge now will be how to manage their communities and

fully harness the power of their social media "armies". In the future, will they be able to work together on investigative pieces; will they be able to produce their own stories? Can they be assigned tasks and be used in data mapping projects to map floods or incidents of crime?

In many ways, social media has already begun to shape the face of news and I can only expect that it will play a bigger part in news in the years to come.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

by Michael Josh Villanueva

Introduction

In November of 2011, I found myself at an important crossroad in my life. I was in the mood for a new challenge and had decided to leave an eleven year career at one of the leading television networks in the Philippines. I had not quite made up my mind about what to do next, but I was certain that the time had come to look out for opportunities that would allow me to push boundaries, something that was difficult to do within the constraints of a traditional news organisation.

Those moments of uncertainty, however, were perhaps also some of the most liberating for me. Freedom from responsibility gave me the unique ability to step out of my skin so to speak, and then look inward. These reflective moments are the kind that made you think about your life, past, present and future. What you have done, what you are proud of, what you can do, what you want to do, what you are here to do.

Reflective moments are a luxury in a career that never allows you the time to pause. So finally, being able to look back at a decade-long career, I realised that the most fulfilling parts came not from the awards or historic coverage assignments. What was most fulfilling was being able to work with people, making a difference in their lives, and somehow pushing the world forward through it.

In a piece that I had written to announce my departure from GMA Network, I ended with the words, "I dream of changing the world". Today, I take another path, but that dream remains alive. Wanting to change the world, although very idealistic, was my answer to the "what comes next?" question. Seeing how fast a decade could pass by, I knew that whatever it was that I was going to pursue next, it should not be in vain - that even in the practice of my profession I was contributing more towards a greater good.

Many see the notion of changing the world as a grand motherhood statement, some even, frown upon the thought. After all, how can one really change the world and solve all of its problems, when things seem to get worse and worse with each passing day.

As a journalist, wanting to change the world, also meant thinking about changing careers. As journalists, we are taught that there are lines we cannot cross, that we can make a difference in the world by telling stories. But we are reminded to remain objective, not to take stands, and not to get involved beyond storytelling.

But if events of the last few years are of any indication, technology is changing mindsets and social media is redefining the realm of what is possible.

Rappler

In December of 2010, Maria Ressa also decided to leave a five year career as Senior Vice President for News and Current Affairs at ABS-CBN. Prior to that Ressa had worked for twenty years with CNN, heading its bureau in Manila and Jakarta. Ressa's departure from ABS-CBN came at a time, when there were plenty of changes happening in the media landscape. As Ressa would say, "the ground is shifting beneath our feet."

It was Ressa's belief that technology was changing consumer habits. TV viewers were shifting to the Internet to get their news, and social networks were playing a big part in how the news was being disseminated.

During her time off, Ressa and a group of friends met to discuss the future of journalism. They thought about how they could change it to make it more relevant and how they could use technology - the Internet and social media - to make that difference.

In a recent interview on a podcast, Ressa looked back at her process then. "I think I wanna do something more. There is something I am not doing. What should I be doing? I couldn't do what I wanted to do within the constraints of a traditional media organisation. What can we do with media? What is its purpose? How can we affect society, deal with bigger issues? How can you converge the different types of media to help make society better?"

A year later, she launched the social news network Rappler. Rappler is the culmination of these talks and embodies the following formula:

Professional journalism + wisdom of the crowds + technology = change.

Ressa believes that shifting tides fuelled by technology has made it possible to harness social media and use it for nation building. In her words: "Now we can do more we can actually help move up the value chain and give direction to people who want to do something about it. It became tactical and implementable."

On the surface, Rappler looks like a news website, but it is intrinsically different also.

1. **Writing Style**: Rappler's writing style tends to be more personal. The organisation believes that the age of authority is dead, while the age of authenticity is in. Journalists no longer need to hide behind a voice of authority and, instead, can when the need, be a bit more vulnerable. The mandate for everyone who writes for Rappler is to be as real as possible, accepting that everyone comes with different experiences and should write with their own voices.

2. **Mood Meter**: One of the innovations Rappler introduced when they launched in December 2011, was what they call a "mood meter". Each article on Rappler.com has its own mood meter where users answer the question, "how does this story make you feel?". Users select from one of 8 emotions - angry, sad, annoyed, afraid, happy, inspired, amused and don't care. The rationale behind the mood meter, is the finding that eighty per cent of all decisions we make are based on our emotions. Studies show that the simple act of labelling your emotions makes people more rational. By voting on the mood meter, one has already taken that first step towards awareness - a much needed factor towards pushing for change. Votes on each article's mood meter are aggregated into the Mood Navigator, which is a daily snapshot of the stories that affect Filipinos each day.

3. **Move.PH**: Rappler is not just a website. In fact an important part of the work that they do, has to do with on the ground efforts. Move. PH is Rappler's citizen journalism arm. But it is more than that, it is a movement towards a better Philippines. The team behind Move.PH set up regular meet-ups, workshops and other conferences that mirrors what Rappler does online, provide context on issues and training, so that individuals are better equipped to tell stories. Apart from that, it also

provides an online platform for users to converge and discuss solutions to pressing problems affecting them. Rappler works with several NGOs to do the work that it cannot carry out as a media organisation.

4. **Social**: At the very heart of Rappler is the social aspect. It is after all, according to its motto, "a social news network where stories inspire smart conversations and digitally fuelled action for social change". Rappler has a strong presence across major social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram and Foursquare - ensuring that the Rappler experience is the same regardless of which platform you are on. Each of these accounts are utilised to not only push out stories, but to generate them. Daily conversations with reporters and/or thought leaders are held on social media. Taking off from stories published during the day, these conversations are then synthesized and developed further into one or two stories that provide users with more insight.

I joined Rappler a month after leaving GMA and was tasked to handle various special projects for the organisation. One of the initial challenges that fell on my lap was how to bring "social" to a new level, and how to get it to translate toward social change.

My idealism suffered a bit, when the gravity of the task at hand dawned upon me. How does one use social media as a tool to create change? What did digitally fuelled action really mean? And how does one go from stories to action?

Case studies

Social media, if harnessed properly, can help shape democracy. It has been done before. For several years now it has served as a tool to organise protests and revolutions. Many have hailed its ability to get people to come together, to speak their mind amidst authoritarian governments - something that would be more difficult to do in countries where there is no freedom of assembly.

Moldova

In 2009, more than ten thousand protesters took to the streets in the former soviet Republic of Moldova to rally against the communist leadership. Two youth activist groups HydePark and ThinkMoldova

were planning a rally called, "I am not a communist." Revolutionary leader Natalia Morar of ThinkMoldova says it took 6 people, ten minutes to brainstorm and several hours to disseminate the news on Facebook and Twitter, as well as on text and blogs. She was surprised at how many people turned up. A hashtag #pman was also created for users to track posts about the demonstration. This hashtag trended on Twitter bringing the protests in this small nation to global attention. The protests were not successful, but they were probably one of the first examples of social media being used in political activism.

Tunisia

In December 2010, images of a man who set himself on fire to protest against the Tunisian government spread like wildfire across the Internet, generating interest and sparking repressed anger against the country's authoritarian regime. Political rest ensued and protesters used online videos and Twitter to spread images of police brutality. A Twitter hashtag was also created, making it easier to track the discussions. There were only about 500 active Twitter users, but because of the influence of these users, the online protests moved to Facebook which was a more mainstream tool among Tunisian's online population. Social media was also used to counter government propaganda. For example, minutes after President Ben Ali denied the use of violence on TV, protesters were able to post videos of recent violence including the shooting of a girl in the head. Twenty-eight days after, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and announced his resignation as President.

Social media was also vital in similar revolutions that toppled leaders in nearby Egypt, Libya, Yemen; civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria and demonstrations in several other Arab countries - collectively known as Arab Spring.

Change.Org

Change.org is a website that aims to provide a platform for users to start campaigns about issues they care about, gather signatures for petitions and coordinate action. Users have gone on change.org to start petitions on issues such as curb side recycling programmes, wrongful deportation, and anti-gay bullying. In March 8, 2012, a

petition called, "Prosecute the killer of our son, seventeen year old Trayvon Martin", was posted on change.org. Signatures for this petition quickly grew, amounting to over two million - the largest in the site's history. The petition brought the issue to national attention and, eventually, led to charges against neighbourhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman. Change.org founder Ben Rattray has also been named one of Time's 100 Most Influential People in the world for 2012.

Avaaz
Avaaz.org, from the Persian word for voice, is a civic organisation that also promotes activism. It runs throughout the United States and has members in about 193 countries throughout the globe. Similar to change.org, members create and sign petitions on their website with much success. In 2009, an online petition to fight Uganda's anti-gay bill was filed on the site. Over 1.6 million signatures were received and tens of thousands had called on to the heads of state. The issue was covered by international news media, and by May 2011, the bill was shelved altogether with the parliament blocking a vote.

Apps for social change
In 2011, an initiative called AppBridge, was formed out of the World Economic Forum Young Global Leaders programme. The goal of AppBridge is to use technology to change every day lives - creating and developing apps that can be used to facilitate education, employment and economic activity for people in disadvantaged communities.

In May 2012, AppBridge launched a competition in the Philippines, called the Ideas and Apps Challenge. The challenge aims to crowdsource solutions from communities based on local challenges that can be addressed through mobile technology, and then tap a global community of app developers to build mobile solutions to these problems.

Its founder, Margo Drakos, says the idea for the competition was inspired by the realisation that a lot of times, technology-driven tools enable only those who already have access to the technology.

As he puts it, "globally speaking, there are 4 billion people who have access to mobile phones. We wanted to create a system for helping people see a need, opportunity or challenge and then have a global community of developers build mobile solutions."

AppBridge is an example of how technology can be used to spark change by working through the needs of smaller communities and pushing for change bottom up.

Criticism

Malcolm Gladwell, author of the book "The Tipping Point", has been a staunch critic of social activism. Not convinced about its role in the Moldova uprising or about how crucial a part it played in Tunisian and Egypt, Gladwell blames the hype on what he calls an "outsized enthusiasm for social media."

In an article for *The New Yorker Magazine*, Gladwell cites the civil rights war in the southern United States during the 1960s, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990 as examples of organised demonstrations, that happened before the era of social media had ushered in. His thesis statement is that while social media has been used as a tool to mobilise it, protests would have occurred nonetheless.

One of Gladwell's main points is that civil activism is based on strong ties, whereas social media is built on weak ties. The weak ties principle was introduced by Mark Granovetter in his popular 1983 sociology paper. "Weak ties" are links that are weaker than those you have with family, your best friends or people who you share the same passions with. Weak ties can be links to friends of friends, former school mates, people you know through others.

Gladwell says that while "weak ties" serve its purpose, real activism requires strong ties.

Gladwell, quoting historian Robert Darnton, hinted that social media was an innovation that was in an off itself. Darnton wrote, "The marvels of communication technology in the present have produced false consciousness about the past - even a sense that communication has

no history, or had nothing of importance to consider before the days of television and the Internet."

But the way I see it, heralding social media as a tool for social change is not disrespectful of a past that has seen passionate people come together to support a cause. But neither do I think it is right to dismiss the power of social media as an agent for social change.

Making it happen
Critics notwithstanding, the real world case studies that I had mentioned above are proof that social change is possible through social media.

Over the last few months, the enormity of the task at hand has been quelled by the realisation that change happens through small steps. The AppBridge bottom up model is perhaps the best way to push for social change by starting with smaller communities. As cliché as it sounds, change starts with the self, and whether ideas of change spread through weak ties vs. strong ones - they are spread nonetheless.

The more I am embedded in the company, more and more does the Rappler model makes sense to me. Knowledge is power, and power comes from awareness.

About the Authors

Anisha Bhaduri

Anisha Bhaduri is *The Statesman*'s deputy news editor, and edits its op-ed page and writes editorials. In January 2010, she helped launch the paper's live digital edition and holds simultaneous charge of this edition. She is the first Indian woman to become a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Fellow, and is an alumna of Banaras Hindu University, Indian Institute of Mass Communication and Konrad Adenauer Asian Center of Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines. As *The Statesman*'s coordinator for Asia News Network (ANN), Anisha has spent more than a decade in journalism and is a visiting faculty member to the Statesman Print Journalism School. In 2009, she won the first prize in a national literary contest organised by the British Council in India.

Bruce Avasadanond

Bruce Avasadanond is a radio journalist and programme host at Radio Thailand's English Language Service and an English instructor at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok. He has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish and a Master of Education in Adult Learning and Global Change, both from the University of British Columbia, Canada. He also holds two additional graduate degrees: a Master of Management from Mahidol University, Thailand and a Master of Journalism from Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines and an Advanced Graduate Diploma in Distance Education from Athabasca University, Canada. He is currently a Ph.D candidate at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in Thailand.

Edi Utama

Edi Utama started his career in journalism in 1987 with *Prioritas Daily*, Indonesia's first full-color daily newspaper styled after *The USA Today* until its unexpected ending, when the Suharto regime closed it for untimely embarking on press freedom in 1988. He joined Antara News Agency in 1989, in a career span that has given him a rich experience as correspondent in places such as Tokyo and Beijing.

Engelbert Apostol

Engelbert "Bert" Apostol produces TV Patrol Weekend and serves as senior producer of TV Patrol in the Philippines. He has spent 15 years in the broadcasting industry as a writer, story editor and producer of award-winning TV news magazines and newscasts, following a two-year stint as correspondent and beat reporter of a broadsheet. He served as jury in the 2012 New York Festivals International Television

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He took his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the East-Caloocan, Philippines, where he served as the first College of Arts and Science Student Council president and first communication arts student to grab a seat at the Central Student Council. His student organisation, UE Ecological Society, was voted as Outstanding Student Organisation during his term as president.

Karen Yap

Karen Yap is a senior consultant with a dual role in public relations and investor relations for Financial PR, a Singapore-based investor relations agency. She represents clients who are publicly listed corporations in Singapore, mainland China and Hong Kong. Prior to this, she was a business journalist and editor for 11 years for news organisations in Thailand, India, mainland China, Hong Kong and Malaysia. Aside from producing news, her experience in journalism included changing newsroom culture, transitioning newsroom to new media and launching new publications. She was a winner of the Australian Press-SEAMEO Award in 2007 for her article on the plight and flight of Burmese refugees in Thailand. In 2009, she was awarded a fellowship by Temasek Foundation to pursue a 3-month media project at Nanyang Technological University. Her chosen project was on the trafficking of human organs. She was a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung scholar from 2003 to 2005, where she was awarded a media fellowship to complete a Master of Arts in Journalism at Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. Her thesis was on illegal logging in Southeast Asia. For her degree, she studied International Business in the United States.

KY Pung

KY Pung is the writer-publisher of *where2*, a bimonthly travel and lifestyle magazine and the media representative of *The Wall Street Journal Asia* in Malaysia. He was the Regional Associate Editor of *The Star*, the largest English newspaper, in Malaysia before starting out on his own.

Michael Josh Villanueva

Michael Josh Villanueva is a thirty-something idealist of Filipino-Malaysian heritage, American-Chinese upbringing and alien-comic book hero origin.

He claims technology is fuel to his superhero DNA, began developing websites in 1998, blogging in 2000 and podcasting in 2004. In 2005, he produced the iTunes featured video podcast Hit, one of the first of its kind in the world.

Previous missions took him to broadcast network GMA7, where he spearheaded the company's social media arm. He jumpstarted its citizen journalism programme, YouScoop, and revolutionised transmission and live reporting through digital newsgathering initiatives. He was also an on air talent, covering sports events and producing his own tech segment.

He joined the newly founded social news network Rappler in the beginning of 2012.

Ratana Som

Som completed his Master of Laws in Public Administration from the Royal University of Law and Economics in Cambodia in 2007. A year before that, he was awarded a Master of Arts in Journalism from the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. In 2002, Som attained a Bachelor of Education in English (TEFL) from the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, where he was also awarded a Bachelor of Science in Biology in 2001.

Since 2002, Som has been working as a lecturer of the Department of Media and Communication and of the Department of English of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. He was also a visiting lecturer of the Royal School of Administration in 2002.

Besides teaching, Som has worked as an administrator for almost four years for a joint project between the Department of Media and Communication and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. In 2008, he joined the European Union Election Observation Mission in Cambodia, where he worked as a Press Assistant and Interpreter.

Currently, Som is working as a greffier for the Office of Co-Investigating Judges of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

Sherrie Ann Torres

Sherrie Ann Torres is a senior correspondent of GMA-7, a leading television network in the Philippines. She specialises in Politics and special reports. She started as a radio reporter before moving to the print medium, and later to television. The author is a graduate of AB Mass Communication at the Far Eastern University (FEU), Philippines. She finished her MA in Journalism in 2009 at the Ateneo de Manila University, under a scholarship programme of the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ). Currently, she is a part-time professor at FEU and the Philippine country representative of the newly-formed Society of Asian Journalists (SAJ).

Simon Winkelmann

Simon Winkelmann is currently working as a Research Associate for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Singapore. He has been working for the United Nations, European Parliament and the German Mission to the European Union. After studying in the Netherlands and Mexico, he graduated with a Master's Degree from the University of Edinburgh. He joined the KAS Media Programme Asia in April 2011. He is the editor of this publication.

Susan Tam

Susan Tam is a freelance journalist and writer based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with a passion for community service. She began her career at *The Star*, Malaysia's leading English daily and has since worked with regional and international media organisations. Her last assignment was as a producer with *Al Jazeera* English TV, covering political and social economic issues. This scholar from the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) at Ateneo de Manila University, currently writes news, travel and lifestyle articles for online websites and is a contributor to the *Yahoo!* Malaysia site. Susan also manages Hati.org.my, a non-profit charity portal that acts as an information directory of underprivileged communities for those interested in volunteerism and philanthropy.

Syed Nazakat

Syed Nazakat is a Delhi based journalist. He works as a Principal Correspondent for *The Week*, India's leading news magazine. As a broadcast, print and online journalist, Nazakat has reported from 17 countries. He covered the war in Afghanistan, political unrest in Nepal, developmental issues in Laos and Cambodia, Al-Qaeda rehabilitation camp in Saudi Arabia and India-Pakistan boarder relations. Over the past decade, Nazakat has produced stories that revealed India's secret torture chambers, the country's rendition programme in Nepal and arms trafficking in Bangladesh. He has received numerous awards for his work, which include the prestigious Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award, the Karmaveer Puraskaar national award (India) and a nomination for the Daniel Pearl Award for Investigative Journalism in Geneva in April 2010. He is a fellow at the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) at Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines and a member of the Washington based International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

The Social Media (R)evolution? Asian Perspectives On New Media is a compilation of 13 articles that discuss social media developments and trends in Asia. For this publication we invited eleven alumni from the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ) at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines to share their views on social media issues based on their inside knowledge and hands-on experience.

The authors from six different countries provide insight into various new media trends and present diversified approaches, ranging from Cambodia, with comparably low Internet penetration, to Indonesia, which is considered the second biggest Facebook "nation" in the world.

Contributions by:
Ratana Som, Edi Utama, Anisha Bhaduri, Sherrie Ann Torres, Engelbert Apostol, Bruce Avasadanond, KY Pung, Susan Tam, Syed Nazakat, Karen Yap, Michael Josh Villanueva

Topics include:
- Integration of social media in traditional newsrooms
- Issues and challenges of social media
- Social media and newsprint advertising
- Social media and television networks
- Ways to maximise and monetise social media
- Investigative journalism and social media
- Censorship and social media