The Use of Online Social Media Platforms by Tanzania Journalists to Produce and Disseminate Development News

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ABSTRACT

Advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are revolutionizing Development Journalism (DJ) into an effective strategy for building competitive economies globally. However, many countries in Africa including Tanzania are slow in tapping potentials of ICT for development journalism. Digital penetration in the form of the Internet and social media are changing the way in which journalists are mobilizing and engaging communities in journalism practises, a key strategy for a competitive digitalised economy. This paper was guided by Development Communication Theory and Diffusion of Innovation Theory to explore the use of online social media by journalists in Tanzania to practice development journalism. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper analyses risks and benefits of online social media platforms in contributing to national development goals. A total of 15 social media journalists and managers from Mwananchi Digital, Ayo TV and Azam TV gave their insights in this paper. Use of online social media platforms for development news is still in its infancy stage, key findings show that out of 270 (100%) studied news items, only 66 (24%) manifested development news practice. Non-development news accounted for 204 (76%) of news items analysed. There were only four (4) (27%) journalists who use social media as a source of information, and platform for disseminating development news in Ayo TV compared to 3 (20%) in Mwananchi Digital and 5 (33%) in Azam TV. Results call upon some intensive national efforts to empower journalists in the use of ICT and mobilize audience in the changing communication patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Social media hosting development journalism

The penetration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) mushrooms social media (SM) platforms and services in Tanzania at an unprecedented pace and hugely influence the practice of Development Journalism (Masele & Magova, 2017). Online SM journalists are emerging and revolutionizing the way journalism content is prepared, produced and disseminated. The internet is changing the style, speed, type and processes of sharing content. The mushrooming growth of social media (SM) platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and many others are expanding the scope of content generation so that journalism audiences can at the same time be journalism content generators and the content can be shared by unprecedented large number of people at all corners of the world at so short a time (Kuyucu, 2020). Social media platforms have not only emerged as important news platforms for the public, but also as useful tools for journalists to develop news leads, capture current trending events and share professional data and information with news sources, actors and audiences. The SM platforms support the use of various news orientation and presentation styles be them in audio, video, or text formats. Journalists can use social media for entertainment or to drive interests and establish links, making the platforms the most useful tools among journalists in Tanzania and many other countries in the 'developing world' (Pradhan & Kumari, 2018). This paper recommends that economic, technology and policy actions must complement DJ efforts including training to enhance learning and e-skills to be imparted to journalists and their audience in the changing communication patterns.

Advantage of social media in development journalism

Social media have become essential part of people's daily life and many formal and informal institutions increasingly use social media platforms to provide better service and assistance. Teachers, students, patients, farmers, livestock keepers, organization members, tourists, and general commercial products consumers all use SM platforms that suit their interests and meet business requirements promptly (Mfaume, 2019). Most common, if not all social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram are not only easy to use and easy to access but most certainly, almost anyone can join. Social media platforms provide appropriate means for journalist and media house to practice development journalism (Thomas, 2013). Development journalism is about involving communities in synthesizing their real situations and finding solutions to their immediate socio-economic insecurities in production, distribution and consumption processes (Banda, 2007). Development journalism addresses issues as wide as education, agriculture, health, environment and rural development all of which can be promoted through social media platforms (Xu, 2009). The rapid growth of social media, mainly due to technological factors such as increased broadband availability, the improvement of software tools, and the development of more powerful computers and mobile devices, has been phenomenal globally and in Tanzania (Mfaume, 2019). Social media has actually become omnipresent and part and parcel of the daily lives of millions of people around the globe and has a tremendous impact upon utilizing digital potentials for competitive economy in many countries (Pradhan & Kumari, 2018). This paper argues that the media industry has acquired great tools for changing the way information is communicated in the development processes.

Global trend of social media

The global and local growth of social media over the years has seen an increasing milestone in the way news including development news is reported and digested by journalists and media industry in general.

Both online and traditional journalists use social media to deliver and to promote their work (Thomas, 2013). This study is focussed to online social media resources and the way journalists use them to prepare, produce and disseminate development news. It is about social media and development journalism because currently, more than 50% of the world's population is online, approximately one million people go online each day, and two-thirds of the global population own a mobile device according to World Economic Forums (WEF) Global Risk Report (2020). According to Digital (2021) report 4.2 billion people (53.6%) of the world population are active social media users. Social media usage has grown alongside the increasing number of individuals utilizing smartphones. The report showed that the demand for mobile-friendly content across social media is rapidly increasing; approximately 91 percent of all social media users access social channels via mobile devices. Likewise, almost 80% of the total time spent on social media platforms occurs on smartphones. Depending on how the social media platforms are used, they have globally proved excellent platforms for promotion of social services such as healthcare, water supply and education. Besides their capacity to promote agriculture, blue economy, democracy and advocacy for human rights, they are effective in advertisement of products and services.

Tanzania trend of social media

Academicians and researchers in Tanzania agree that practicing development journalism through social media has a great potential to empower ordinary citizens in decision making on matters relating to their lives (Mfaume, 2019). Current statistics show that 28 million people (49% of total population) in Tanzania access internet (TCRA, 2021). Some estimated 8 million people (31%) of internet users in the country are social media users (Digital, 2021). Out of all social media platforms, Facebook accounted for 30.08%, Pinterest 21.82%, Instagram 21.29%, Twitter 19.78%, YouTube count for 6.59% and

Reddit 0.15% (Staticounter, 2021) and the numbers are on the increase. Other local popular social media platforms in Tanzania include *Jamii Forums*, *Milard Ayo* blog, and other sites with added social media features include newspaper sites such as *The Citizen*, *Mwananchi, Azam* and *Global Publishers* (Masele & Magova, 2017). TCRA (2021) report revealed that the internet and SM platforms in the country are used for various purposes including chatting, data search, events locating, information exchanging, skills development and entertainment through photographs, audio, video, texts and other formats. The most used social media platforms for chatting in Tanzania include *WhatsApp*, *Facebook Messenger*, *Skype*, *Snap Chat*, *We Chat*, *Telegram*, and *Viber* (Staticounter, 2021).

Conceptually, the Development Journalism (DJ) encompasses the idea of "Citizen Journalism" and citizen journalism is complex to define since it varies so widely depending on its purpose and formulation. At its core however, citizen journalism uses or employs the internet attendant social media platforms to allow citizens to communicate with and among each other. This paper acknowledges the participatory nature of citizen journalism, and draws on the articulation of Rosen (2008): ''When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools, they have in their possession the tools to inform one another, that's citizen journalism.'' Problems for journalists using social media platforms to produce and disseminate development news are the same problems associated with citizen journalism and include mainly fake news which misinformation and disinformation to both users and journalists. The spread of misinformation and disinformation can be accidental when people share stories from satirical websites and SM platforms while assuming that the stories are true. However, sharing miss and dis-information is not always an accident when it is driven by financial, as well as ideological motives. In this case online communication increasingly pose serious news verification

problems. Social media platforms are not safe from onlookers, and actions taken in these spaces are not without consequence.

Therefore, the aim of the paper is to fill an apparent gap on social media-based DJ practice in Tanzania, the study specifically assessed how Tanzania online journalists use social media platforms to produce and disseminate development news. To achieve this specific objective, the study generated data using the following research question: how do Tanzania online journalists use social media platforms to produce and disseminate development new?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This paper applied a mixed method approach: a combination of at least one qualitative and one quantitative component in a single research design, aimed to include the benefits of each method by combining them (Bban, 2008). This approach helped to gain a more complete picture than applying a standalone quantitative or qualitative study because it integrates benefits of both methods. Moreover, this paper applied concurrent triangulation design, a plan which qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently (simultaneously) in one session Creswell (2003). The priority of data was equal, and data collected using interviews and questionnaires was then analysed separately, then results were compared or combined together. The concurrent triangulation design was used because it provided an opportunity to examine all aspects of the problem being studied according to Bban (2008) and Creswell (2003). The conceptual framework that guides the methodology theory is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Decision choices for determining a mixed methods strategy of inquiry

Implementation	Priority	Integration	Theoretical Perspective
Concurrent Triangulation design	Equal	At data collection and data interpretation	Implicit

Source: Adopted from Creswell et al. (2003).

A stratified population of 45 online journalists was selected by virtue of their key positions in the target media and a sample size was drawn from a 30% calculation on the number of populations of each of the three online TV platforms selected for the study as shown in Table 2. Creswell, (2009) suggests that the sample should not be less than 10%. A disproportional random sampling procedure was applied whereby sub-group sample sizes are not equal to the number of stratified populations.

Table 2: Study population and sample size of respondents

Online TV	Study Population (Journalists)	Formula	Sample size
Ayo TV	19	30% × study population= sample size	6
Mwananchi Digital	15	30% × study population= sample size	5
Azam online TV	11	30% × study population= sample size	4
Total	**45**		**15**

Source: Field Data (2021)

Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires from 15 journalists and qualitative data from interviews with the same journalists and program editors at the same session and compared the results. The qualitative component included interviews examining how journalists utilise YouTube online TV platforms and tools to practice development journalism. quantitative data was obtained by examining the number of journalists who use social media as sources of news as well as the number of journalists who verify information and or data acquired from social media platforms from three *YouTube* online TV results of the interview were used to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate qualitative findings obtained from a structured questionnaire subjected to the same respondents of the qualitative component. The three YouTube online TV selected for the study included; Mwananchi Digital, Azam TV and Ayo TV. The online

TV chosen for study were selected because they hold the lion's share in the Tanzania media industry, in terms of big number of subscribers, investment and mainly local content according to MOM (2022).

Thematic Analysis was applied to analyse qualitative data with the researcher coding results that identify key words, concepts, and reflections. The paper closely examined data from the interview to identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly from the respondent's then themes were named and write results.

Descriptive Statistics, which is a numerical summary that describes quantitative data according to Bban (2008), was applied to analyse quantitative data. It was applied to provide basic information and highlighting potential relationship between variables in dataset whereby frequency percentage as measures of descriptions were applied to give results.

FINDINGS

The objective of this paper was to examine how online journalists in Tanzania use social media platforms and tools to produce and disseminate development news as a way of practicing development journalism which might be a road map to utilisation of digital potentials for competitive economy in Tanzania.

Demographics and socio-economic characteristics of journalists

The demographic factors that were considered during data collection included age and sex of respondent journalists while socio-economic factors included job position and working experience of the respondent journalists. Table 3 presents the results subsequently discussed in the following sections.

Table 3: Distribution of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Ayo TV	Mwananchi Digital	Azam TV
1	**Age in years**				
	18-25	4	2	1	1
	26-35	7	3	2	2
	36-45	3	1	1	0
	46 and above	1	0	1	1
	Total	**15**	**6**	**5**	**4**
2	**Sex of respondents**				
	Male	10	4	3	3
	Female	5	2	2	1
	Total	**15**	**6**	**5**	**4**
3	**Job position**				
	Online TV director	1	1	0	0
	Head of online	3	1	1	1
	Visual editor	3	1	1	1
	Online news reporter	8	3	3	2
	Total	**15**	**6**	**5**	**4**
4	**Online Experience**				
	0-2 years	5	2	2	1
	3-5 years	4	2	1	1
	6-10 years	3	1	1	1
	Over 10 years	3	1	1	1
	Total	**15**	**6**	**5**	**4**
5	**Education level**				
	Certificate in Journalism	2	2	0	0
	Diploma in Journalism	3	1	1	1
	Bachelor	7	2	2	3
	Masters	1	0	1	0
	Other studies	2	1	1	0
	Total	**15**	**6**	**5**	**4**

Source: Field Data (2021)

Age group of respondents

The age factor results show that seven (7) or majority of journalist respondents working on online TV stations were aged between 26-35 years compared to four (4) respondents aged between 18-25 years while 3 respondents were aged between 36-45 years and only 1 respondent fell in the category of 46 years and above. The results suggest that younger people are engaged in online work

than other age groups of interest to the study. The explanation for this trend provided by interviewed journalists prove that younger people are more technology savvy, having been exposed to the ICTs or social media platforms by way of training in colleges, exposure by frequent usage and peer influence. The younger age has an advantage over technology advances and opportunities that are mushrooming during their era.

Gender of respondents

Results presented in table 8 shows that the males dominate in online social media platforms in Tanzania as shown in this study 10 respondents who participated in this study are male and only 5 are female. The study findings further revealed on the average there are 2 females employed in each of the three selected social media platforms s as follows; Ayo TV (2), Mwananchi Digital (2) and Azam TV (1). According to the findings, heads of all three online social media platforms are also male. Solomon (2014), has observed similar underrepresentation of women in news media in Africa namely Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC (15%), Malawi (27%) and Zimbabwe (27%). Many scholars agree that continuous marginalization of women's voices in the media is attributed to: (1) A culture of silence (women belong to the private realm). (2) Low education and (3) Low media literacy levels (Geertsema, 2010; Solomon, 2006). Globally, this marginalisation is claimed to be a result of the absence of women highly educated media professionals and specifically due to the small percentage of women in senior editorial positions.

Job position

Demographic and socio-economic survey results shown in Table 3 above shows that the few numbers of journalists in decision making positions affects Development Journalism practice in social media platforms in Tanzania. The results show that only four (4) out of 15 online journalist respondents were part of the editorial decision-making staff in the selected social media platforms.

According to the results, eight (8) of the online journalists interviewed are simple news reporters and 3 are visual editors, all without power to make decisions. The question is whether the numbers and job position held influence favourable decisions for Development Journalism.

Online working experience

Like job position, work experience has no direct influence on Development Journalism unless involved parties are knowledgeable of DJ and the decision-making process is participatory. However, the low performance of DJ in social media platforms in Tanzania and many African countries can be attributed to lack of experience as a result of poor DJ performance. Results for the work experience category shows that nine (9) or majority of the online journalists involved in this research had work experience of between 0-5 years. Six (6) journalists had work experience of between 6 and above 10 years working in online journalism media. More results from the interviews with heads of online units noted that journalists with longer work experience are capable of understanding and adhering to at least some principles of Development Journalism.

Education level of respondents

Results show that majority of respondents (7) had acquired a Bachelor's degree in journalism and mass communication, while three (3) respondents had a diploma, two (2) had a certificate and only one (1) had a Master's degree. Two (2) respondents had no education in journalism at all. Results show half of the journalists had college level education which is considered an advantage to improving professional performance - news gathering, news writing, news editing, news publishing and building confidence.

Proportionality: Development news Vs Non-development news

Findings from the major study revealed that out of 270 selected news items only 66 (24%) news items were development news with 204

(76%) being articles presenting non-development news as shown in Figure 1. The distribution of development news coverage by selected social media platforms puts Mwananchi Digital in the lead with a total of 29 news items equivalent to (32%), followed by Azam TV 20 articles (22%) and Ayo 17 articles (19%). In this case *Mwananchi Digital* published 10% more development news than *Azam TV* and 13% than *Ayo TV*. This difference is explained by ownership structure and editorial policy of Mwananchi Communication Limited (MCL) which owns and runs *Mwananchi Digital.*
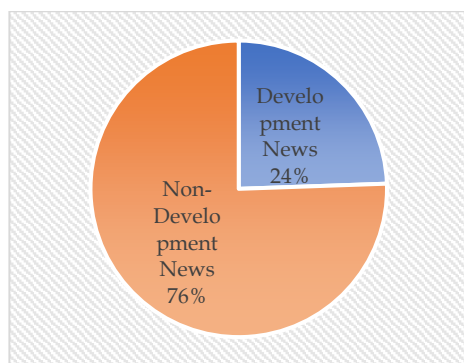
Figure 1: Proportional between development Vs non-development news.

Source: Field Data (2021)

Social media as a source of news for online journalists

There were four (4) journalists (27%) who use social media (SM) as a source of information and a platform of dissemination in Ayo TV compared to 3 (20%) in Mwananchi Digital and 5 (33%) in Azam TV. Ayo TV had 4 (27%) journalists who do not use social media as a source of information. The same number for Azam was 3 (20%) and 6 (40%) for Mwananchi Digital. The reason given for higher rate of non-usage by Mwananchi Digital journalists is that social media users' responses cannot be a trusted source. Ayo TV had 2 (13%) journalist who said they verify the credibility of SM sources of information compared to 5 (33%) who do not. The same numbers for Mwananchi Digital are 3 (20%) who verify and 3 (20%) who do not and for Azam TV is 4 (27%) who verify and 3 (20%) who do not. The use of social media platform as a source of news for online journalists in Tanzania was marginal as proved by Mwananchi Digital where only 3 (20%) journalists responded on the positive. The positive response by 5 (33%) journalists in Azam TV is not so high either compared to 6 (40%) journalists in Mwananchi who said they do not use social media as a source of information. Since sources of news have to be credible for online journalists to use them, verifying sources for authenticity is necessary to avoid challenges related to misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. The use of social media as a source of news for online journalists is marginal, so is the verification of such news as proved by Ayo TV where only 2 (13%) journalists said they verify the sources as compared to 5 (33%) who said they do not verify their SM sources. Azam TV leads the list of online journalists who verify online news sources by 4 (27%) journalists.

Table 4: Distribution of social media as a source of development news

Variables	Ayo TV		Mwananchi Digital		Azam TV	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Use social media as source of news	4	27	3	20	5	33
Do not use social media as source of news	4	27	6	40	3	20
Verify news source	2	13	3	20	4	27

Do not verify news source	5	33	3	20	3	20
Total	**15**	**100**	**15**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Source: Field Data (*2021*)

Verifying social media information sources

The question of information credibility does not meet well with self-generated information. Observation of the links between the three studied YouTube TVs and their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages was carried out to monitor the extent of dissemination of and feedback on development news or information. The journalists 'use of social media to generate and distribute development news or information is examined at pre-production, production and post-production phases and findings for each of the three studied online TV stations are discussed.

Azam TV

The use of social media by journalists in Tanzania to generate and distribute news is as old as the coming of the social media platform themselves. The seven (7) journalists in the online department of Azam online TV disclosed that they started to use the platforms in 2012 when the department was started but their use specifically for development news has come more recently in 2017 as development journalism begun to capture the potentials of the platforms. According to the journalists, none of them used the platforms to develop news ideas, quite contrary to the common practice by old, well established media institutions in the developed world. This marked contrast between Azam online TV and other media was simply a result of short experience and differences in mode of operation otherwise the use of social media platform for development of news ideas was a practice of every serious journalist. In the case of Azam online TV, development of news ideas was not done by the journalists in the online department but rather by other journalists in the wider Azam media house who feed other mainstream outlets including UFM Radio

and seven (7) other TV channels. In this Azam media set up, the journalists in the online department remained to perform the donkey job of turning news or information from mainstream media into formats suitable for Azam online TV and links to its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

In the Azam online TV mode of operation, the chances that journalists would use social media platform to generate development news ideas were very limited because the content of their materials was pre-determined by first-hand generators who may not have interest in development journalism. This was more so because the journalists in the mainstream media were pre-occupied by sports and entertainment news, the focus of the wider Azam media house right from its inception. With its few inexperienced staff, the online department was also pre-occupied with the Azam Max application which decodes all information programs by mainstream media into a pay TV system delivered through Azam decoder. It was the responsibility of the Azam online department to manage, market and sell the decoder. Their presentation also allows journalists to find experts, pick on eyewitnesses and ordinary people with personal experience on issues that matter, an opportunity favourable to development journalism. However, these golden opportunities for DJ were missed in Azam online TV because of its mode of operation.

In the absence of a clear policy to guide the operations of the Azam online TV, the production of social media content remained disorganized with the decision on what information should be posted left on preference of the journalist on duty. This happened because the Azam online department did not produce its own contents. The department had no criteria, guideline, or indicators to select publication material from the mainstream media except journalists'

instinct on what would be interesting to the viewers.

The treatment of news stories was similarly disorganized with the journalists picking on lead stories that attract viewers attention irrespective of whether the news was developmental or no. The headlines for picked news stories were posted to the social media with a link to its origin in the mainstream media. The Azam online department did not carry out monitoring and evaluation of audience reaction to the posted news and information materials.

Ayo TV

The Ayo TV did not have a clear, written, and consistent policy on development journalism and development news did not always dominate its social media pages but the way Ayo TV journalists collected, prepared, and disseminated information and news was typical DJ practice. The production and distribution processes of the online TV, were well organized making it the best online social media in the country.

All the 6 Ayo TV respondents said they got their news and information tip offs from both traditional and social media platforms which they had to explore before they embarked on production of their online materials. Development of news ideas was not based on a single traditional or social media platform but rather from a review or survey of a wide range of national and regional media outlets. The media outlets served two purposes; providing background information upon which further investigation was made and identifying trends and issues of interest that took place in different parts of the country. According to the Ayo online journalists, they picked on background news or information that dominated or appeared in many social media platforms and traditional media. They argued that background information must be current, of human interest and current in order to qualify as a news idea.

The production of Ayo online TV news and information was preceded by a rigorous review and study of news and information dominating headlines in traditional media and appearing more frequently on other social media platforms. New angles for the stories or information were developed based on general audience mapping principle of public interest news. A reserve of sources, the online journalists engaged resource persons, experts and professionals to analyse and cross check facts on the new angles. This verification procedure gave credibility, trust and a wide following of Ayo online TV and its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. The journalists revealed that the verification procedure was not one way, it involved verification of materials posted to the online social media platforms by the audience as a measure against slender, disinformation and amplification.

Amplification of stories on celebrities and politicians is common on social media platforms and Ayo online TV particularly guarded against this malpractice that impacts negatively on the image of a practicing social media. According to the interviewed journalists, amplification was common in many social media platforms because the platforms favour sensationalistic news, promoting it and labelling it with high importance.

In verification of stories, the journalists considered, among other things, the origin of the story. Here they have to find out where the article or piece of content originated from and whether it was original. The journalists said it was necessary to verify the source to find out who wrote or created the original content. They also verified the date to establish when the content was written or created and the location in order to determine what website or account the content was originally published on. It was also important to verify the motive for publication. Verification methods used included conventional and online verification tools. After verification and before dissemination through Ayo online TV and its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, the new gathered news or information was edited and written with a click-bait headline. Click-bait is a sensationalized headline that encourages a reader to click a link to an article, image, or

video. Instead of presenting objective facts, click-bait headlines often appeal to your emotions and curiosity.

Mwananchi digital

Mwananchi Digital as an online TV was established in 2012 following developments in ICTs and trends towards more media convergence that increased audience access to online news. With 15 online reporters based in Dar es Salaam headquarter, Mwananchi Digital has varieties of content including sports, entertainments, hard news and documentaries broadcasted in Swahili and English language.

The verification of social media content and sources are increasingly critical to journalists and news organisations. At Mwananchi Digital, all 4 out of five journalists do not use online verification tools to verify their news sources instead they use phone calls to interviews sources for fact checking. Only one reporter applies online news verification tools.

The argument by many journalists is that Citizen Journalism has brought a lot of fake news mainly through social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) that allow for the creation and exchange of user generated content. Verification has become essential especially for researching topics, curating information and analysing stories before production and dissemination of news content. Being good at verification is mostly about repetition, persistence and using digital investigative tools with a little creativity.

Moreover, incorrect and false information will remain present on the internet, even when Facebook and Google attempt to counter-attack the publication and dissemination of fake news on their platforms. This means that journalists and citizens need to remain critical about online information in general. Particularly, young journalists who grew up as digital natives in the internet age will continue to use the internet as an unquestionable and integral part of their daily activities in their professional and personal lives.

The setup of Mwananchi Digital studio is well equipped with modern tool of production including spacious rooms, adequate software and hardware necessary for editing, sound recording, storage facilities and a host of ICT technicians. Mwananchi Digital applies *mojo* approach in production and dissemination of news. *Mojo* refers to 'Mobile Journalism', it is a specific type of journalistic production where news in various forms (text, audio-visual recording and the like) are produced and disseminated through the internet and displayed on screens of portable devices mostly mobile phones and tablets.

"…This has been and is a magic charm of Mwananchi Digital to facilitate online journalism and development journalism practice at large … it has brought also a new type of journalist. We have mobile journalists equipped with notepads, cameras, recorders, cell phones, mobile video editing software, and laptop computers so they can file community news stories for the online TV at a moment's notice. They don't go to a newsroom. Their deadlines are whenever they get their information" …. (Mwananchi Digital).

The emergence of mobile journalism is related to development and the wide public use of the mobile internet and wireless network connection, respectively. Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) believes that journalists of today should perform many different tasks and duties. They should acquire many different skills and adapt to new roles and responsibilities hence both horizontal and vertical multitasking are applied. Horizontal multitasking is ability of a journalist to produce contents to different media platforms (e.g., print journalists are writing articles for print and online, and learn to shoot short news videos for online platform). Vertical multitasking is ability of a journalist handling different phases of the production process by oneself for example, a TV news reporter shoots video footage and edits the news story him/herself, in addition to doing background research, interviewing, writing the script and recording the voiceover.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Several issues were examined in this effort including the role of Information and Communication Technologies in maximizing potentials of online social media platforms for practising development journalism. A review of the role of ICTs and issues related to credibility of online social media content are presented.

Maximizing use of social media sources

Like in the general findings of this paper, different scholars including Dipanwita (2015) and Narula (2013) argue that social media presents a valuable platform for spearheading development journalism. As Dipanwita concludes: "Communication can be effective not only when adopted to induce change in awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, but also as a tool to build trust, share knowledge and explore options enhancing the overall results and sustainability of development initiatives". Despite this positive general picture, working experiences in these social media platforms are still underdeveloped and the driving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are yet to penetrate and reach all populations for the platforms to be effective tools of development journalism which is an engine to utilize digital potentials for competitive economy. This paper has also proved that ICTs have increased the capacity of online journalists to practice development journalism. Social media platforms are one such technology that has seen increased usage as an information source (Pepitone, 2010). The use of SM as an information source and as a tool to gather information, share stories, and discuss concerns by online journalists in Tanzania was found to reflect elements of DJ practices though shrouded with inexperience.

Transition of social media stage

The paper established that online journalist in Tanzania were at the transition stage where they act as SM platform creators (producer) who develop news and post them online.

They also act as users or consumers as they receive feedback and use them as tips for developing further news. A major question surrounding the use of social media as an information source was how the online journalists could assess the credibility of source information. This question becomes especially important to answer because the online journalists play the role of both social media producers and users. Besides, they all do not have knowledge of and access to technology and online news verification tools; Tin-Eye, Osint, Boot-o-meter and Infodemic toolkits.

As a journalists' source and tool for development journalism, social media platforms have a high-stake advantage. Being one of the widest network methods of news gathering, Pradhan & Kumari (2018), describes social media as the new information source for journalists. Cheney (2013), argues that since they are user friendly, social media platforms can effectively be used by ordinary people to provide constructive criticisms to the government and in this way meet the core value aspiration of development journalism which is to bring together government and communities in implementing development programmes.

Since information credibility is among the key challenges to social media, its use as a tool for development journalism in Tanzania remains untapped because slightly more than half of online journalists do not apply information credibility verification techniques. Poor development journalism training, lack of access to verification techniques and little online working experience combine to make social media use for development journalism ineffective. Researchers Gautham, & Leisa (2007) support this contention, when they conclude that social media can only be used as an effective medium for development journalism when verification is applied for accuracy and to support journalist avoid amplifying fabricated news.

CONCLUSION

The social media (SM) platforms are increasingly becoming important sources of development news for journalists in Tanzania and so open up opportunities for journalists to practice the much-desired development journalism. The pace and scope of the social media platforms to promote development journalism is still low, requiring journalists to adapt multitask skills so they can remain in control of preparation, production and dissemination of development news in the face of invasive citizen journalism. Key findings show that out of 270 (100%) studied news items, only 66 (24%) manifested development news practice. Non-development news accounted for 204 (76%) of news items analysed. Results found that, there were only four (4) (27%) journalists who use social media as a source of information and a platform for disseminating development news in Ayo TV compared to 3 (20%) in Mwananchi Digital and 5 (33%) in Azam TV. Ayo TV had 4 (27%) journalists who do not use social media as a source of information. The same number for Azam was 3 (20%) and 6 (40%) for Mwananchi Digital. Results call upon some intensive national efforts to empower journalists in the use of ICT and mobilize audience in the changing communication patterns.

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