



GLOBAL JOURNALISM AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SOCIETY

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Abstract

Freedom of information is one of the fundamental human rights, the right of every citizen to express his or her opinion through the written and the spoken word. The technology of communication has revolutionized the spread of information, making it instantaneous and allowing it to reach an ever-widening public. Thus a new power is born, the power of global journalism and social media. This paper seeks to describe the role of global journalism and social media in applying both good political and corporate governance practices as well as identify some problems arising due to global journalism. There is no freedom without freedom of expression, and global journalism and social media should strive for the highest ideals of journalism: to denounce all forms of injustice.

Keywords: global journalism, social media and governance, Zimbabwe

1. Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the theoretical advancement in the conceptualization of news engagement by proposing different levels of news engagement with empirical measures and identifying factors that predict news engagement and corporate governance.

2. Literature Review

Conceptualization of engagement has been of interest to board members and policy – makers for some time because board members realize its importance to Corporate

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Governance and Global Journalism effectiveness (Collier & Piotrowski, 2009, Mulgan, 2007, Quinn, 2003, Reylea, 2009a and Shuler et al, 2010).

3. Introduction

The vital role of global journalism, the fourth estate, is fast changing as a result of technological advances that have brought about easier and faster access to all kinds of communication. Global journalism as well as social media provides a constant stream of information to the public, which has brought many government, non-government organizations, and corporate entities to greater accountability, transparency, and a development of democratic institutions across the globe. With the advent of global journalism and social media, there have been unthinkable changes in our lives. For instance, privacy and confidentiality are more difficult to maintain; it's difficult to operate in secrecy or count on privacy. Global journalism and social media also allow people to more easily share different facets of their life in the global public spheres. Technology enjoyed by journalists is providing access to information by the public for example; access to boardrooms that were supposed to be inaccessible to everyone except top management has become a thing of the past. In many instances, expectations of confidentiality are no more. *"Information that once had been safely proprietary now escapes the confines of a corporation and gains viral public exposure. Corporate missteps that once had been easily and quietly managed can get magnified into crisis,"* note Santiago Chaher and David Spellman (2012). When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the world for the first time witnessed live coverage of the death of a head of state. The execution of President Saddam Hussein was captured by smart phone and was made public, and the mob killing of Colonel Muhammad Gaddafi in the streets of Tripoli went viral.

These and similar events have brought to stunning clarity the instantaneous and global nature of modern information. The power of the new public global journalism and social media helped spark the first "Arab spring" uprising in Tunisia, and other forms of global public journalism helped sustain popular dissent in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa. Social media communication has demonstrated a new capacity to highlight political agendas globally. But they are not just effective in influencing political change. *"Widespread use of social media has equal potential to transform corporate agendas. Tools used at Tahirr Square are also available in the capital market for use by directors as much as by disgruntled employees, by customers both satisfied and aggrieved, by competitors, and by shareowners both retail and institutional in confrontation with the board"*(Chaher and Spellman, 2012). New technological advances have resulted in a radical transformation in both the political and professional spheres. With the recent

advances made in communication methods, it is becoming possible to imagine a whole nation being called upon to discuss its affairs day after day in the media marketplace in the manner of a global village in classical times. Decision making and policy will be influenced more by public opinion, in a style similar to direct democracy; such a transformation can broaden and enrich democracy and expands corporate accountability.

4. Global Journalism and Social Media in Democracies

The media have come to play an increasingly influential role both in the lives of the citizens of our democracies and in those of their leaders. For centuries, thought has been mirrored in the written word: newspapers, pamphlets, and the like. For the last 40 years or so, the transmission first of all of sound, and then of images, has spurred the conversion to a continually flowing and immediately accessible worldwide information network.

The proliferation of such forceful new forms of communication has brought into being a new form of power: the power of social media. While it has numerous benefits, social media power threatens a variety of confidential relationships, whether that of doctor-patient, attorney-client, priest-penitent or husband-wife. The social media demand for access to the news in the name of freedom of the press also threatens family privacy, relationship privacy, national security, and a wide range of confidential boardroom decisions. What exactly is the nature of this power? What is its place within the functioning of a democracy? On what is its legitimacy based? Has it now become a fully fledged power in itself, whose *de facto* existence should be recognized as such before the law? Does it constitute a fourth power? Democracy is characterized by the existence of legal rights among the citizens of a sovereign state. The people are the sole source of political power.

They exercise that power either directly or through representatives, but the principle of legitimacy is always bound up with the will of the people. Where does the media, a *de facto* power that was initially national but has now become global, fit into this conception of democratic legitimacy? Where does it stand with regard to corporate governance? This paper will try to address some ways that global journalism and social media can influence corporate governance.

5. The Rise of Global Media

Social media is neither a power nor a counter power, but a reality in the same but reality itself. Only a few reckless followers of Marxism speak of ultimate economic

power. Fernand Braudel reminded us that economics was society, that one was part and parcel of the other and that they were indivisible. The same goes for social media and society: they are indivisible. Civilian society is steeped in the media just as it is in economics. We could even apply Braudel's method to social media and identify three distinct layers of the media reality, just as there are three layers of the economic reality. At the very bottom is the micro societal layer, consisting of oral information; in the middle is local and national information; and above that is "global media," in the same way as there is world economics. These three layers are also inseparable from society.

Global media today is demolishing barriers of time, space, and national borders. It is a fluid and instantaneous realm resembling the great financial market: news now circulates as freely as dollars. Here, we are plunged in social media, just as we are plunged in economics. However, governments and corporate bodies are just as helpless when confronted by social media as they are in the face of the world's economic realities. They have been able to establish a balance of power with the media only on a national basis, just as they have been able to master economic movements only within a country in protectionist times. Today world media and world economics bear witness to the withering away of nation-states. It is the instantaneous nature of information that is helping to create the media world as we know it today: global press agencies with the use of satellites, international television transmission, or whatever the hardware--is creating this new reality.

Social media's leading players have, in a sense, even more power than the actors in international economics. The latter, in fact, have less negotiating to do and less to expect from governments or corporate bodies. Thus, the three-layer media reality is no more regulated from outside than is the economy. Conventional balances of power come into play at the first level. At the second—national level, regulation is by the state in less democratic countries, and through the rule of law in the most democratic systems. The third level of global social media acts as a regulatory authority capable of controlling major social relationships. The absence of regulatory checks and balances is everybody's insistence on the media's professionalism and code of ethics. What is the cult of professional ethics, if not a return to individual morality as the sole counterweight to phenomena that are hard to come to grips with, control, or master? Nevertheless, there is no answer to global media other than global media itself, just as there is no answer to world economics other than world economics itself. It means the system can find its equilibrium only in open operation -that is, with a large number of actors, a large number of trends, and a large number of instruments. It is a return to the good old theory of market forces.

Self-regulation of world media presupposes that the law of survival of the fittest does not operate too ruthlessly among the social media and that they do not become too

tightly organized into monopolies. Though uncontrolled, global media have a center just as world economics has a center. That center is manifestly the United States of America, the United States dominate the global media far more than the United States economy dominates the world economy. This stems from the fact that they have had a head start in development, their home market is expansive, and they have a technical edge. Corporate power can pose as great a threat to democracy and freedom of communication as governmental power: corporate communication markets can and do restrict freedom and equality of communication by generating barriers to entry, monopolies, and restrictions in choice and by shifting the prevailing definition of communication from that of a publicly useful and publicly meaningful good to that of commercial speech and the consumption of privately appropriable commodities (Fiss, 1990; Keane, 1991).

6. Global Journalism and Democracy

The new global journalism, when it performs well, includes all those forms of journalism that recognize that the borders between domestic and foreign are negotiable and subject to continual osmosis. Global journalism is more or less aware of its dependence upon global dynamics and thus sees itself as contributing positively to citizens' understanding of the push-pull processes of global interdependence, conflict, and compromise that stretch from local milieus to the four corners of the earth and back again. Similarly, social media sites are places where power struggles are visibly waged and witnessed by means other than violence and war: they are the narrated, imagined, nonviolent spaces within global civil society in which millions of people at various points on the earth witness the powers of governmental and nongovernmental organizations being publicly named, monitored, praised, challenged, and condemned by journalists, in defiance of the old tyrannies of time and space and publicly unaccountable power.

Global journalism consequently heightens the sense that the socioeconomic and political legal institutions of our world are unfinished, permanently threatened projects. They shake up its dogmas and inject it with energy. They enable citizens of the world to shrug off their insularity, to see that talk of global civil society is not simply Western-turned-capitalist ideology--and they even enable us to appreciate that the task of painting a much clearer picture of the contours and dynamics of global civil society, a picture that is absent from most of the current literature on globalization, is today an urgent ethical imperative. The contemporary growth of global journalism certainly points to the need to bring greater democracy to the global order. However, the vast numbers of nongovernmental organizations know little or nothing about democratic

procedures and behaviors. The world is structured also by a conglomeration of governmental structures comprising bodies like the European Union, the United Nations, the World Bank--that defies the textbook of traditional political science and political theory (Keane, 1991). Global publics have important implications for democratic theory and practice. By throwing light on power exercised by moonlight, or in the dark of night, global publics and global journalism that supports them stretch citizens' horizon of responsibility for what goes on in the world (Edwards and Gaventa, 2001, pp. 6–7). They help keep alive words like freedom and justice by publishing the manipulations, skullduggery, and brutality in other countries. *“Global publics, of the kind that in recent years have monitored the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi and Yasser Arafat [as well as Nelson Mandela and George W. Bush], with the messy business of exclusion, racketeering, ostentation, cruelty, and war. They chart cases of intrigue and double-crossing. They help audiences to spot the various figures of top-down power on the world scene: slick and suave managers and professionals who are well-practiced at the art of deceiving others through images; kingfishers who first dazzle others and then stumble when more is required of them; fools who prey on their citizens' fears; quislings who willingly change sides under pressure; thugs who love violence; and vulgar rulers, with their taste for usurping crowns and assembling and flattering crowds or beating and compelling them into submission”* (Keane, 2003a, pp. 172–73). Global journalists can also “probe the powers of key organizations of global civil society itself. While the multiple voices of this society function as vital checks and balances in the overall process of globalization, very few of the social organizations from which these voices emanate are democratic.

Publicity can serve as a reminder to the world that these organizations often violate the principle of public accountability. Reminders are served to those who read, listen, and watch that its empty spaces have been filled by powerful but publicly unaccountable organizations. Or by profit-seeking corporate bodies that permanently aggravate global civil society by causing environmental damage, or swallowing up others by producing just for profit rather than for sustainable social use. Global publics [backed by global journalism] can help to expose malfeasance, such as accounting and stock market frauds of the kind in the United States during 2002 that rocked the industrial conglomerate Tyco International, the energy trader Enron, the cable company Adelphia, and the telecommunication giant WorldCom. Global journalism can likewise help question some of the more dubious practices of some nonprofit INGOs--*for instance, their lingering colonialist habit of behaving like missionaries, “their bureaucratic inflexibility and context-blindness, their spreading attachment to market values or to clichés of project-speak, or their mistaken belief in the supply-side, trickle-down model of social development”* (Keane, 2003a, p. 173).

“Because of their propensity to monitor the exercise of power from a variety of sites within and outside civil society, global journalism--when it functions well puts matters like representation, accountability, and legitimacy on the political agenda. Who benefits and who loses from global civil society? Who currently speaks for whom in the multiple and overlapping power structures of global civil society? Whose voices are heard, or half-heard, and whose interests and concerns are ignominiously shoved aside? How could there be greater equality among the voices that emerge from the nooks and crannies of this society? And through which institutional procedures could these voices be represented?” (Keane, 2003a p. 174). With these questions, global journalism can help fight against entities who seek to monopolize power at the local and global levels. Moreover, it can expose corrupt or risky dealings and name them as such, as well as catching decision makers and forcing their hands and then requiring them to rethink or reverse their decisions. And in uneven contests between decision makers and decision takers--corruption scandals within the International Olympic Committee or European Union controversies about United States foreign policy are good examples--global journalism and its publics can help to prevent the powerful from “owning” power privately. At its best, global journalism and its publics imply greater parity (Keane, 2003b).

According to Price Waterhouse Coopers, *“Firms that embrace Web 2.0 (social technologies) and social media are more likely to be market leaders, have their market share increase, and use management practices that lead to higher margins”* (2012). What is the relationship between business and social media and the consequences at their peril? We have, for an example, the experience of the Argentine Football Association (AFA). Football (in some places, called soccer) is the most popular sport in Argentina, and its millions of fans want to know everything related to it. So, when the AFA board met in July 2011 to discuss a possible new organization for the national tournament, the public immediately became interested. Before social media came about, the AFA would have kept its deliberations confidential until it was ready to publicize the details of the new setup on its own terms. The new format would have nearly doubled the size of the top league by adding 18 more teams, in turn increasing revenue by \$320 million in television broadcasting rights for the AFA, paid by the Argentinean government (which holds the TV rights).

With social media, it is harder for organizations to control information, and after the AFA meeting, a board director tweeted about the changes, even though there had been no decision yet made. His one tweet caused a serious reaction from football fans, including those opposed to the new tournament, which jeopardized the project. *“So much social media attention had been drawn to this issue that an AFA spokesman was forced to declare that the national Argentine government was not involved in the process of creating the new tournament that it was only an idea. Unfortunately, for the AFA, it relied solely on*

television as its communication pipeline, while the social media channel continued to lead the issue in a downward spiral, generating a live protest involving 500 people in front of AFA headquarters. By the end of the week, the AFA announced its 'indefinite' postponement of the new tournament project and Julio Grondana's decision not to run for re-election as chairman" (Deloitte, 2011). This experience shows very well how misunderstanding and underestimating social media can affect businesses. "The AFA experience underscores why directors and managers must understand social media technologies, the ethos of social media users, the dynamics of how "conversations" occur and people 'engage' with one another, and the tools used to monitor and analyze social media activities. Paul Cantor (2012), chairman of the ING Direct Risk and Investment Committee, advises, 'Board oversight of social networking requires more than an understanding of the underlying of the sociology and the implication of the phenomenon'" (Chaher et al., 2012). This example is only one of many that aptly illustrate the power of social media to effect far-reaching change.

In analyzing the views of the respondents, the following positive and negative effects of using social media were realized:

6.1 Positive Effects of Social Media

A. Impact on Politics

Successful politicians utilize social media because social websites have played an important role in many elections around the world, including in the U.S., Iran, and India. They have also served to rally people for a cause, and have inspired mass movements and political unrests in many countries.

B. Impact on Business

Effective companies are using social media to advertise their products, build customer loyalty and many other functions. Interactions and feedback from customers help businesses to understand the market, and fine-tune their products and strategies. Many firms organize contests and give away prizes to enthruse consumers to visit their social website page more often. Social networks help the businesses in a variety of ways. Traditional marketing mediums such as the radio, TV commercials and print advertisements are completely obsolete now and demand for thousands of dollars. However, with social media the businesses can connect with their targeted customers for free, the only cost is energy and time. Through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or any other social site you can lower your marketing cost to a significant level. Compared to television advertisements and other expensive forms of marketing, social media presence is a cheap and effective means to enhance brand image and popularity.

C. Effect on Socialization

Social networks offer the opportunity for people to re-connect with their old friends and acquaintances, make new friends, trade ideas, share content and pictures, and many

other activities. Users can stay abreast of the latest global and local developments, and participate in campaigns and activities of their choice. Professionals use social media sites like LinkedIn to enhance their career and business prospects. Students can collaborate with their peers to improve their academic proficiency and communication skills. You can learn about different cultures and societies by connecting with people in other countries. The increasing popularity of social sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, social networks has gained attention as the most viable communication choice for the bloggers, article writers and content creators.

D. These social networking sites have opened the opportunity for all the writers and bloggers to connect with their tech savvy clients to share your expertise and articles. Your audience will further share your articles, blog or expertise in their social circle which further enhance your networks of the followers.

E. Social networks have removed all the communication and interaction barriers, and now one can communicate his/her perception and thoughts over a variety of topics. Students and experts are able to share and communicate with like-minded people and can ask for the input and opinion on a particular topic.

F. Another positive impact of social networking sites is to unite people on a huge platform for the achievement of some specific objective. This is very important to bring the positive change in society.

6.2 Negative Effects of Social Media

A. One of the negative effect of social media or network is it leads to addiction. Spending countless hours on the social sites can divert the focus and attention from a particular task. It lowers the motivational level of the people, especially of the teenagers and students. They mainly rely on technology and the internet instead of learning the practical knowledge and expertise of the everyday life.

B. Cyber Bullying and Online Harassment

If you are not careful, unscrupulous people can target individuals for cyber bullying and harassment on social sites. School children, young girls, and women can fall prey to online attacks which can create tension and distress. If you are a victim of cyber bullying, do not take it lying down, but try to take appropriate legal action against the attacker. Kids can be greatly affected by these social networking sites if they are allowed to use them. The reason is that sometimes people share photos on social media that contains violence and sex, which can damage the behavior of kids and teenagers. It put the negative impact on overall society as these kids and teenagers involve themselves in crime related activities.

C. Another downside of the social media is that the user shares too much information which may pose threats to them. Even with the tight security settings your personal

information may leak on the social sites. Downloading your videos or pictures and copying your status is an easy task and can be done within few clicks.

D. Unfortunately, there are a few downsides too to social networking. Many introverts and socially reclusive users place too much emphasis on virtual interaction, and ignore the real world outside. Read on to learn about a few more negative repercussions of social media.

E. Impacts on Productivity

Many companies have blocked social networks on their office Internet as addicted employees can distract themselves on such sites, instead of focusing on work. In fact, studies show that British companies have lost billions of dollars per year in productivity because of social media addiction among employees.

F. Impact on Privacy

If you are not careful, what you post on the Net can come back to haunt you. Revealing personal information on social sites can make users vulnerable to crimes like identity theft, stalking, etc. Many companies perform a background check on the Internet before hiring an employee. If a prospective employee has posted something embarrassing on social media, it can drastically affect their chances of getting the job. The same holds true for our relationships too, as our loved ones and friends may get to know if we post something undesirable on social networks.

7. Conclusion

Democracy is rarely pure or authentic. Whether in the kitchen or in staff meetings, or in the boardroom or on the battlefield, it always seems to be in short supply. We are always chasing it around corners, through halls of mirrors, across uncharted landscapes and oceans, up into blue skies. And while improvements are made, perfectibility and disappointment and failure are inscribed within the very idea of democracy; the role of global journalism theory in such circumstances is to remind us of the practical requirements of the ideal at a global level. As has been noted, *“The struggle against blind arrogance and stupidity caused by power may not be ultimately winnable, yet it is among the struggles that we human beings abandon at our own peril. Democracy is a powerful remedy for hubris. It champions not the rule of the people--that definition of democracy belongs in more ways than one to the age of kings--but the rule that no single body should rule. It refuses to accept that decision makers can draw their legitimacy from gods and goddesses, or tradition, or habit, or wealth. Democracy is a way of life and a way of governing in which power is publicly accountable, in which the use of violence and sitting on thrones and making decisions behind the backs of others and the intrigues and ambitions that usually accompany arbitrary rule--are deeply problematic.”*

The history of democracy is replete with a weird and wonderful cast of figures who believed in democracy because they saw that it could humble blind arrogance and was not merely a marketable commodity. *“They refused the temptations of aggrandizement and did not much like big clichés and smelly little orthodoxies. They trusted in simple decency. They did not believe that unequal society was inevitable. They believe in the power of the powerless. That is why, in these testing times, their democratic spirit, helped along by global journalism, badly deserves to be nurtured--not only within but also beyond the borders of territorial states”* (Keane, 2004, b p. 45). Though we do not know yet the future role of global journalism and social media in helping to shape public opinion and change corporate and government policy, we can assume that its influence will only grow over time. Though there will be challenges posed by this growth and undoubtedly, some negative consequences and repercussions, for the most part, the increased impact of global journalism and social media should be a benefit, helping to promote democracy worldwide as well as a freer, more independent, and more effective media. It is hoped that global journalists and social media outlets will work tirelessly and relentlessly toward this ideal.

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