WHEN PEOPLE ARE THE MESSAGE… PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NEW MEDIA: USER GENERATED CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

Digital age and new media brought some changes for media users and producers to have interactions in the process of the creation of content. Today, user generated content made it possible for anyone to become a journalist, reporter, publisher, broadcaster, marketer, influencer or a social advisor which could be a frightening improvement for the new communication era. Until this time, traditional media including print and broadcast media had been the broader carriers of news and entertainment, using a delivery system marked by limited options of interaction. User generated content empowers audience to create messages, converting news, generating content and also share and influence others, where others can comment and interact easily and immediately with each other. This paper describes that the message is not generated by the traditional media any more. The message has been shaped by the consumer. Marshall McLuhan's theories of media, and society are being re-examined in the context of new digital age and communication era. This proceeding tries to provide a new approach to some of his key texts to discern the contribution his thinking can make to our understanding of the present condition.

Key Words: McLuhan, UGC, Public Participation, New Media,

INTRODUCTION

The various forms of media are called under the term "mass media". Because they all seem to share large amounts of same information and stimuli from a central point to countless individual receivers (*Denise McQuail donated an overview of Downing's book*); Downing,

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2004:3). Sharing large amounts of same information may hide some differences in the type of content which media carry. McQuail explains this (Downing, 2004: 4) "common property conceals significant differences in the type of content, in the relations between senders and receivers". Every medium itself may characterize and shape the audience (public). The relations between senders and receivers could be varied, their experiences can be varied, and their social, psychological criteria can be varied. For present time, we can contribute that a technology opens a wide perspective to shape the media, and society.

For better understanding of "user generated content", there should be a multidimensional approach in the new communication era. How people gain power to create, to convey, even to manipulate or form the messages? The power of people by obtaining digital world needs some theory of how technological change relates to cultural transformation.

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

To construct a theoretical perspective for user generated content, we need to begin by reviewing and evaluating existing theories. Communication studies have been based on "mass" and "new" media, trying to assess their role in and consequences for culture and economy. Studies of media are generally focused on three main subjects: 1- Media theory, which sees new communication technologies radically restructuring our most basic coordinates of experience and our perceptions of time and space; 2- Political economy, which examines new media and technology as extensions of capitalist power; and 3-Cultural studies, which treat interactive games, as well as film and television, as media texts to be read in terms of representation, narrative, and the "subject-positions" offered to audiences (Kline, 2003: 30) Innis in his books "The Bias of Communication" (Innis, 1951) and "Empire and Communications" (Innis, 1950), developed a relationship between communication technologies and social change. One of Innis's concepts is especially important to us: the "bias" of communication technologies. Innis declares that all media have bias and media affect our whole perception even of time and space. Innis also gave a future vision about broadcasting and internet. He contributed that some media are spatially biased in that they can send messages over great distances (Kline, 2003: 31)

According to Kline (2003: 31), Innis was interested in uncovering the uses to which media of communication are put and their related effects on wider social relations of power. Innis first emphasized that a media system's bias emerges within the specific social circumstances into which a technology is introduced (Ibid. 31). He focused on societal oligopolies of knowledge to embrace the totality of human experience.

Innis emphasized his point of view by giving an example of Roman road system. He mentioned that the Roman road system enabled the consolidation of imperial power (Ibid. 31). In the mid – 1400s, Johannes Gutenberg's revolutionary contribution was to invent the movable metal type of printing machine (Vivian, 1995: 31). He made one of the most significant changes in history. According to Vivian (Ibid.) it is called: "The mass – produced written word". After the first page Gutenberg had printed with movable type, his printing process was widely copied. By 1500, presses all over Western Europe had published almost 40,000 books (Ibid.) Gutenberg's contribution cannot be overstated. The duplicative power of movable type helped people into broader information and mass message circulation, and also it helped to increase literacy. This scientific innovation accelerated other activities such as postal systems, mapping, newspapers and special publications. Today Gutenberg is remembered also for the Bibles he printed. Innovation of printing machine; printing press was first used to print the Bible. Innis's one of his best example is pointed the printed press. He shows how the printing press was first used to print the Bible and extend the power of the Church and its control over human being. (Kline, 2003: 31).

Innis also added that after the invention of telegraph; telegraph systems created rapid transcontinental news reporting were essential to industrial capital (Kline, 2003: 32; Mattelart, 1996: 166). Between 1850 and 1865, the telegraph began to link through European countries (Mattelart, 1996:167). Before the end of the 1870s, there were many questions to be solve that how the telegraph could get underwater to help communicate; and how could be a permanent transcontinental link that connects continents. But in 1870, for example, British network was extended to India and Singapore, in 1871 to Australia and China, to South America three years later and to West Africa in the 1880s (Ibid. 167). As a consequence, the dominity of British companies on communication; (by linking the telegraphs); their control of the social and economic life was either direct, by ownership, or indirect. Mattelart criticized this situation (Mattelart, 1996: 167) as a censorship over the messages transmitted via British

cables. He added also that British owed this advantage to have the financial power for supporting the government and admiralty and finally to have the financial power setting the prices used in the manufacture of cable (Ibid.167). With the spreading strategy of British telegraph media, British news agency Reuters founded in 1851 and took full advantage of the telegraph networks of Britain. In this way, Innis, who was one of the first theorists to recognize the strong connection between media and markets, pointed out that this is the commercialization of communication (Kline, 2003: 32). Innis also shows us that mass communication and media both shape and empower and they are shaped and empowered by the cultural and economic circumstances.

Due to switching in to a mass production and distribution of information through media channels, public access had been enabled from controlled to uncontrolled information. For example, when the demand for information increased, the print technology itself has begun to rise. With the help of technological improvement during the ages, the social relations and the empowerment of people on media has become reshaped. This also led the telegraph and the news services, and then periodical magazines and newspapers became the fundamental tools of social life.

So while Innis focused on print, McLuhan was a theorist of electronic media. McLuhan continued Innis's media approach about the cultural dynamics and clutter caused by new technologies and media of communication. McLuhan observed that technological mediation is a condition of culture. He illustrated his idea in his various studies of media of communication. In his book, "The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man" (1951) McLuhan claimed that social myths surrounds new technologies and the emerging consumer society (McLuhan, 1951). He also addressed the impact of technology, including media technologies, within the practices of social life. McLuhan saw a deep engagement between new media technologies and society. McLuhan shows us that each technological device communicates on the level of everyday experience, creating a cultural effect as people use the potential of technologies to act differently. According to McLuhan, the railway did not introduce the transportation into human society; but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of human functions such as; new kinds of towns, cities, new kinds of business and leisure (Durham, Kellner, 2006: 108). One of the most important inferences from McLuhan's studies that "technological mediation is a condition of culture". He addressed the impacts of

technology (also media technologies), within the practices of social life. McLuhan stressed that each technological invention especially media technologies, change and shape the level of everyday life, create cultural ripple effect as people use the potential of technologies to act differently.

McLuhan's most important contribution may be the each new medium extends the people's perceptions through the communication styles. For example; due to the invention of the print machine may lead the book publishing. As a conclusion, book became as an outcome of the print; helped to extend the eye, and then people have an extended sense on visual practice of reading. After inventing the radio, radio became as audio communication, which led to improve the ear. The improvement of ear may improve the voice, sound and music system. McLuhan sees that whole society and culture; senses, feelings, attitudes and also the people's experiences are shaped by communication technologies. His most popular statement "the medium is the message" means that the deepest significance of any new medium of communication is "to change of pattern which it introduces into social affairs." For example, the automobile is a medium that transport people fast both to work and home and help people to gain leisure by extending time. The new electronic environment as radio and television created new communities, new cultures, new identities, and new contributions based on collective participation.

Medium is the Message

A medium in the study of mass communication is a means of transmitting some kind of text (Berger, 1995: 54). For example, electronic media, such as television and radio carry some messages such as news, commercials, music, events, and shows. Print media such as newspapers, magazines carry messages such as articles, news, publicity releases, advertisements and critics. Online social media such as internet, social networks, web sites, forums and news groups carry messages such as critics, advertisements, releases, reviews, news, games, and complaints.

We can assume that medium carries specific texts and each medium (television, internet, newspaper) shapes the people's life, society and the culture. In his book Understanding Media (1965), McLuhan argues that "The medium is the message". According

to him, the messages are carried by the media and the media affect the people, people make sense of the world (McLuhan, 1965: 18-19). He explains the effects of technology are carried by media. Therefore he thinks medium is more important than the text (message). He gives an example of print that the impact of print (as a medium) on our psyches and society. After inventing print machines; the importance of eye and seeing had amplified. Hence, linearity, standardization, rationality, continuity, individualism, nationalism, specialization, the assembly line (in factories) and railroads (Berger, 1995: 57).

For McLuhan; message (content) is not important as much as the media themselves. According to him, content has the secondary importance. For example, McLuhan appeals to the electric bulb. According to him, electric bulb was the medium of electricity that changed social life, created cultural spaces for people and overcame the limitations of darkness (Durham and Kellner, 2006: 92). McLuhan determines that the means which the "content" of any medium is always another medium such as written word is the content of print, print is the content of the telegraph (Ibid. 108). For example, television appeals to a individual's domestic space, and thus it is also play wide range of senses. His theory shows us that media is a kind of translator and media provide access to a wide range of social experience as well as the media shapes and controls of humanity (Ibid. 108) (*)[1]

Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz's introduced "Uses and Gratification Theory". The Uses and Gratifications theory came to the forefront in the late 1950's and early 1960's, to

measure the short-term effects on people and their exposure to mass media campaigns (Blumler, 1979). This theory suggests that users (media users) play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process during their media use. The theorist says that; the media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user (Blumler and Katz, 1974). This is a distinction part of McLuhan's arguments that the media forms the culture and people. Because "Uses and

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[1] (*) Ironically, McLuhan had rejected himself one of his most important book; "The Mechanical Bride" (1951). In Mechanical Bride, McLuhan focused on content as texts which are carried by media. The book "The Mechanical Bride" deals with advertising, programs specially focused on the messages which are conveyed by the media. But again, his contribution in his book to better understanding of popular culture and social life.

Gratifications Theory" put the "user" at the heart of participation process and assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need. We can assume that "Uses and Gratifications" theory focuses on people to look at their media usage. According to the theory, media consumers (users) have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will effect them. Blumler and Katz believe that media consumers can choose the media which influence them. The theory takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. It reflects a desire to understand audience involvement in mass communication in terms more faithful to the individual users' own experience and perspective (http://www.ciadvertising.org/studies/student/98_fall/theory/hamilton/leckenby/theory/thome.htm). It sought to replace the image of the audience member as a passive victim --persons were thought to be able to actively bend programs, articles, films and songs for their own purposes (Blumler, 1979: 9-33). Uses and Gratifications Theory has formed itself to the modern media age in millenium. A development in the study of Uses and Gratifications is moving away from audiences as "active" or "passive" to treating individuals' activities as a variable (Severin and Tankard, 1997: 329-341). For example; people has a World Wide Web access via internet and create messages and share with others easily.

2. THE ERA OF PUBLICS

Gabriel Tarde was an important figure in the history who contributed "publics" versus "crowds" into the literature. The "crowd" for Tarde was a social group of the past. But the group of the future was the public (Mattelart, 1996: 251). In his point of view; printing, the railway, the telegraph and the press had made possible the formation of a public. Mattelart explains this "One person belongs to only one crowd at a time, but one person may simultaneously belong to several publics" (Ibid. 252). Arthur Asa Berger contributed that audiences are not "masses" and he also added that publics are the groups of people who form themselves into audiences for specific texts offered on the various media (Berger, 1995: 88). Some scholars expand this view that publics (audiences) are active individuals and members of social groupings who consume media products in the context of their social objectives (Ball-Rokeach and Cantor; 1986: 17). We can assume that society can be divided more into publics (assumed various types of groups; i.e. corporations, economic groups, political parties, schools, NGOs, professionals, consumer groups. There is also no doubt that these

groups and publics would become more complex and integrated into the mass communication. Public contribution has always vital importance for public relations. Tarde emphasized public as a "virtual crowd" (Ibid.253). His much emphasizes were put on a fact that public might be the victim by the media. But did the public itself could be the criminal?

Publics are made up of various groups of people who come together, who speak, who consume messages for the variety of objectives. And these people not only consume the messages but also generate the messages". From correspondence to conversations, from personal opinions to public opinions, from individuals to the masses, from local to national and even global platforms, people become the main source to generate messages.

2.1. Participation Of The Publics

We can assume from the arguments above that, most media discussions have centered on technologies (medium) —tools and their affordances. Yet, as they quoted above suggestions, while medium conveys the texts and messages, it also operates in specific cultural and social contexts that determine how and why they are used. By introducing new media technologies, such as internet; the medium as itself is no longer the one which has the power. Imagine that computer is discussed as a magic black box with the potential to create a learning revolution (in the positive version) or a black hole that consumes resources that might better be devoted (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, Weigel; 7-8). We may never know whether a bird makes a sound when it is in a forest where no one around. According to Jenkins, a computer does nothing in the absence of a user (Ibid). The internet also does nothing in the absence of a user. Of course, digital technologies affect people's relationship and their social life. Web 2.0 technologies shape feelings, attitudes, norms, cultures. But on the other hand, new media would be nothing when there are no people to communicate.

Herbert Schiller (1989) also critiques the notion of "the active audience". Due to multiple channels, segmented media offerings are individualized. Schiller points that the idea of an "active audience" engages the power between audience and content (Schiller, 1989: 151). Dick Hebdige supports from the same perspective by determining that individuals use media culture to generate styles, subcultures, identities and groups (Hebdige, 1979).

According to Severin and Tankard, some authors suggested that the term "passive audience" should be replaced with the idea of an "active reader" (Severin and Tankard, 1997). The implications of this suggested that much of the mass media content was rich in meaning and open to various interpretations for the audience, or the reader (Severin and Tankard, 1997). In contrast to McLuhan; some empiricist approaches are stressing the conflictual elements of audience reception and how audiences oppose the dominant social order rather than simply being absorbed and integrated (Durham and Kellner, 2006: 95). Nevertheless, "Uses and Gratification Theory" has a pluralist perspective which emphasizes consumer empowerment, personal initiatives form of power.

Rather than dealing with each media theories, we would better to think shifting power from media to people, to think about the interrelationship among all of these different media technologies. With the new media, the cultural communities grow up around them, and the activities they support. Media systems consist of communication technologies and the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic institutions, practices, and protocols which shape and surround people (Gitelman, 1999). The same task can be performed with a range of different technologies, and the same technology can be deployed toward a variety of different ends. Some tasks may be easier with some technologies than with others, and thus the introduction of a new technology may inspire certain uses (Jenkins et al., 2006: 8). Yet, these activities become widespread only if the culture supports them. It matters what tools are available to a culture, but it matters more what that culture chooses to do with those tools (Ibid.8). That is why we should focus on the concept of the "user" who participates on digital technology. Culture absorbs the new technologies and then responses accordingly that make it possible for any audience to participate, to generate, to archive, to review, to circulate media content by using new media.

Henry Jenkins wrote that the history of participatory culture might start with the invention of photocopy machine (Jenkins, 2003) and they quickly became publisher and distributor for circulating their perspectives on society. This approach also gives a path of McLuhan's assumptions concerning media and society. Photocopy machine as a new media, shaped the enduring culture and transformed into a participatory culture. For example the invention of Video Cassette Recorder (VCR) also enables the people to bring television programs under their control, and they have started to record their personal media content,

collect these video cassettes, shared them with others. The invention of this new tool also brought new employment and new market sector for the video world. Again, McLuhan's assumptions could be confirmed here. Because his theory shows us that media provide access to a wide range of social experience as well as the media shapes and controls of social life and economy. Due to advancements on VCR, technology gave people tools to facilitate amateur media production such as recording, collecting, exchanging. When portable technologies were introduced into the mass communication market, such as walkman, cell phones; enabled people to carry these media and made people mobilized. And this let people to connect each other without boundaries. Computer and video games encouraged people to see themselves as active participants in a fiction world (Ibid.).

These advancements in media technology help to break barriers for people for entering media market. Next, internet opens world wide door and provides a new sphere for people to make public discussions of media content. Prior to this new innovation (web), public participation were only in circles between their friends and family. The internet made any media content possible to be shared and circulated as well as globalizing public participation. This ability exhibits new excitement for people about self-expression and self-publishing. McLuhan asserts that the media affect the way people make sense of the world, so they are much more important than the texts which media carry (Berger, 1995: 64). It is not the content of media so much as the media themselves which are important for McLuhan. Yet, internet transformed into a main mass communication and shaped the participation culture rapidly. But social interactions via internet have offered a radical alternative to dominant media content. Internet became to provide for individuals and public groups to generate their own content, their own stories, own expressions and their own representations. Public has become more active and more participated to the new media. What we are considering here, however in contrast to McLuhan's famous dictum (Medium is the message – dismissing the content of media) "the power of media", has shifted into a "power of people" (raising the importance of media content generated by people).

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NEW MEDIA: USER GENERATED CONTENT

As a direct consequence of continued people's access of internet all over the world, the internet and the World Wide Web are rapidly transforming into the main platform for mass

communication and social interactions. Public participation in new media depends upon a technology that is unlike print and unlike the electronic media. We believe that without internet and Web, there would be no user participation in that proportion. There may be some reasons for why people participate. It is cheap, easy, flexible, readily available, and quick. It also combines the decentralized model of the telephone and its numerous receivers (Poster, 1995; Durham and Kellner: 543).

User Generated Content has the capacity to become people interactive. Interactivity offers better chances to communicate people with each other. The internet and UGC , with its open and decentralized protocols, stimulate free speech (Van Dijk, 2004: 157). It is also based on decentralized access for people to communicate by crossing local and national borders ahead. People can create their own messages and content and they can also use new media to express their ideas, their beliefs and attitudes. New media does not only in the internet. National TV and radio broadcastings, print media, video productions derived many communication channels which help their audiences to integrate in an interactive network. People connect and interact themselves at a large global scale. People has more mobility and awareness during their interactivity. Sharing their product and service experiences with others, building their attitudes towards products and services with the help of new media (social media). The new social media platform has a specific feature to influence other consumers. When they interact each other on the internet platform, many communication channels may influence people directly. People become more active to generate and manipulate content also to transact the information they have. UGC tools can vary. They are all effective, interactive, contain two way communications and empower conversations.

For some market segments, user generated content tools such as UGC web sites; MySpace, Facebook, Youtube, Blogs have already replaced email as the primary way to communicate with peers. People all over the world are also continuing to upload pictures and video clips and are expressing themselves via blogs and in chat rooms. In relation to the World Wide Web, very important opportunity is opened to the people that the same technology (internet) can be used for creating, sending and receiving, sharing, commenting and publishing software putting professional expertise into the hands of everyone. However, the internet primarily means the World Wide Web, for internet users it means emailing,

chatting, gaming, publishing (Livingstone, 2003: 13). We can assume that they are content producers.

But in spite of an estimated 373 million users worldwide in 2007 (http://www.strategyanalytics.net/default.aspx?mod=ReportAbstractViewer&a0=3688);   a new report by Strategy Analytics claims that around one out of every 6 people on the face of   the   earth   will   be   using   social   media   in   5   years (http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&news Id=20071213005893&newsLang=en). This survey notes that companies must view social media and user generated content both as a tremendous opportunity and a competitive threat (Ibid.) "It is clear that user generated media will increasingly compete with professional media when it comes to the attention and free time of users," comments Martin Olausson, Director of Digital Media Research at Strategy Analytics. "However, if professional media companies choose to embrace social media applications it will enable a more direct and positive relationship with consumers, which will in turn drive increased engagement   and   loyalty" (http://www.strategyanalytics.net/default.aspx?mod=ReportAbstractViewer&a0=3688).

User generated content (UGC) is not a new idea. Their past has belonged to the traditional media. User generated content (UGC) is web site content produced by users (Schweiger and Quiring, 2006: 1). In fact, the interaction of traditional media producers and their readers, listeners and viewers has longstanding interactions (Ibid. 2). Letters to the editor, letters to the radio producers and television program producers (Gans, 1977: 86; McGuire & Leroy, 1977: 79), radio show callings (Bierig & Dimmick, 1979: 92-93) and also the musical request calls for the music shows can be given as examples of user generated contents (UGC). Schweiger and Quiring determine that the creation of media content with the help of users gained importance with the advent of the new media (Schweiger, Quiring, 2006: 3). In fact, the term UGC was named for determining user participations and contributions to the new media environment. Digital age and new media brought some changes for media users and producers to have interactions in the process of the creation of public content (Walter von., Quiring, 2004). As outlined the details above, UGC can be the result of process including the combined forces of media users and providers with the aim to reach the public. It can also be defined as UGC is an intereactive process (Schweiger, Quiring: 4). "User

generated content is connected to the concept of interactivity" says Schweiger and Wolfgang (2006: 17).

UGC is sometimes called as consumer generated media (CGM). Consumer generated media describes a variety of new sources of online information which are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues (Blackshaw, Nazzaro, 2006: 2). Such new sources of online information, web sites contain user generated contents help to create perfect forums which also motivate and enhance the customers with positive power.

UGC was featured in Time magazine's "2006 Person of the Year", in which the person of the year was "You", meaning all of the people who contribute to user generated media such as YouTube and Wikipedia. This tradition of Selecting Man of the Year" has begun in 1927. In 1999, the title was changed to "Person of the Year" in order to avoid sexism. Time Magazine made another criticized choice by 2006 selection of "Person of the Year". Because they put their choice in Time's front page, pointed out "You", representing all people in the information age who use internet, blogs and other social communities (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html). Lev Grossman from Time Magazine claims that User Generated Content is a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter. He also adds that it's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes (Grossman, 2006:1).

Newsweek magazine issue which was dated April 3, the cover story features fledgling companies MySpace.com and Flickr and describes them as "leading a charge of innovators making internet's ability to empower people and enrich those who help with the empowerment (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12015774/site/newsweek/). The story examines how user-generated web sites are fostering the new business and marketing. Advertising Age magazine named "You" its "Agency of the Year" for 2006. They noted that we're live in an era of tremendous change in the way companies communicate with their consumers (TNS Media Intelligence, Cymfony; 2007: 2).

CONCLUSION

Due to the lack of confidence in the traditional media sources lies a more fundamental change, people moves beyond the media sources to alternative new media which content is created by the people like themselves. Raising mobility causes people not just talk and text, they snap, share and report the world around them. People are turning into the citizen with a meaningful role to play. Social networking is an example of user generated content where anybody has a control of generating, publishing, sharing the content via new media. The rise of MySpace, Facebook, Youtube and Wikipedia is premised on sharing of content with a group of audiences. It is the power of people with consistent updating of content based on their personal experience.

The advent of blogs, podcasts, community news sites and social networks has moved publishing into the hands of people. The power to publish and influence no longer resides in the hands of media gatekeepers. Traditional media organizations are profoundly affected by these developments. Some won't be able to adapt to this new world and will be replaced by competitors built on a different model. Others will go through a restructuring and emerge to compete again. The new media model will be much more focused, interactive and community-oriented. It will create a new style of journalism based on aggregation and interpretation. Join Paul Gillin as he examines the new media model emerging from Web 2.0 and takes us through the changes conventional media must undergo to get there.

Media companies like the BBC have already used this powerful force in London bombings of July 7, 2005 by retrieving stories from publics (http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2006/07/060705_7july_media.shtml). There is no doubt that people have been doing journalism for themselves for sometime - but it took the London bombings on 7 July 2005 for mainstream journalism to wake up to its potential. With the improvement of media technologies and also introduction of social media; these new tools such as mobile phones, cameras, internet, and user generated content sites such as youtube, flickr, myspace, facebook; the amount of content spreading over the internet has been increased. The face of journalism changed forever as the rise of mobile phones with cameras helped many BBC News website readers told the story of the bombings at first hand. According to the BBC report, BBC official web site received hundreds of emails and photos

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from readers across London, including the first pictures and the videos of the disaster (http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ifs/hi/newsid_4600000/newsid_4605800/4605808.stm). The same article also gives another example which demonstrates the impact of citizen journalism as a user generated content. In August 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast of the United States, the devastation in the affected areas started to become clear when a steady flow of emails, pictures and video began to arrive (http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ifs/hi/newsid_4600000/newsid_4605800/4605808.stm). But citizen journalism is not only about people sending their images of events they have witnessed to media organizations. People around the world are writing their own blogs telling people about how they live their lives and the issues that matter to them. Media also started to look more participatory and inclusive to user generated content. For example; the day of tsunami in 2004 starkly showed the potential of these tools. Most of the memories of that day have been captured, replayed and played again, by the media. It was the same portray as BBC and other media news centers have played and published these content. In fact all these examples (the 7 of July London bombings and the hurricanes in the US) may show the fact that people has much larger role in the production of news content than ever before.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina were both ground-breaking events that propelled citizen journalism into the mainstream. As traditional media's role has become challenged by citizen fact checkers offering commentary on events and increasing amounts of original reporting, journalists and editors have often responded by setting up boundaries between who is a "real reporter" and who isn't. This panel will re-visit some of the major battles of this ongoing war, while revealing what the real debates should be about.

Today everything becomes digitized, translated into the language and form of computers. Computers have formed information culture. According to Pat Mitchell, President and CEO of Paley Center for Media (Edelman, New Media Academic Summit, 2007: 4); it took 35 years for TV as a traditional media to reach 25 million people and earn $1 billion in revenues. Yet, it took the internet just three years. Reflecting on the McLuhan's arguments concerning media power on culture; media generated and shaped the culture. When traditional media has shaped the culture for 35 years, we can assume that new media which is called also social media or UGC has only did the same thing for three years. With social media, we can

assume that our personalities are translated into data in online chat rooms, forums, newsgroups by the digital age. Digital age is transforming culture from traditional media to social media into its own digital form and technology. New communications system caused the information exchange easily and this discourse may redound as an advantage for audiences and institutions. At that point, exchanging of information required audiences to act and speak by using different communication channels. UGC have become very important communication channel for audiences to interact and to make conversations. Internet and new media open the boundaries in a global scope. They facilitate people to interact each other (sometimes with totally strangers) removing great distance. Internet configures images, words, sounds so as to cultivate new configurations of individuality (Poster, 1995).

Regarding McLuhan's arguments, media transmits units of the information which institutions convey. Purely traditional media point of view, the questions then would be how much information the institution would convey with preventing noise, how the information transmitted to whom and how many time the message would repeat. Because traditional media have limited abilities. But UGC (new media) abolished these limitations. Even a small photograph related to a new factory of a company may transmitted to the news service in a second; the newsletter of a company might be published on the net in a minute and it may transmitted to a large number of audiences at the same time. But what we are considering here, however, this large number of audiences are not passive anymore. They are active users. They have gained great power due to internet. They have got global interaction, they have shifted their positions of "sender" and "receiver". Today everybody can easily generate message content and send message to each other easily. They are not expected to know each other. They may not share common fields of experience also. Poster specifies that anyone could produce and send a message to anyone else in the system and, in the advanced industrial societies; almost everyone was in the system (Ibid.). Poster pointed out very important contribution that specified "almost everyone in the system in advanced societies". (Ibid.) In advance societies, there are more activist people. Users are more active, have direct control in communication flow, and user empowerment is very high level. Poster in his "Postmodern Virtualities"; referred to Mitchell Kapor's discourse by confronting two discussions (Durham, Kellner, 2006; Poster, 1995; Kapor, 1993: 5):

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According to Kapor (1993); there are two extreme choices who controls the switch. Users may have indirect or limited control over when, what, why and from, whom they get information and to whom they send it. Kapor defines this as a broadcast model. This definition of "broadcast model" may have fit to McLuhan's famous concept "medium is the message". Medium may have direct control over users and the message, and people maybe have indirect control. Kapor's second notion is that, users may have decentralized, distributed, direct control over when, what, why, and with they exchange information. Kapor defines this as an internet model. The internet model creates more active users (Kapor, 1993). This second notion of Kapor may have given the people empowerment. "Medium is the message" may fit to broadcast model. In contrast to McLuhan, we may assume that "People are the message" would be much better fit to internet model which represents user generated content.

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