



Social Media, Impact on News Sources for Television Journalism in Albania

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Abstract

Social media or media of the new generation is now a tangible reality in Albania as it is in the entire world. In the last years social networks, blogs, different informative sites on the internet have been turned in an important element affecting the political, economic and social different societies. The development of information technology, the increase of internet users have bring the spread of the social networks, known as social media in Albania, setting it in the same line with the global trend. This characteristic is noted more even when we analyze the use of these types of media and see that in Albania has reached higher rates. In a situation where the number of Facebook users converted into 80.7% penetration level toward Internet users in the country, it is important to study the effect that this new information is making to the performance of traditional media tools and, such television. However beside the usage of the news consumer as an information channel, the social blogs are often used as an information source by the journalists (reporters). The political communication is transferred from traditional one where the politic leaders used to be directed to the public from a television or radio, now they use Facebook or twitter to communicate to the public. This phenomenon has directed the reporters and journalists to follow this way. That's why most of the reporters have abandon the terrain and they are limiting the reporting area by refereeing only to the report the status of public people (like, politicians, artists , sport people etc.) on the social blogs. This has consequently brought a profound transformation in news sources for journalist raising questions about quality of the news and television reporter. Another reduction of the information levels is that of the editorial process because of the news speed consumption another thing that cause the journalist to toward to the news "poor" in sources and poor in quality. The study aims to analyze the impact that progress of social media or new generation media brings to television reporter profession and the challenges that are faced from them. Analysis of the effects that have created social networks on how television journalists collect and serve the information to the public. The research will be carried out based on literature that explains news sources and information collecting process as well as conducting interviews with news managers and journalists in newsrooms on several televisions, news reporters in place (terrain) and by collecting data through surveys on television reporters who exercise the profession actively.

Keywords: Social Media, New Media, Traditional Media, Communication

1. Introduction

Albanian Media after the fall of communism system began walking on an unidentified field where in addition to the challenges of public information in a free system, had to face the many challenges that come as a result of technological developments. After 90's mediatised field in Albanian was enriched with numerous titles and actors which brought pluralism in the media and politics. But while Albania was trying to build the foundations of a democratic system, media was "fighting" on two fronts. From one side young journalists were conducting their activities in a free field without the pressure of government power which dictated a new way of journalism, different from what was done until 90, on the other hand among these years, in world the element of interactivity with web 2.0 technology or the Internet was born.

Another important step which came as a result of the development of 2.0 web technology were the searching engines such as Yahoo, Google and etc., that turned this space into a navigational area in a wide world of endless research and information. All of this was completed by other

major change that completed the picture because 2000 brought the birth of social media, blogs, interactive forums, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and dozens of other social Medias, interactive communication forms that created a whole new conjuncture for communication media.

These developments also brought many questions. What is the impact of these developments in communication media? What impact has the new Medias, web, and social media in traditional media such as television? What changes have these developments brought to the profession of journalist and in the structure of the news source for the journalists of traditional media in Albania.

These types of questions have been a discussion topic in the last 2 decades, in many different places of the world from researches of media and communication. While the declining trend of information consume produced by traditional media and the increase of the number of Internet users who actively take part in the cuisine of news have brought a big change in the way the journalistic profession is operated.

The large increase of new denominators shocked social mission, and citizen journalists, as economic models and their employees cannot remain more attracted to a revolution that is already overturning the rare events: before there exist just a few newspapers, some television channels and radio, today there exist the blog of content, abundance and sometimes confusion, fed from a wide range of new technologies, easy to use and inexpensive. (Scherer, 2012)

In front of this revolution which has changed everything, in front of these overturn in production, spread and consummation of information made extremely abundant, free and available everywhere, professional journalist seems to be corrupted from all the sides, less necessary and less useful. (Scherer, 2012)

2. Social networks and their usage in Albania

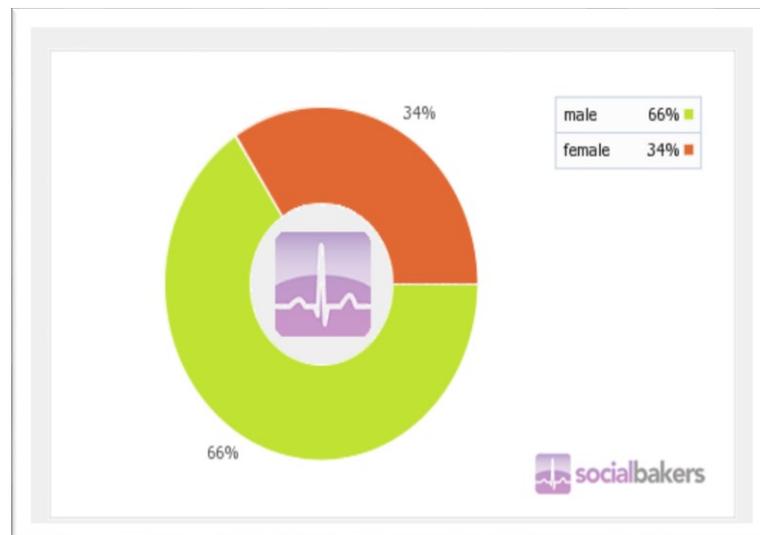


Figure 1. Albania Facebook Demographics

Social Networks like Facebook, twitter usage trend in Albania follows the trend of usage in the world.

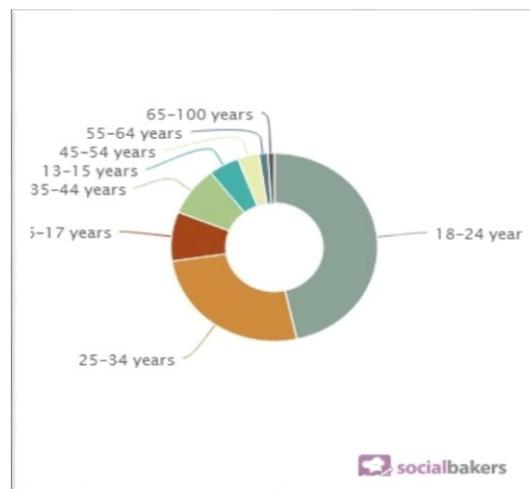


Figure 1. Albania Facebook Demographics

According to the statistics website Social Bakers, there are more than one million Facebook users in Albania with penetration into the population standing at 33.95 percent, representing 78 percent of Albanians with access to the internet. Social Bakers report that 75 percent of these users are under 24-years-of-age, while the country is ranked 66 worldwide when it comes to social network penetration. The penetration of internet and Facebook users into population in Albania according to the world statistics for end of 2012 is 49%

Table 1. Internet and Facebook Usage in Albania

	Population (2012)	Internet Users, 30-June-12	Penetration(% Population)	Users % in Europe	Facebook 31-Dec-12
Albania	3,002,859	1,471,400	49.0 %	0.3 %	1,097,80

3. Social media as a new source platform for traditional media, Citizenship journalism

The developments in technology of information brought a new perspective regarding to information. Until the mid-90 when the site, when we have the spreading of internet, news or information was one side process. Only one professional category of people in media had the opportunity and the exclusivity to search, produce and transmit the information to public. Therefore, public had the role of customer who only consumed the offered information. Interactivity was unknown term and the participation of public in the process of production and transmission of information was impossible. Later 2.0 web technology started to spread in world which brought a profound revolution in communication. People were not any longer simple consumers. They begin to be part of the information process, by contributing in production, transmission and commentary of information.

Nowadays according to Pew Research institute centre, 37 % of American users of internet have contributed in the formation of news or have commented or have forwarded the transmission of information through different tools of 2.0 webs.

Meanwhile the born of social networks like Facebook in 2004, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram etc., the spread of blogs brought a step forward the transformation of communication process.

Liberalization of communication has entered in a new phase. A large amount of information is free, meaning that the consumer does not pay anything specifically to obtain the information.

In these conjunctures, when everything can enter freely, what is the market price of mediatised information? (Fuga, 2012). This question also brings in light the most important challenge which the traditional media is confronting nowadays. In a market when information is taken freely, why should you pay for it, as is traditional media offering. This might be the most evident effect that the development of new media brought over traditional media, such as written press and television.

Beside economic aspect also the relationship between client or audience and product which in this case is news or information has changed. It is the time when deflation of information is seen, meaning that news can be found everywhere and in a large amounts. One of the reasons stand in the fact that this information is unconfirmed, not filtered and can be consumed in his gross production form from the consumer with different psychological burden. Consequently, this abundance is a new effect that new Medias have over traditional media. Social networks and blogs are nowadays fulfilled with diversified information which is served to public immediately, which cannot be reached by traditional media. Every one of us who has an account in Facebook, twitter, or whatever other social network can offer the news immediately for a large amount of audience.

With the development of networks and the wide range of internet users we see the increasing of a phenomena which in today's literature is called as "citizenship journalism of e phenomena like citizenship journalism" and which supports the participation of whom till yesterday was considered as consumer in all the steps of information.

Citizen journalism is considered when an individual practically does the "job" of a reporter, do essentially what professional reporters - journalists do. They report information. This time the news consumer is also the producer of the information content.

As a result this has brought a weakened role of the journalist who has lost his power over the public audiences. This situation has directed the written press toward the bombastic news, the scandals of public figures thus toward a tabloidization.

Although till middle of 90's the reporter was obligated to run in terrene to produce the news of the day, nowadays journalists and reporters are converted into computer operators who reproduce the published news of social medias. But by acting in this way and by not transforming the way news is produce, reporters risk losing their power over audiences due to the fact that the producers of who contribute in published news in social medias are doing the same thing, even in same cases even faster than reporters, and in more summarized form, like one part of audience will want to have it.

The pressure of time, competition of social media such as twitter, competition coming from the blogs and the orientation of producers of news towards social networks to communicate with many people, force the journalists of traditional media to review their source of news. Many journalists of television have become monitors of social networks, politician's profiles, or important people in Facebook and twitter hoping that from there they can locate the news.

Social networks are not just useful tools for journalists, they are also powerful new aggregators and distribution networks, which threaten to further disrupt the already uncertain economics of the internet. The 'click and link economy' has tended to work against traditional publishers, disaggregating content and allowing search engines and web portals to take a significant slice of the available revenues. Now, social networks like Facebook are becoming the portals of the twenty-first century: a key starting point for web journeys and a place where audiences are spending more and more time.

Social networks also outperform news sites in terms of engagement. Almost 20 per cent of all time spent on the internet is now spent on one of these sites. Average daily time spent on Facebook is 25 minutes, compared with around 5 minutes for a popular news site (Newman, 2009)

3.1 Reporter Professions Transformation

The analyses should not remain only on the level of the effect of new media over the traditional media. It has brought big transformation over the reporter's profession. Nowadays journalists are obligated to change the pace of work in order to reach the rates of changes information statuses in Facebook and also twits on twitter.

An advantage of the informers (users) of Facebook toward the television reporters and journalist as a professional is that they do not have to edit the news and they do not care for the quality of information, credibility or other ethical elements which they publish in social networks.

In reality the credibility of online and offline news is an on-going battle. The difference stands on the fact that the electronic medium due to the new nature, seems to have another challenge toward public.

Often the desire to be the "first" on informing, risks to prevail over the verification, over the reliability and credibility.

The journalism profession has not died, because has not yet take end the need of existence for a mediator. Even the mediator, note that we say Mediator and not the informer is more needed than ever. World needs to be intermediated with the information she produces herself. She asks for the medicals of the information and it is the time of the journalists to play this game. (Lela, 2014)

Finally, news in an electronic, digital environment can be customized, or personalized, in a way not possible in other media. Coupled with the first four dimensions, this personalized nature of online journalism potentially offers audiences a view of the world that is much more contextualized, textured, and multidimensional than stories told in the worlds of print and broadcast analogue media. (Pavlik, 2001)

4. What is the situation in Albania?

The debate on new media versus traditional media is raised also in Albania. However we can say that there is no academic study regarding this debate. Hence with the purpose to understand the situation of Albania we focused the studies on the direct interviews to the news editors of newspapers and newsroom managers.

The interview consisted on three questions,

1. How do you thing the visual media is influenced by the increase of social media usage (social networks)?
2. Which is the influence of Facebook and twitter in the way how reporters are doing their job?
3. What changes have brought these technological developments in the profession of journalism and the structure of news sources to traditional media journalists in Albania?

4.1 Influence of the Social Media over the Television (Traditional Media Tool)

Menada Zaimi, Deputy Editor on Agon channel related to the influence of social media states that: it should be accepted that social media has diminished a little the role of visual media. The consummation which is dictated by the era, we all have less time to sit in front of television.

Off course remembering an important element which is that people does not want to be only consumers but also transmitters of information. (Zaimi, 2014)

Roland Zili, News Editor in Vision plus notes that Social media is having impact every day more and more a substantial impact on the visual media: not accepting this would mean to deny reality. Social media is a revolutionary step in the public communication, as it is television for written press. Social media made televisions to re-dimension the time of transmitting the news and especially the quality of it, especially in content. Events in social networks circulate quickly, are being commented almost in real time and are enriched with professional or amateur elements, but however valuable. Therefore, the visual media are obligated to follow the way of functioning of social media: Inclusion and discourse that it produces. As a result, the impact can be considered positive as it has raised competition. (Zili, 2014)

Another professional journalist interviews is Pandi Gjata. He works as a news editor in a national TV in Albania, and states that social networks in Albania undoubtedly have made a revolution recently. Notification for many events and developments begin to be in Facebook or Twitter due to swiftness, but also because of wider use. This has also influenced visual media, which in my opinion often take start from certain notifications in these networks. But the biggest impact is in emissions and television programs, which through these networks extend the conversation with viewers. In this context I see it positive. (Gjata, 2014)

Another opinion is expressed from Fatos Hakorja (TV Klan News Editor). He notes that social networks gave another dynamic to the tracking of news. The distance between message – Transmitter - destinations is reduced significantly. Perhaps no one had thought that through Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, people will come to receive information in real time from various events happening in different countries around the globe or in different areas within the same country. These social media were suddenly converted into information agency. In fact they transmit gross information, unclassified, but valid indications to produce ideas to create journalistic stories. They have almost enough data to transmit through visual media developments in real time. Many politicians use social networks recently (in Albania as well as in many other countries), to transmit messages to certain groups of interest. These pages were converted to "spokespersons" of politics, and consequently useful resources for media, especially for written media. Visual media could not stay passive towards this information flow that flowed freely and effortlessly through these channels which were previously unknown from it. (Hakorja, 2014)

Nowadays media has taken new dimensions. It not just about Albanian media. It is about global media. Arab spring almost two years ago taught us that information now it is not and will not remain a domain of journalists, but of all citizens. Many of the international developments, especially those important developments that are bringing the new way and the new view in world, show that social media is gaining more and more space in international media and of course in Albania (Basha, 2014).

Enton Abilekaj, News editor in News 24 television comments the relation of visual media and social media as a partnership between them. He states that visual media in Albania has felt the spread of social media, but not as a risk. For visual media, social media has been a partner. If the televisions debate nowadays is more interactive, this is dedicated to online media. If we want to do a fast canvass in TV, we address to online media, if we want to do a commercial of a program, we also address to online media. There have been cases, newly created projects online on TV which online are contacted by visual media. Meaning that visual media has gain a precious forum because of social media, but also gain new ideas and new people (Abilekaj, 2014).

4.2 Influence of Facebook and Twitter in the Way How Reporters Are Doing Their Job

Facebook and Twitter have become source of news for journalists. Communications of politicians, officials and public people have the value of being attributed. Facebook and twitter in other words function as press office. However the official pages serve to journalist to increase the speed of communication and do the confrontation of facts. In these social networks mini-survey exist which serves to journalist to deepen and upgrade his report. Today Facebook and twitter are assets because of the fact that facts and evidences are brought there, public or anonymous, which might become indicators for fulfilment and further investigations form journalist. (Zili, 2014)

Menada Zaimi states that: More than journalists it has influenced the public which tends to be “fed” with everything served there, truth or not. (Zaimi, 2014)

On the other hand Pandi Gjata thinks that it has influenced positively, but also negatively. He states “I will start from the second one and give an example. The death of the famous singer of Albanian slow music Vace Zela was given weeks ago via social networks. This news was taken like it “was, unconfirmed from the journalists and was published from a privat television. I mentioned this example to reveal that social networks can create our indicators, but are not reliable sources and in the example above can create scandals that question the profession and mission of journalists. Meanwhile it has also a positive effect because it has become an advisory entity which often generates ideas for journalists. As it has also become an addiction. I am saying this because most of the politicians are choosing to make statements in Facebook and twitter, aiming to outline all type of media. Therefore, they do not accept any statements for newspapers or TV. Through the statements in their pages in social networks, they are publicized everywhere and for every reaction. Hence, the media often refers to statements made in their social networks, because it lacks pronunciation with voice and image”. He added that Facebook and Twitter swiftly became aids to outline in real-time developments. The reporters continue to utilize as a source to collect the information, but aiming to generate and exchange ideas. There is a lot of communication between those who give information as the first source and those who seek to develop it further. Everything happens like in a mega-forum. You ask and someone else, despite unknown, provide the information on what is going on in another place on the same time, from another city or place. (Gjata, 2014)

Regarding the influence of social networks over the journalist profession Fatos Hakorja says that: “In these cases, the reporter just need to verify the taken information forms these unknown sources. Facebook and Twitter have created facilities in providing ideas, but on the other hand have also globalized journalism. Original ideas are rare. Reporters, by having almost the same information sources (same friends and followers), are moving away from authenticity. Information is not stored anymore with that much fantasy that will make the reporting of every journalist of visual media attractive. There is almost the same content in news bulletins of various news channels. As much as they are helping the reporter on the information they give which we may name “Informative Impulses” so they remove from the creativity and originality” (Hakorja, 2014)

Even though it has positive effect in bringing the news and developments in time, in Albania, the misuse of social media has affected the journalist reporting or opinion makers. There are also a lot of cases where the journalists have not followed the basic principles of transmission of the information for citizens. Preparation of news, according to same sources. Social media can be and a very good indicator, but it is not the final result of news which is being published in a newspaper or television. (Basha, 2014)

Enton Abilekaj thinks that: Facebook more and Twitter less are now a tool of communication for journalists, but also source of information. Helps and prevents. Helps to track public activity of a person or institution, but hinder the real work of journalists; being eyewitness in scene, not through social media. Nowadays there are journalists who might never entered in an instructions, but they have information about it. This information however is not one that a journalist should have. Being eyewitness, assessing with the cold eye of a journalist, are unchanged principle, disregard of which feels more in today's media situation. (Abilekaj, 2014)

4.3 Changes Brought By Technological Developments

What changes have brought these technological developments in the profession of journalism and the structure of news sources to traditional media journalists in Albania? To the above question the journalism professionals answered:

Roland Zili: "Technology eventually led media to a whole much higher stand. The Internet has led to valuable information sources for journalists, a giant archive available to the profession, established contacts within and outside the country, the opportunity to polls, comments, opinions and complete analysis. The Internet and related technologies have also perfected the image elements. Finally, the structure of news sources, traditional ones, has changed and has become more dynamic, more accessible and more convincing."

Remains simply and only a source, which off course should be confronted with other news sources. This is a general principle! But in Albania in the era of social media or not, the news often are not accurate products of information sources that influences the general trend to give a little, to the right for accessing information answers MENADA Zaimi, deputy editor of news at Agon Channel.

Pandi Gjata (News Editor in Top Channel) mentioning that he has told also in the previous answer he says that, "Social networks have brought change and my fear is that they are "undoing" the profesion of a journalist. Social Networks in my opinion cannot replace traditional media. In general, the work of a journalist today is more comfortable than 10 years ago, but is much more risked due to the spread of information in social networks as fast as an unconfirmed news reporter's on its own sources can blow. I can speak for television where I work; from social networks we take only the important statements of politicians when they are not with the voice and view. While every other news passes through filters and verifications of some resources. Greater risk for young journalists is that technology is striping from the basic principles of journalism."

"Essentially the social networks help the reporter only in collection of information. Social networks are turned in giant news room, the editor of which is only "NEWS". However the news which comes that's easy has brought the phenomena that the reporters are becoming lazier, less demanding, has destroyed their "intuitive sensors". Simply has made them less reporters. "Something happened in a way on another will be heard and will not pass unnoticed, because someone will write in Facebook or Twitter". This idea which is dominating in the news rooms is killing the journalism as far as it seems that the journalist can be replaced from anyone who owns a laptop and internet connection. Whoever perceives the social networks as sufficient information sources has made his final step toward his failure. For any of them, it has happened. This is the most negative change brought by these networks to the profession of reporter. If the information obtained from these networks will be processed and will be served to the public in a professional manner, then journalists have managed to transform those networks into ancillary tools of their work" (Hakorja, 2014)

Anila Basha states that: It has lost the sense of receiving information by meeting directly with the source of information, interviewing face to face and not through email, phone, or Facebook.

This has weakened the structure of the information conveyed to the public. The media has become more dependent on social networks, and thus has inevitably contributed to the weakening of the quality of information given in the newspapers in Albanian television. It is an Albanian phenomenon which I think that will change very soon.

Enton Abilekaj analyses the technological development effects as increase of freedom. He states that: The report between traditional media and social media is very complicated. Social Media has given to all the possibility of giving and taking information, debating with known and unknown people and listening to the voice of every one. This has an un-denied benefit, the truth can not deleted by the social media. Freedom which is pertained in a time where the traditional media is lined near big corporates with big economic and political interests and the freedom space is in minimum level. It is obtained the freedom of expressing. However there is no evidence that with the freedom is obtained also the truth. Meaning that blogs, social networks, online media, does not have any similarity with each other for the information and does not have any credible source.

Often there are abuses which only distract the readers and TV viewers, who confuse in the way of find the truth, so that they lose the freedom. For this reason the traditional media, those that are in a media business, however it shouldn't be a business remains the best credible way even it is threatened from the capture of politics and economy. So it is created antagonisms, but also dependence between traditional media and social media. Without social media, we would not have freedom without the traditional media we will not have the truth.

5. Social media versus traditional Media

5.1 Advantages and Disadvantages

The main element that differentiates and advantages Medias of the new generation in front of social media is interactivity and freedom of each user to produce and transmit information without facing any filter. New media like advantages may have also disadvantages. The news is served uncontrolled, unfiltered and this may have negative effects over the persons that may have psychological problems. Sometimes people with the scope to be the first, transmit the news without verifying it hence the incredibility is poor.

As an advantage for new media can considered the fact that information is free (you don't have to pay for it). Information deflation, the news is found everywhere and in big amounts. The social blogs and network are full of information which is served to public in a record time. Traditional media faces difficulties on caching the speed of information Advantages and Disadvantages.

An advantage of the informant (users) of Facebook toward the television reporters and journalist as a professional is that they do not have to edit the news and they do not care for the quality of information, credibility or other ethical elements which they publish in social networks.

In reality the credibility of online and offline news is an on-going battle. The difference stands on the fact that the electronic medium due to the new nature, seems to have another challenge toward public. Often the desire to be the "first "on informing, risks to prevail over the verification, over the reliability and credibility. Incredibility, is a challenge in traditional media as in new media.

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Traditional media faces difficulties on caching the speed of information

5.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

The technology developments have reshaped the sources of information. Social media, social networks like Facebook, Twitter has directed the reporters and journalists to abandon the terrain. They are serving news by commenting the statuses from Politicians or public persons Twitters or Facebook. Consequently has brought a profound transformation in news sources for journalist raising questions about quality of the news and television reporter.

Another reduction of the information levels is that of the editorial process because of the news speed consumption another thing that cause the journalist to toward to the news "poor" in sources and poor in quality. When we have a look to the transformation that they has bring to the journalist as a professional we sew that Traditional media faces difficulties on caching the speed of information. The journalist may act very fast to catch the tweets and statuses on Facebook.

If we analyse the information for the consumers we see that the right to be informed is more reachable. People through their social networks give the information for free (no one have to pay for it). In this case we have an information deflation, the news is found everywhere and in big amounts. The social blogs and network are full of information which is served to public in a record time.

As recommendations for the news reporters, the Social Media can be used as a source for information. It can be used only as a start for your news production. The information shall be always double checked with other sources. Sometimes the information can be fake and the prestige and incredibility of the institution (traditional media) decreases.

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