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The Impact of Citizen Journalism towards Society

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1.1 Background of the study

Journalism refer to an activity or product that engaged in the preparation in written, visual or audio material which will be spread through public media with reference to factual, ongoing event to the public concern. It also known as the activity of gathering or presenting of the news and information. In Malaysia, journalist will have the advantage of which they are the first person to receive information from their trusted sources. This trend of journalist leads the society to become a journalist or also known as the citizen journalism which mean that the job conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who disseminate information using social media or internet such as blog and website.

Citizen journalism has expanded its worldwide influence despite continuing concerns over whether citizen journalists are as reliable as trained professionals. According to Courtney C. Radsch, which defines citizen journalism "as an alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism."

Some see citizen journalism as part of the problem and not the solutions because of their credibility to deliver the information to public. As we can see nowadays there are lot of issue regarding the citizen journalism that lead to major problem such as defamation widespread and the spread of fake news that give negative perceptions towards the citizen journalism.

1.2 Rationale of Study

This research focuses on the impact of citizen journalism towards society. The practice of citizen journalism has becoming a norm these days. Apart from that, this research seeks to understand citizen journalism as a whole and also the pros and cons of it.

The findings for this research may be very helpful for the society as this research creates awareness about the practice of citizen journalism and how it affects the society's way of thinking. Besides, by acknowledging the fact, that citizen journalists should be extra careful in spreading news to the society and should avoid giving out news that contains ambiguity. On the other hand, the researchers find that the society should be able to differentiate between fake and genuine news.

Next, the rationale to conduct this research is to study the factors that contribute to the rise of citizen journalism, to identify the society's acceptance towards citizen journalism and to find out the impacts of citizen journalism towards society. This research is crucial as it may impact the society to a very large extend. Not only that, this research also helps the society to take safety precautions be it in spreading news or believing in the news that they receive. Therefore, the practice of citizen journalism in Malaysia is indeed very impactful to the society especially in this digital era and should not be taken lightly.

1.3 Problem Statement

In this technological era, citizen journalists have become regular contributors to mainstream news and have become the primary source of information and news to the news consumers. The tremendous boost of new media technologies has given those who have a voice, the license to provide news by being a citizen journalist. According to Anuar (2000), In Malaysia, there has been a growing segment of online citizen journalists since the beginning of a political reform movement in the late 1990s, fueled by rapid growth in availability of Internet access and the use of social media platforms and intelligent mobile networks, combined with the government's commitment not to censor the Internet. This shows that due to the emergence of new media, the number of citizen journalists are increasing.

However, there are negative impacts on citizen journalism towards society. Citizen journalist may be bias towards one's side when reporting the news. Aside from the lack of training, citizen journalists are not capable of providing credible information to the public. For example, in the case of flight MH 370, a lot of families were kept in the dark and not knowing what had happened to their loved ones are because of citizen journalists who are biased in reporting this issue. As a result, the family members of MH370 victims are clueless, devastated and deflated by the failure of the report to reveal anything new till now.

Apart from that, citizen journalists have no formal training like the professional news providers which can lead to factual inaccuracies and unethical behavior. A clear example of this usually involving gossips among celebrities be it about relationships or personal matter which they may accuse the wrong person of doing things that they did not do. Same goes to crime issues, citizen journalists may accuse the wrong suspects as well as conspirators for a particular crime that occurred. For this matter, the investigation may be time consuming to complete.