

# Mobile Journalism and Citizen Journalism:

## Origins, Benefits, and Challenges

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### Abstract:

This research paper discusses how these practices of mobile journalism and citizen journalism have evolved over time and their impact on traditional journalism. It also examines the benefits of Mobile and Citizen Journalism, such as increased accessibility and diversity in news reporting, real-time reporting, and community engagement. However, the paper also highlights the challenges of Mobile and Citizen Journalism, including limited access to reliable sources and information, limited resources, and the need to balance speed and accuracy in reporting. Overall, the paper argues that Mobile and Citizen Journalism have the potential to transform the way news is reported and consumed, but that ethical and professional standards must be maintained to ensure the credibility and objectivity of the content.

**Keywords :** Journalism, Mobile journalism, Citizen journalism,

### المخلص:

تناقش هذه الورقة البحثية كيف تطورت ممارسات صحافة الموبايل وصحافة المواطن بمرور الوقت وتأثيرها على الصحافة التقليدية. كما سيتم التطرق لفوائد صحافة الهاتف المحمول وصحافة المواطن، مثل زيادة إمكانية الوصول والتنوع في التقارير الإخبارية والتقارير في الوقت الفعلي والمشاركة المجتمعية. كما تسلط الورقة الضوء أيضًا على التحديات التي تواجه صحافة الموبايل وصحافة المواطن، بما في ذلك محدودية الوصول إلى مصادر ومعلومات موثوقة، والموارد المحدودة، والحاجة إلى تحقيق التوازن بين السرعة والدقة في إعداد التقارير. بشكل عام، كما سيتم الإشارة في هذه المداخلة إلى جدلية قدرة صحافة الموبايل وصحافة المواطن على تغيير الطريقة التي يتم بها نقل الأخبار

واستهلاكها، ولكن في نفس الوقت يجب الحفاظ على المعايير الأخلاقية والمهنية لضمان مصداقية وموضوعية المحتوى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصحافة، صحافة الموبايل، صحافة المواطن.

## • Introduction :

In recent years, the landscape of journalism has witnessed the emergence of new forms of news production and dissemination that have revolutionized the way we consume and participate in the news. Mobile journalism (mojo) and citizen journalism have emerged as powerful forces, reshaping the media landscape and challenging traditional notions of journalism. While distinct from each other, these two phenomena share a common thread: they both represent innovative approaches to news reporting that harness the power of digital technology and the ubiquity of mobile devices.

Mobile journalism, often referred to as mojo, represents a paradigm shift in professional journalism. Equipped with smartphones and a range of cutting-edge tools and applications, trained journalists leverage the power of mobile technology to capture, produce, and distribute news content.

On the other hand, citizen journalism embodies a more grassroots and participatory approach to news production. It is driven by the idea that everyone can be a reporter, leveraging the democratizing nature of digital platforms and the accessibility of mobile devices. Non-professional individuals, armed with their smartphones, become the eyes and ears of the community, capturing and sharing firsthand accounts of news events, often in real-time

Though distinct in their origins and approaches, both mobile journalism and citizen journalism have contributed to a new era of news reporting and consumption. These forms of journalism have expanded the boundaries of traditional media, fostering a more inclusive, dynamic, and participatory news ecosystem. The combination of professional expertise and technological empowerment in mobile journalism, along with the grassroots involvement and diverse perspectives of citizen journalism, has ushered in a new wave of storytelling that reflects the changing media landscape and the evolving needs of audiences.

In this research paper, we will try to learn more about mobile journalism and citizen journalism by answering the following questions:

- **What is mobile journalism?**
- **What is citizen journalism?**
- **What are the benefits of these two journalism types?**
- **What are the challenges they face?**
- **What are the differences between them?**

## 1. Definition of mobile journalism :

Mobile journalism is acknowledged widely as a field of media innovation and one of the fastest-growing areas of journalism. **Westlund and Quinn** (2018) have argued that “the nexus of mobile media and reporting has become one of the most important developments for journalism.

Using a smartphone or tablet. It is a trend in news covering and broadcasting and has the potential to become the new standard in journalism practice, especially to report breaking news. Ground breaking work is being accomplished by people who are constantly experimenting with how to produce content with their mobile devices. Mobile journalism is all about building the skills and having the interest to explore alternative mediums to those of traditional journalism. ( Larrea Maccise & Marai, 2017)

Mobile journalism is a form of digital storytelling where the primary device used to create and edit images, audio and video is the smartphone

Mobile journalism has also become more widely accepted as a legitimate form of journalism, with news organizations around the world embracing mobile technology as a way to reach new audiences and report on breaking news in real-time. In fact, mobile journalism has become so prevalent that some newsrooms now have dedicated teams of mobile journalists, or "mojo" teams, who use mobile devices as their primary reporting tools.

## 2. Definition of citizen journalism :

With the rise of digital and social media during the past twenty or so years, citizen journalism has become increasingly more common. The broad definition of citizen journalism is when citizens, amateurs, report on events in society. Professional journalism is done by educated journalists who are employed by a media outlet. Acts of journalism can be done by citizens, without the intention of doing. (Hjelm, 2021)

Citizen journalism has been defined by experts in various ways, **Bowman & Willis** define citizen journalism is the act of a citizen, or group or citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide the independent, reliable, accurate, and wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. But **Nip** described citizen journalism as People who are responsible for gathering content, visioning, producing, and publishing the news product. (Miller, 2019).

The phenomenon of citizen journalism has been spurred on by the rise in the availability of the new-media platforms of desk-top publishing. Some of the technologies that have come to characterize citizen journalism are catalogued by **Dan Gillmor** as follows:

- Mail lists and forums, made of diverse communities of interest;
- Weblogs, a ‘many to many, few to few’ medium whose ‘ecosystem’ is ‘expanding into the space between email and the Web, and could well be the missing link in the communications chain’;

- Wikis, server programmes that allow users to collaborate in forming the content of a Web site;
  - SMSs, a service offered by network providers which allows customers to send text messages over the cell phones;
  - Mobile-connected cameras, which include the every-day digital cameras that allow users to download, store, edit, and transmit pictures anytime, anywhere;
  - Internet ‘broadcasting’, whereby ordinary people can record and upload anything on to the Internet, as well as distribute it;
  - Peer-to-peer (P2P) sharing of files; and
  - RSS (Really Simple Syndication), which allows readers of blogs and other kinds of sites to have their computers and other devices automatically retrieve the content they care about.
- (Banda)

### 3. Origins of mobile journalism :

The term mobile journalism (i.e., mojo) originally was rooted in the emergence of the first solo audiovisual newsgathering possibilities in the 1990s and has evolved simultaneously as new technological advancements have surfaced. Thus, early mobile journalists often were synonymous with the first solo video journalists who applied video camera technology with wireless Internet connections (Bock, 2012). The emphasis on the word mobile was in the context of the reporter “being mobile,” allowing the journalist to be more active and independent in the field. By the beginning of the 2000s, the first academic studies emerged that examined the newsgathering potential of so-called “pocket-size digital field reporting kits”.

These kits were based on multimedia and network-enabled mobile phones and emerged around the time when news wire service Reuters started to experiment with its first “mojo toolkit,” which it developed in-house in 2007. According to Westlund (2013), this experiment was the initial spark that applied mobile devices to news reporting and led to a broader international diffusion of mobile journalism. (Salzmann, 2022)

However, it wasn't until the iPhone was introduced in 2007 that mobile journalism really took off. With its high-quality camera and ability to connect to the internet, the iPhone made it possible for journalists to capture, edit, and distribute multimedia content from virtually anywhere.

In the years since, mobile technology has continued to evolve rapidly, with smartphones and tablets becoming increasingly sophisticated and powerful. This has led to a proliferation of mobile journalism tools and platforms, including apps for capturing and editing video, audio, and images, as well as social media platforms that allow journalists to share their content with a wide audience.

### 4. Origins of citizen journalism :

The history of citizen journalism is a key element when it comes to understanding citizen journalism as a concept. Due to the development of technology, the Internet and social media, citizen journalism is often considered as a new phenomenon.

Scholarly articles have been suggesting that the emergence of journalism movements by citizens, especially citizens from less developed countries, was initially triggered by the

distorted misleading news and the capitalism expansion. Social movements and grassroots organization began local and community media as an alternative of mainstream media report, and to democratize communication and information. Indeed, one salient feature of grassroots movements is to accommodate an alternative to mainstream media news. Given this, people start to name the phenomenon of people covering news as “alternative journalism”. As it arises from ordinary citizens and non-professionals, it differs from mainstream media with regard of economy and organization aspect. (Yusuf, 2013).

Furthermore, the power of the Internet and the influence it had on the development of citizen journalism cannot be denied. In other words, without the Internet, citizen journalism would not exist as we know it today. The world’s first website <http://info.cern.ch/> was launched in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee, but it was not interactive. Over the following years, the number of websites did increase, but the real “game changer” was the Web 2.0. platform, developed in 2004 .

Authors Alexander and Levine claim that, when differentiating Web 2.0. from the rest of the web, two features should be considered: microcontent and social software. The authors explain microcontent as an essential feature that allows users to create small chunks of information, which take up significantly less storage. Furthermore, their uploading to the web is simpler than ever and does not require any kind of web design expertise. The second feature is social software, or social media. Web 2.0. platforms are organized around people. Therefore, the authors claim that social media in combination with microcontent creates a “series of synergistic effects, including conversations that occur across multiple sites and with multiple conversations. (Licitar, 2018)

## 5. The benefits of mobile journalism:

In this section we will learn about the benefits of mobile journalism:

- ⇒ **Portability and convenience:** Mobile journalism allows reporters to capture and report on events from virtually anywhere, as long as they have their mobile device with them. This makes it easier to cover breaking news and to report from remote or hard-to-reach locations.
- ⇒ **Quick turnaround:** With mobile journalism, reporters can capture and edit their content in real-time, allowing them to publish stories quickly and stay ahead of the competition. The familiarity with the smartphones is motivating and inspiring the new journalists to try it in their media work. Thus, they find themselves involving into the practice of mobile journalism. (Mohammedsalih, 2017)
- ⇒ **Cost-effectiveness:** Mobile devices and the apps and tools that accompany them are often much cheaper than traditional journalism equipment, making it easier for smaller news organizations and independent journalists to produce high-quality content. Mobile journalism saves money. A good, state of the art mobile journalism kit costs less than USD \$1,000. Also, you don’t need a large crew and you can make savings on production costs. ( Larrea Maccise & Marai, 2017)
- ⇒ **Engagement with younger audiences:** Younger audiences are often more likely to consume news on mobile devices, so mobile journalism can be an effective way to reach this demographic and engage them with important stories.

- ⇒ **Flexibility and creativity:** The few numbers of the buttons on smartphone make it easy to be handled in comparison to the big number of complicated buttons on normal cameras. With smartphones there is no fear of doing mistakes, spoiling the tape or messing up the settings. (Mohammedsalih, 2017).

Below are **examples** of where the importance of mobile journalism has emerged:

•**During the Arab Spring**, mobile journalism played a crucial role in covering protests and uprisings in the Middle East. Journalists were able to capture and share footage of events as they unfolded, helping to spread awareness and keep the world informed about what was happening on the ground.

•**In 2016**, an independent journalist named Diamond Reynolds used Facebook Live to broadcast the aftermath of a police shooting in Minnesota, sparking a national conversation about police brutality and the role of citizen journalism in holding law enforcement accountable.

## 6. The benefits of citizen journalism:

In this section we will learn about the benefits of citizen journalism:

- ⇒ **Diverse perspectives:** Citizen journalists come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, which can bring new perspectives and insights to news coverage. Citizen journalism tends to produce a greater diversity of perspectives and expertise than MSM and gives readers access to more viewpoints and information to draw their own conclusions. (Admire Mare, 2018)
- ⇒ **Grassroots reporting:** Citizen journalists are often on the ground in their communities, allowing them to report on stories that may be overlooked by traditional news organizations. And on it The coverage of important issues that would have otherwise been ignored by professional journalists (Luke Ifeanyi Anorue, 2013)
- ⇒ **Timeliness:** Citizen journalists are often the first on the scene when news breaks, allowing them to report on events in real-time.
- ⇒ **Low barriers to entry:** Anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can become a citizen journalist, making it a more accessible form of journalism than traditional media.
- ⇒ **Increased transparency and accountability:** Citizen journalists can serve as watchdogs, holding those in power accountable and shining a light on corruption or wrong doing. Citizen journalists become the advocates for democracy, and sometimes the only truthful news source. According to **Riaz**, citizen and other independent media not only inform people, but critically question various problems and make governmental actions more transparent. (Licitar, 2018)

Below are **examples** of where the importance of citizen journalism has emerged:

•**During the 2014 Hong Kong protests**, citizen journalists used mobile devices to capture and share footage of police violence against protestors, bringing attention to the situation and sparking international outrage.

•**In 2019**, a series of videos taken by citizens and shared on social media helped to expose police brutality during anti-government protests in Chile.

## 7. The challenges of mobile journalism:

Mobile journalism faces many challenges, including:

- ⇒ **Ethical concerns:** Mobile journalism can raise ethical concerns around issues such as invasion of privacy, accuracy, and verification. Journalists must be careful to adhere to journalistic standards and ethical guidelines when using mobile devices to report on stories.
- ⇒ **Safety concerns:** Mobile journalists may put themselves in harm's way when covering dangerous or volatile situations. They must take extra precautions to ensure their own safety as well as the safety of others around them.
- ⇒ **Connectivity issues:** Mobile journalism relies on a reliable internet connection to upload and share content. In areas with poor or no connectivity, this can be a significant challenge. Mojos need to know where to find free or cheap wi-fi networks for those occasions when a 3G network is not available. Vericorder technology takes care of the network issues, in the sense that stories are sent back to a dedicated server. (Quinn, 2012)
- ⇒ **Quality concerns and equipment limitations:** the standard smartphones used by the public will remain suffering from some disadvantages in the design that make the journalists displeased with the results; the zoom issue is one of those problems, the digital zoom in smartphones distorts the picture, the best way to get a close shot is to approach to the subject, and this is not easy to do in all situations and circumstances. Another issue, the battery is not designed for working with videos and media around the clock. For those who want to go further in optimizing the results, they have to depend on external accessories to improve the zoom, the sound, and one or two power banks for a longer working time. (Mohammedsalih, 2017)

Below are **examples** of challenges of mobile journalism:

- **During the 2020** Black Lives Matter protests, many mobile journalists faced violent attacks and arrests from law enforcement officials while reporting on the events. This highlighted the safety concerns associated with mobile journalism, particularly when covering politically charged or controversial issues.
- **In 2017**, CNN faced backlash after using a smartphone app to capture footage of a Russian hacking suspect, raising questions about the quality of footage captured by mobile devices in high-stakes investigative journalism.

## 8. The challenges of citizen journalism:

Citizen journalism faces many challenges, including:

- ⇒ **Bias and subjectivity:** Citizen journalists, like anyone else, may have their own biases, opinions, and agendas. . Instead of reporting news and accurate information,

most citizen journalists publish news and information just because of their personal interest. According to Brown (2005), hundreds of people do the reporting job because they want to see their own ideas on the media. (Akifah, 2012)

- ⇒ **Lack of training and expertise:** Citizen journalists often lack the formal training and experience that professional journalists undergo. This can result in a lack of understanding of journalistic standards, such as fact-checking, source verification, and maintaining objectivity. The absence of these skills may lead to the spread of inaccurate or biased information.
- ⇒ **Verification and accuracy:** Verifying the authenticity and accuracy of information is crucial in journalism. Citizen journalists may struggle with accessing primary sources, verifying facts, and ensuring the reliability of the information they report. Without rigorous fact-checking processes, there is a risk of spreading misinformation or rumors. Many authors claim that citizen journalism is not objective and is lacking in quality. (Licitar, 2018)
- ⇒ **Legal and ethical issues:** Journalists often navigate legal and ethical boundaries when reporting stories. Citizen journalists may not be familiar with these boundaries, which can lead to unintended legal consequences or ethical dilemmas. They may inadvertently violate privacy rights, publish sensitive or confidential information, or face legal challenges related to defamation or libel.
- ⇒ **Safety and protection:** Unlike professional journalists who often work with institutional support and have legal protections, citizen journalists may face safety risks. Reporting on sensitive or controversial topics can expose them to harassment, threats, or even physical harm. Lack of resources for personal safety measures and inadequate legal protections can make citizen journalists vulnerable.
- ⇒ **Credibility and trustworthiness:** Traditional journalism typically operates within established ethical guidelines and has a reputation for providing reliable information. Citizen journalism, on the other hand, may face skepticism due to its informal nature and the potential for personal biases or hidden agendas. Building credibility and trust can be a significant challenge for citizen journalists. With the speed that content moves on the Web, it is very tempting to plagiarize someone else's work and post it on another site without attribution. (Wally, 2011)
- ⇒ **Limited resources and access:** Citizen journalists may face limitations in terms of resources, such as funding, equipment, or access to information. They might not have the same level of access to official sources, press releases, or interviews as professional journalists. This limitation can hinder the depth and breadth of their reporting.

## 9. The differences between mobile journalism and citizen journalism:

After we have discussed in this research paper the details of both mobile journalism and citizen journalism, we finally conclude to make a comparison to show the most important differences between them.

<b>Mobile Journalism (Mojo):</b>	<b>Citizen Journalism:</b>
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<p><b>Professional Approach:</b> Mobile journalism refers to the practice of professional journalists using smartphones or mobile devices to gather, produce, and distribute news content. It involves trained journalists utilizing mobile technology as a tool to enhance their reporting capabilities</p>	<p><b>Non-Professional Involvement:</b> Citizen journalism refers to the participation of non-professional individuals or ordinary citizens in gathering, reporting, and disseminating news and information. It involves everyday people acting as journalists without formal training or affiliation with news organizations</p>
<p><b>Training and Expertise:</b> Mojo practitioners are typically professional journalists who have received formal training in journalism and have experience working in the field. They possess knowledge of journalistic principles, ethics, and storytelling techniques. They use mobile devices and various applications to capture, edit, and disseminate news stories.</p>	<p><b>Accessibility and Participatory Nature:</b> Citizen journalism promotes the idea that anyone can be a reporter and contribute to the news ecosystem. It emphasizes the accessibility and participatory nature of news production, empowering individuals to share information and highlight stories that are important to them and their communities.</p>
<p><b>High-Quality Production:</b> Mobile journalists employ professional-grade equipment, including smartphones with high-resolution cameras, external microphones, stabilizers, and editing apps. This enables them to produce high-quality multimedia content, such as videos, photos, and audio recordings, with a focus on visual storytelling.</p>	<p><b>Informal Reporting:</b> Citizen journalists often use personal devices, such as smartphones, to capture photos, videos, or text-based updates related to news events. They rely on social media platforms, blogs, or community-driven websites to share their content directly with the public.</p>
<p><b>Integration with News Organizations:</b> Mobile journalists often work within established news organizations or media outlets. They follow editorial guidelines and adhere to journalistic standards. Their work is subjected to editorial oversight and quality control processes. Mobile journalists typically have official press credentials, granting them access to events, interviews, and official sources. They have the necessary legal protections and rights afforded to professional journalists.</p>	<p><b>Lack of Editorial Oversight:</b> Unlike mobile journalists, citizen journalists typically lack editorial oversight or quality control mechanisms. They have the freedom to express their opinions and biases, which can lead to a wide range of perspectives and potential challenges regarding accuracy and reliability. Citizen journalism aims to provide alternative viewpoints and voices that may be underrepresented in traditional media. It encourages individuals to contribute their personal experiences, opinions, and observations to the public discourse.</p>

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## Conclusion :

In conclusion, mobile journalism and citizen journalism represent exciting new frontiers in the realm of news reporting. These forms of journalism have not only transformed the way news is created and disseminated but also empowered individuals to actively participate in shaping the public discourse. Embracing the possibilities offered by mobile journalism and citizen journalism can lead us to a more informed, engaged, and democratic society.

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