

The Detrimental Influence of Social Media Apps on Multimedia Journalism

English 2201

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Social media has changed the way that news is delivered. With social media being so instantaneous, a post or story can be shared without the required facts to prove it (Cacciatore, et al. 2018, p.406). As social media becomes more popular, it becomes harder for those in the journalism industry to avoid using it. However, were social media applications originally meant to be used as a source of information? Those in the multimedia journalism industry are concerned about the validity of social media in the process of gathering news. News travels fast, and with social media, even faster. In a day and age where multimedia journalism is at its height, how is social media's push for instant news detrimental to those that work in the multimedia industry? In what ways has multimedia journalism lost its credibility because of social media?

Originally, journalism was done in written form through newspapers and magazines. Over the years, it has popularized into radio, and now, technological apps. However, was social media originally created to be a news platform? Was its purpose not to entertain and connect with those who are like-minded? The problem with social media as a news platform is that a large group of people can be responsible for spreading news that can be inaccurate, and that makes it hard to distinguish who is at fault for misinformation (Woods, 2017, p. 10). With inaccuracy comes lack of credibility. When information is inaccurate and lacking proof, those who are responsible for spreading that information are deemed less credible because they are promoting something that has not been proven. In the past, it was required that journalists verify a story before they publish it (Vidal, 2016, p. 40). However, when gathering information from social media apps, it is hard to provide credentials to something that has been re-shared repeatedly, especially when there are deadlines for getting a story in. The process of proving the accuracy of a story is strenuous. To see if a piece of information is accurate via social media, journalists should research the information to see if it has already been reported, which agency has reported

it already, and should review the information before they post it (Vidal, 2016, p. 40). This is a task that can be time consuming, especially if it is easier to do your own research on a topic and report it. However, the lack of time taken to verify a story can make the story susceptible to inaccuracies, which in turn, makes the story less believable.

In order for the general public to believe what is being reported, they first have to trust the media. In the years before social media had a significant influence on journalism, journalists were expected to provide unbiased, credible news and follow a code of ethics (Ilevea, 2014, p. 19). However, social media apps have caused the public to only search for information that is trending. When a user sees what is trending, they are more likely to post something that relates to the trend so that they feel incorporated in the ideas, thoughts, and opinions that are being shared among other users. The same thing happens for multimedia journalists. When deciding what story to publish, a journalist has the authority to evaluate the favorableness of a news story by determining what will sell faster or get the most attention (Maggetti, 2012, p. 395). By observing the trends, journalists are tempted to report on what is both easier and striking to the public. With quicker stories comes the risk of mistakes and inaccuracies. “Fake news” has become a popular term used to describe the inaccuracies that have been prominent. Fake news is composed of different parts – whether it is propaganda or re-tweeting a piece of information that is not accurate (Woods, 2017, p. 10). How often is an individual willing to trust a source that is constantly inaccurate? Distrust in the media has always been present, however, the media is just now starting to realize it (Gutierrez, 2018, p. 31). As a result, journalists have to address areas in which they have failed. Allowing social media to dictate what is being reported is an area in which multimedia journalists have fallen short.

Journalism was originally about providing accurate and quality information to the general public. With social media apps, it can be hard to do so. The news that is being reported is determined by what is popular at the moment. This issue has caused some journalists to be wary of using social media as a reference for news stories. Several staff writers working for the New York Times have refused to use Twitter altogether (Friedman, 2014, para. 1). Their wariness is warranted. When a journalist is required to write a story based on what is popular instead of what is necessary for the public to know, it can be discouraging, especially to those who have dedicated time and effort to become qualified in reporting the news. The rules for what can and cannot be used as a news story is constantly fluctuating, which can be tiresome for journalists who have to constantly change their methods to fit what is popular (Zúñiga, Diehl, & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2018, p. 229). If one is required to complete a job task that is seemingly below the standard requirements of that job, wouldn't it be unfair to the person who has to complete the task? The same goes for multimedia journalists. They constantly have to research and report on stories that are below the standard. By writing to meet the standards put in place by social media apps, multimedia journalists cannot write to the standards that their industry originally had in place – to provide relevant and quality news to the general public.

Social media has brought the news industry to new heights, but it has also proved to be more detrimental than beneficial. The idea of instant news has caused the general public to dictate what is deemed as news, instead of journalists reporting what is important. With social media use only increasing in the coming years, the multimedia journalism industry should ask themselves if being popular is more important than being proactive. The future of multimedia journalism relies on how willing journalists are to reform the culture of journalism, rather than having society change the essence of journalism. In order to reform the culture of journalism,

multimedia journalists should focus on repairing the relationship between themselves and the public. Over the years, lack of trust in the media has become the root of the unfavorable reputation of the media. Improving that trust is the only way that the multimedia industry can improve their reputation. Journalists should include sources in their reports, interact with their consumers, and create a personal ethical statement that reflects their standards (Sonnenberg, 2009, p. 24). By doing this, journalists can encourage their consumers to trust that the news that they receive is accurate and trustworthy. Both the public and those in the multimedia industry must find a common ground in their ability to distinguish what news is allowed and how they use it to improve the standard of journalism.

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