The citizen as media critic in periods of media change

Media criticism often evolve – and grow in strength – during times of media change with new media formats, new media markets, new ways of addressing media markets and promoting status quo. It is not difficult to find critics who in the name of the citizens formulate criticism against journalism and the media. It is more difficult to find and study representative examples of criticism expressed by the citizens themselves.

The technological development on the Internet has paved the way for a number of new communicative tools that enable users to interact with each other and publish content in a way that changes the conditions for citizens to act as media critics radically. This is an aspect of the Internet’s democratic and participatory potential – and a key point in the rhetoric surrounding the concept “web 2.0”. In this paper we analyse and compare media critical debates during two periods of media change in Sweden: A) the debate caused by the launch of the tabloid Expressen in the 1950’s, and B) the critique against the new, commercially driven participatory news- and debate forum called Newsmill, launched in 2008. These historical and contemporary cases are used to enlighten a theoretical discussion about participatory online media’s potential for improving the conditions for citizens to act as media critics in a fruitful way.

Both Expressen and Newsmill represent examples of journalistic innovations that affect surrounding media considerably. The result of the comparison point to a new dilemma related to the role of citizens as media critics in the digital age. The fact that the citizens themselves are now increasingly involved in the production of content, also puts them in a new role as defenders of the site that publish their content, against critics from traditional mass media.

Abstract

The citizen as media critic in periods of media change

Kate Soglin, a young citizen journalist, who gives the outsider’s view of inside politics. Citizen Kate was one of the first citizen journalists to hit the 2008 presidential campaign trail. She started Wikipedia. New-media technology is not only having a serious effect because of its impact on established journalism. The way that the vast bulk of public and citizen journalism, new media formats, new media markets, new ways of addressing media markets and promoting status quo. It is not difficult to find critics who in the name of the citizens formulate criticism against journalism and the media. It is more difficult to find and study representative examples of criticism expressed by the citizens themselves.

Keywords

Media criticism; tabloid journalism; participatory journalism; Web 2.0; Expressen; Newsmill; Media Accountability

Full Text:

PDF

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15847/obsOBS442010432