

Analysis of Journalism Standards in Citizen Journalism Content: A Case of Tanzania Blogs

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ABSTRACT

⁵¹ In the early 2000s, Tanzania saw the rise of social media, which led to a proliferation of online media initiatives. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives often disregarded journalistic principles and ³¹ ethics, resulting in the spread of distorted news. To protect the public from inappropriate content, the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA-CC) oversees and regulates electronic media through “The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022.” However, the field of scientific research in Tanzania is yet to fully explore the adherence of online media, particularly blogs, to the ethics and principles of journalism. This study, with its three specific objectives, presents a novel approach by investigating the news values of citizen journalism about professional journalism standards, assessing citizen journalism content against ⁴³ professional journalism code of ethics, and examining the language used in citizen journalism in relation to the professional journalism code of ethics. This study employs content analysis of 10 blogs and incorporates interviews with five respondents to gather insights on the experience of using blogs. The study, which is of significant importance to the field of journalism, employed a purposive sampling method to select blog accounts pertinent to news, along with five respondents possessing experience in applying blogs within journalism practices. The study employs content analysis and interviews to obtain information regarding news values and ethics in journalism. The study's results indicate that all 10 blogs comply with the principles and ethics of journalism. In terms of language, the blogs employ a combination of Swahili and English, particularly in advertisements. The research indicates that bloggers ⁴² have pursued journalism education and engaged academic editors to ensure compliance with the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022. The study concluded that blogs do not violate media values and ethics within citizen journalism; instead, they serve as a significant new media platform. They play a crucial role in addressing the longstanding information deficit in rural development, a key area that demands our attention. The study recommends that journalism schools enhance education on new media to equip more young individuals with skills for self-employment in the news sector, stimulating national development and promoting online media.

Key words: *blogs, media ethics, news values, online contents, Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

Citizen journalism emerged in the late 1990s as individuals in developed and developing nations gained internet connectivity. Scholars such as Wall (2015, pp. 797-813) and Aboub (2015) considered the phenomenon of networking as an overarching concept encompassing both blogs and institutional practices. In Jamaica, for ¹⁶ example, the television station in its program known as ‘I Watch report’ gave an opportunity to viewers to send variety of events or activities. Viewer

did it within their local¹⁶, personal website or social network such as Facebook, and Twitter. In Jamaica national wide news network have made a regular part as solicit views from listen¹⁶ and incorporate those views in their programs. Some researchers keep on debating that citizen journalism did not exist before the age of internet thus justifying the phenomena grew within the age of internet (Barnes, 2017). This has attracted different scholars on the debate on the subject¹⁴ matter. To date, the debate goes on. Allan (2013) argues that citizen journalism originated during the tsunami in the South Eastern Asia in December 2004 when citizen started taking the pictures and the videos of the incidents as practicing journalism at the scene ordinary citizens started engaged themselves into journalistic activities using digital technologies. These events, became the basis of the evidence of the existing citizen journalism. Various studies indicated that the citizen's journalism that³⁰ takes the transit information go around the globe within seconds. Smudde (2005) argued that certainly no consensus exist as to how mu¹⁹ journalism will be changed by the internet but no doubt that change is evident in the future. Newspaper publishers and other media managers worry about how they can fit into the changing scene and still prosper concerned journalists wonder as well as how the traditional values and standards of good journalism can survive in the turbulent world of the internet. According to A¹⁸un & Thorsen (2009), citizen journalism emerged soon after the revolution of technology, the latest media technologies, social networks, media-sharing websites and the increasing presence of smartphone users in sea²²ing for information in social media than from the mainstream media. Often citizen journalism characterized by the emergence of low-cost equipment and ease of access to online media distribution, these technological developments helped revolutionize how ordinary citizens engage with news and information.

Citizen Journalism and Objectivity

A contentious discussion regarding the objectivity of professional journalism is also seen in the realm of new media. Wien's 2006 study indicates that journalistic objectivity should be centred on principles like 'truth' and 'reality', with the latter being inseparable⁵³ from the former. According to Alter (2019), the traditional view of journalism is described as the "professional objective model," in which journalists are expected to deliver unbiased facts entirely neutrally. Mainstream journalism is characterised by certain professional norms that involve specific news gathering and construction techniques. A typical journalist for a significant publication strives for impartiality, maintains a detached stance in relation to their subject, obtains facts from established sources, and presents the information in specific formats (Hindman 1998:177). Other scholars, like Meyers (2020), argue that journalism should be free from objectivity. Ruiz-Rico (2020) noted that contemporary journalism emerged during the 19th century and was founded on the principles of truth and reality. In contrast to the Enlightenment, Romanticism focuses on individual perspectives and the self as genuine reality. The emergence of postmodernism has resulted in a crisis regarding objective facts and truth, thereby contributing to the suggestion of moral and epistemological relativism, which raises questions about the validity of journalism. The current crisis requires both attention and comprehension and underscores the necessity for a more sophisticated grasp of journalism. Miller's research supports the observation of citizen journalists' roles in the publication space, including advocacy, interpretation, and representation.

As Miller noted, the mappings of citizen journalism require a vital interpretation of information to make it usable (Prado, Paola. (2017).

The significance of an interpretation, whether intended for advocacy or a community, is reduced because citizen journalists frequently rely on information disseminated by mainstream media, except in cases like those identified by Bolette (2013). Tereszkievicz (2006) suggested that live blogs' reliance on quotes from other media sources can be seen as a beneficial approach, as it enables readers to gain a more complete understanding of an event and consider multiple viewpoints on that event. Studies conducted by Barnes (2012) reveal that many professionals tend to be sceptical of citizen journalists, particularly when those journalists have a vested interest in the issues they report on. This results in professionals stressing the significance of objectivity in traditional journalism, a benchmark that they believe citizen journalists fail to meet. It was contended that only professionally trained journalists could comprehend the ethical guidelines for reporting (Barnes, 2012). According to Ross (2011), the history of citizen journalism is essentially the history of journalism in its entirety.

Citizen Journalism and Accuracy

Big corporation like BBC own online platforms like blogs. These blogs are called media blogs, written by journalists within a media institution. They include blogs by some of the institutions with highest profile and respected journalists including political editors. It is from these blogs that editors write about dilemmas and issues, including contributions from other media personnel. Such media blogs have specific guideline for accuracy and are easily monitored by the higher authorities (Hermida, 2009). This is contrary to the individual citizen journalists. These have no guidelines and operate from a personal perspective. Therefore, while the accuracy aspect seems to be an issue with individual citizen journalist, this is a no problem with organization online platforms. Hermida (2009) further explains that the number of institutional blogs like, BBC news blogs, and the degree of contributors shows how far blogging has come if corporation decide to experiment with ideas. The adoption of blogging had to overcome the perceived challenge from blogs to the profession of journalism embedding accuracy in writing and posting. Blogs emerged as self-published and unedited reporting, written in an interpretative and subjective style, often at odds with the notion of the journalist as a professional, non-partisan gatekeeper of news and information. However, this role has changed over time and allowed professional journalism to take place of media organizations. Organization blogs offer a great deal accuracy lesson to private citizen journalists.

Citizen Journalism Credibility and reliability

In communication research, the communicator's credibility has widely been suggested to influence the processing of the communicated content and the change of audience attitudes and beliefs (Karlsen & Aalberg, (2021). Recently, it has been suggested that, according to Metzger et al. (2015), the credibility and reliability of the channel/medium of communication influences the selective involvement of the audience with the medium.

Johnson et al. (2010) used an online poll to investigate how politically engaged Internet users in the United States view blogs' legitimacy. This study focuses on how blog credibility is detested of the reasons for visiting blogs. According to the survey, blogs were seen as more reliable than any online or mainstream media source but as only some, but they were reputable.

According to Banning and Sweetser (2007), blogs are seen as more reliable by real blog users than conventional news sources and even more so than any other online news source, including online cable TV news, online periodicals, and online radio news. Because they are familiar with blogs' goals and their writing style and do not adhere to conventional news standards like impartiality, balance, and fairness (Johnson et al. (2010) seasoned Internet users assessed blogs as more credible. Additionally, Internet users see blogs as trustworthy due to their independence from corporate-controlled, mainstream media and the ability to openly express their opinions and publish in-depth, opinionated messages. According to Yang and Lim (2009), the openness the primary element influencing audience engagement with blog-mediated communications and blog readers' assessments of its reliability. Citizens have the freedom to send and receive, much of the information in their possession. Citizen journalists have been publishing contents that do not adhere to the news values and ethical standards such as accuracy, objectivity, reliability, and credibility. This has been a great challenge in the field of journalism (Manyika et al, 2011). In Tanzania, little has been documented about citizen journalism content towards professional journalism. Therefore, the study is geared towards understanding citizen journalism content in the view of professional journalism. The research was guided by the following questions.

- i. Does citizen journalism content consider news values according to professional journalism standards?
- ii. Does citizen journalism's content obey the professional journalism code of ethics?
- iii. Do citizen journalists adhere to professional language in their media outlets?

Theoretical Framework

The study utilised three theories: Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to analyse blog usage, Gatekeeping Theory to examine news selection through journalistic principles and media ethics, and Signalling Theory to assess news credibility.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The theory was first introduced by Comas-Forgas et al. in 2001. Gay et al. (2001) suggest that computer-mediated communication involves using networked computer systems to facilitate human interaction. The computer-mediated communication theory explains how information can be transmitted through various channels such as email, video conferencing, audio/video conferencing, instant messaging, bulletin board systems, listserves, internet relay chat, websites, blogs, and multi-user environments. Global development partners can utilise CMC to collaborate and address pressing employment concerns with a significant personal impact. CMC can also be leveraged to establish support groups, as Wright and Clarke (1999) suggested. Computer-mediated communication theory encompasses the exchange of information via text,

audio, and telecommunications; it is worth noting that this theory serves as the foundation for interpersonal interaction facilitated by groupware systems (Pempek et al., 2009). Thurlow et al. (2004) define computer-mediated communication theory as a process whereby individuals situated within specific contexts interact through computers and shape media for various objectives. This theory holds particular relevance to this investigation, given that ordinary citizens are currently heavily reliant on technology. Internet access is available to every citizen, and devices such as computers, mobile phones, and tablets have made interactivity easier.

Using this technology, people can share any content recorded at the scene. Under CMC theory, citizens exhibit a strong affinity for electronic devices capable of storing large amounts of information that individuals heavily rely on. Thanks to technological advancements, numerous individuals can create and disseminate stories, often accompanied by video content and captions, which can be rapidly published online. The electronic devices in citizens' possession have prevented any manipulation of the incident recorded on the scene. A significant number of citizens are now engaging in journalistic activities, resulting in the concept of citizen journalism. The researcher's framework is based on CMC theory, which they consider pertinent to this research as it has enabled human interaction through technology to influence media across different settings, as facilitated by computer-mediated communication. The CMC theory serves as the foundation for citizen journalism, as its reliance on internet and electronic technology is a fundamental component, mirroring the same dependency seen in citizen journalism.

Gatekeeping Theory

Lewin's gatekeeping theory was first developed in 1947 and later applied to newspaper newsrooms by White in 1950. This application exposed a sequence of decision-making junctures at which many news articles are obstructed at "gates," with only a limited number of them being released for publication. Various individual, organisational, and extramedial factors affect decisions on the value of published news or photographs. In her book "Gatekeeping," published in 1991, Pamela Shoemaker introduced the Gatekeeping Theory, which suggests that gatekeepers, including editors, decide which content is published or left unpublished, with these choices influenced by established journalistic standards and media regulations. The theory enabled the researcher to examine blogs and news articles to assess their conformity to journalistic standards, as the theoretical concepts were relevant to the consequences of news choice.

Signaling Theory

The researcher used to signal theory to compliment computer mediated theory CMC. The theory was developed by Donath *et al* (1999). The theory states about online presentation and how it facilitates deception on the online contents. This is because the internet has facilitated online interaction for the users. Internet allows everyone to publish the content desired. The theory went further to demonstrating an animal with very strong horns to be very powerful and strong to support itself, compared with an animal with no strong horn. The researcher defines the animal with strong horn as a professional journalist with strong and heavy training to journalism standards that adhere to media codes of ethics. Since such a journalist attended heavy and strong training, he/she can support himself/herself in the profession in publishing the content which

complies with journalism standards. Those with no strong horns are the citizen journalist who are not trained thus cannot support themselves in publishing the content since their content do not adhere to journalism standards. The researcher has decided to additionally use this theory because it is quite relevant to the study. The study utilizes citizen journalist with no training and this correlates with animals with no big defensive horns from the theory. The study will therefore adopt the theory in its description.

Theoretical Literature

²⁹ Modern technology is the promoter and enabler of citizen journalism, suggesting technology was the key to opening the door to this journalistic renaissance. The advent of the Internet has created a forum through which citizen journalists thrive, and these citizen journalists are now threatening professional journalists' place and position as the "kings of news." The Internet provides a forum for the free flow of information and allows citizen to use simple new media tools to become a source of information to an endless audience (Fernando & Sham, 2008). With the intrusion of the Internet, the ability of non-journalists to publish their words and link them with those of other social platform scribes has forever altered the balance of power between those who control the means to publish and those who believe they have something they believe is important to say the social platform has been as the playground of ordinary citizen to publish the content of their interests whatever incident is the content to be published (Bowman & Willis, 2005). A unique and great characteristic of the Internet is that it provides tools to influence new audiences and to quickly spread important information. Because of modern technology individuals have access to fairly inexpensive communication devices, such as computers, cell phones, video equipment, digital cameras, and editing software. As a result, everyday citizens have the tools needed to quickly and successfully share information ranging from everyday life experiences to breaking news events (Johnson 2008). Mutsvairo & Columbus (2012) argued that citizen journalism is emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Africa. The rise of digitally networked technologies such as the internet and mobile phones is reshaping reporting across the continent. This change is technological with social media platforms enabling new forms of publishing, receiving, and discussing stories as well as cultural with idiosyncratic conventions emerging on these platforms.

¹³ Mutsvairo & Columbus (2012) survey exhibit that the ethical beliefs of citizen journalists in several sub Saharan African countries are driven by a sense of social responsibility and a wish to inform their readers and the general public. Citizen journalists show a clear antiauthoritarian strain and an antipathy towards government regulation, yet most see themselves as subject to the same ethics that guide traditional journalism. When working with content provided by the citizens, the editors have to bear in mind that citizens are not educated journalists. Thus, their stories might not tell the actual truth and sometimes exaggerating the whole truth the editors have to verify that information from citizen if it is true and what are the dangers of using this kind of content (Allan 2013). Citizen journalism has currently been normalized in our information systems. This is because electronic equipment are as common as any other commodity in the society. Society scene videos as well as images are found to be newsworthy to the citizens as videos and images are easily captured and uploaded and shared across social networking sites around the globe (Cohen et al, 2017).

The Internet as part and parcel of the so called new media. The internet has largely supported the inversion of new form of journalism that we call it citizen journalism. We cannot go astray or rebuke that the emergence of internet has made a great transformation on the atmosphere of journalism (Pavlik, 2001). It is clearly that the rise of the new technology has made the concept of citizen journalism more of a reality since the emergence of new technology. The evolution of personal publishing offers new tools allowing Internet users to become content creators. One need not to own a printing press or a broadcasting station to reach large audiences anymore. One of the latest popular tools in personal publishing is the Internet-based blog. Just as the printing press gave way to the mass production of pamphlets and newspapers, blogs too extend the ability to communicate on the Internet beyond simple static Web pages (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005).

Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) further describe that while still young, blogs have been described and defined in many ways. Some define blogs by their format: frequently updated Web sites containing dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order. 1 Blog genres range from personal, diary-like pages to in-depth public affairs analysis. 2 Blogs bear different purposes: some provide description of subjectively selected links, others tell about details of a writer's day, and some offer personal opinions and commentaries on the news of a day. Opinionated people, called bloggers, post their thoughts, experiences, and politics, on blogs.

People and citizen at large have a great opportunity of disseminating and manipulating the information the way they feel. Currently citizens are able to create their personal home pages and share information with the universe. The view that citizen journalism have been found difficult to define is true since the concept has been labelled in different ways. This includes ways such as grassroots journalism, open source journalism, citizen media, participatory journalism, hyper local journalism as well as bottom up journalism. The concept indicate the inclusiveness that is not found in traditional journalism (Barnes, 2018).

Professional Journalism

Professional journalism believes that the public is the priority to be given different information. Information relies on ethical values. Professional journalism integrity is a cornerstone of journalist credibility. Journalism should rely on ethics, fairly, courage in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Editors should test for accuracy, that is, information from all sources should be valid and avoid errors, headlines, promotional materials like photos videos audios graphics, should not misrepresent (Brown and Feng, 2011). The flourishing of user generated content and blogging stimulates a debate of journalistic expertise, what is it, and where is it to be found the professional framework of journalism. It is challenged and the idea of professionalism is under siege in the age of amateurs and the citizen journalists. According to Media Council of Tanzania (2005), journalists are professionals who operate as trustees of the public and who stand accountable for their activities, society and communities. Journalists have their own ideal and morality. The expectation is that media as social institution would promote these ideals and morals, the code of ethics for journalists are there to express purpose of guiding professionals journalists in serving the society as required. The current state of the journalism professionalism has been changed since currently, the profession has become more commercial compared to previous times where by the professionalism was respected. Today, journalism is

fragmenting among a fascinating array of news sources and social networking sites. As well, its economic model is undermined as paid advertising migrates on line.

Code of Media Ethics

Brown et al (2005) emphasize that ethical values are said to be the core value in any professional journalism as one of the professional ethics is put into priority ethical journalists. Ethical journalist will always have the power to publish the story content that has been edited by the editors and abide with ethical standards. It is said the proper news story should be filtered like water so as to get clean one for consumption. This is to say that journalists have to filter stories and content at large so as to give the audience proper product that is adhering to ethical standards, with the advent of technology. The online content has widely been not filtered since everyone has the power to create content on blogs as well as social platforms this is the product of technology being on the fingertips of every citizen.

Journalism⁴ built upon different new values and not on credibility alone (Wee et al, 2009). This is because professional journalists have been held accountable for their work they traditionally have the responsibility to use moral reasoning when creating story, ethical standards and share truth when reporting. Brown (2005) noted on accuracy that the work of professional journalists is only published after it goes through the checks and balances process where the common citizen journalists receive no training and such editorial advice and have no such expertise to safeguard such accuracy.¹¹ Professional journalists have to rely on specific codes since journalists are trained professionally how to collect and process news and information for the use by mass media and they should observe and defend these codes. Professional journalists have to adhere to these media code of ethics; truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, privacy, avoid harassment avoid publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005). Ward (2009) noted that modern journalism ethics is built⁴⁹ on the twin pillars of truth and objectivity. Journalism textbooks, associations have cited on truth and objectivity in the field of journalism. The books illustrate that truth and objectivity are the fundamental principles of emerging professionalism.⁵⁰ Truth and objectivity have long roots in journalism. The heart of objectivity requires reporters to provide straight unbiased information without bias opinion.

The publications of news and images done by citizen's journalism is currently not a new phenomenon that hits newsrooms and spread at a larger pace to the audience. However, technology has brought anyone with electronic equipment to organize the story at the scene and uploaded accompanied with images. The stories and images have always been in vague as they do not consist news values such as objectivity, concise, balanced and depict prejudice as consider to professional journalists whom will manipulate the news, images and video footages as to align to journalism standards (Stuart, 2017). The mode of publication has significantly reverted away from the code of ethics.

Language

Language is one of the crucial element in journalism. It is said, the absence of language is equal to death of journalism that means without language journalism cannot exist. However, citizen

journalism have been using language to convey the message and information to the audience. The language used has been so fast in spreading the information and easily captured in the heads of people. The researches done show that the language is not proper as compared to professional journalists. The citizen journalism language is manipulated with no facts, edition and sometimes employ useless words that bring ambiguities. In professional journalism, the language is manipulated in a manner of relying on media code of ethics (Purser et al, 2013). Citizen journalism is becoming a prominent feature in journalistic landscape as video footages, mobile and digital camera snapshots are found to be commonly posted online through blogs and personal websites. These are ordinarily citizens on the scenes, making unique contribution and challenging to the mainstream media coverage. This has been ushered by the internet technology that gives a room for amateurs (Boon and Sinclair, 2009).

Citizen journalism has secured its place in news professionalism. Citizen journalists are likely to refer on breaking news alerted by citizen²⁶ their news organizations since citizens are likely to be the first eye witnesses on the scene. More often than not associated with breaking news of the²⁶ significant events, it includes the provision of first eye witness of citizen on the scene that accounts audio recordings, video footage, mobile phone or cell phone capturing of videos and images. The collection can be further³⁹ shared online via blogs, personal websites as well as social networking sites. The term citizen journalism can be coined as grassroots journal¹⁰, open source journalism, participatory journalism, hyper local journalism (Allan, 2013). Today's web and the new media underpin the ability to create instant communication sensations. From Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and a collection of blogs, a news statement can advance from zero to 20 million viewers overnight. The viral nature of this highly social, user-driven environment enables complete strangers to connect over common be²⁷s, desires or interests and together create winners and losers (Lewis and Fabos, 2016). The mid-2000s witnessed a fundamental shift in the relationship between media institutions and audiences, as¹⁸ zen journalism became a global phenomenon (Allan & Thorsen 2009). On the other side, citizen journalism has been criticized by professional journalists because citizen journalists have not been oriented toward the standards and practices⁴¹ professional journalism. The language citizens journalist use is questionable. It is reported that, reports from citizen journalists are subjective, amateurish, inaccurate and haphazard with wrong language orientation. They categorize citizen journalism as of low quality, and with inadequate language (Ellison et al., 2007).

Empirical Literature

Towner and Munoz (2011) argue that³⁸ professional journalists only faced with fierce competition from rival Tv stations or newspaper¹⁵ Currently, citizen journalism is posing a great threat to professional journalism. Journalists are not entirely wiped out in online world but they are eroded and most important they cannot be confined any longer to an exclusive elite group. Journalists have no longer the⁵² exclusive right of authority and ability to disseminate information to the masses. This is because members of the public have the power to¹ determine the news and information they will consume. Bibuli (2014) has exhibited that creating and replicating knowledge is important for sustainable development. Only a few years back the fax was a great

addition to a limited collection of communication tools. Today technology has evolved to give us emails, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Myspace and Whatsapp among others. The internet has enabled a range of new platforms for personal and social interactions particularly through social media. Current examples of social media platforms include social networking sites like Facebook, photo sharing sites like Flickr, video sharing sites like YouTube, business networking sites like LinkedIn, micro blogging sites like Twitter, and numerous others. Social media sites are inexpensive and, more often than not, completely free to use. Social media allow users to interact, share content, and to create content collectively (Bibuli, 2014). In Uganda for example, social media use has grown by leaps and bounds largely due to the growth in internet penetration which now stands at 15 % of the country's population of 35 million people. It adds that many users access internet (social media) on their phones with service providers such as MTN (with the largest number of subscribers) and Orange Telecom offering their subscribers free access to social networking site Facebook (Bibuli, 2014).

Dare et al (2011) continues to explain that the making of the news is no longer exclusive to professional journalists and a legion of newsmakers and public relations people. In the last decade, traditional journalism has been in serious competition for relevance. Legacy media continues to struggle to secure its turf as the authoritative voice and the manager and processor of news in the face of citizen journalism. The audience, aided by internet technology which has made the online communicative experience possible, is no longer a passive receiver of news, but also an active creator of content, altering the face of journalism from being a lecture to a conversation. It is now common practice for media outlets like the BBC to feature blogs on their websites to allow the flow of stories across numerous modalities. They have also embraced social media by inviting readers, listeners or viewers to follow their activities on Facebook or Twitter. These platforms are used to make readers aware of the news content in the publications. They also provide real time updates on unfolding events in the region (Onyango, 2013).

Social media has also helped citizens and media actors circumvent state control, interference and intimidation that is rife as observed. Reports show that the banning, harassment and intimidation of the press and closure of media houses has greatly infringed freedom of expression (Kokenge, 2010). Non-media players such as Civil Society have emerged to disseminate information and fill the void left by traditional media and are doing so with great effect. In Africa, Parliamentary Watch a Civil Society entity has mainly used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to provide information on parliamentary processes and increasing the transparency, responsiveness, and accountability of the parliament. This entity has become the undisputed source of news on parliamentary activities and information from its platforms in that information from its accounts is picked up by the major news agencies in the country (Towner and Munoz, 2011).

Onyango (2013) argues that the technology has made citizen journalism more accessible to people worldwide due to technology. Citizens are able to report different issues faster and quicker than traditional media regardless on ethical standards observed by journalism profession. Online content have become a key part of social, economic and cultural life in many societies. With today's technology, blogs, chat rooms, message boards, wikis, Facebook, Twitter and mobile telephones, the citizen have found new life as the average person can capture news and distribute the content globally. The use of mobile telephones provides low-cost option for people

to set up news content⁷ and publish online via social network platform such as blogs. Kokenge (2010) argued that in 2007, with its coverage of Myanmar's governmental crackdown on protesting Buddhist monks, the BBC put citizen journalism to brilliant use in the midst of that repressive regime's attempt at a comprehensive media blackout. The broadcast giant combed through the thousands of photos, text messages and blog entries that escaped the blackout via the Internet and incorporated these messages and images into its news reports. These images and messages came not from professional journalists but from citizens living and working in Myanmar.

¹ Social media users like newspaper readers know as ¹ that all newspapers are at times inaccurate or else select, interpret, and at times distort the events they report. Some newspapers like social media will publish what amounts to little more than barefaced lies. However despite this challenge, social media enables access to knowledge and provides and creates fresh opportunities for organizations, communities and individuals (Bibuli, 2014). However, this fact is still under debate and conclusion have not yet been made. Kokenge (20²³) states that citizen journalism is there to serve the public surroundings since the newspaper continue to die away and more people migrate their media consumption to the internet. Media professionals will be increasingly faced with this new type of citizen-generated content.

Research Methods

The researcher employed a descriptive research design grounded in qualitative methodology, as Kothari and Garg (2023). This design facilitated the description of the phenomenon of citizen journalism following data collection. As noted by Berg⁴⁶ (2020), a qualitative research approach was used due to its ability to provide a clear and direct description of experiences, perceptions, or events through language derived from the collected data. This study specifically focused on citizen journalism content in the 100 blog accounts. A sample size of 10 was drawn from 100 registered news blogs, namely: The study's results indicate that all 10 blogs attempt to conform to established news values Lukaza Blog News - josephatlukaza.blogspot.com; Arusha Yetu News - yetuarusha.blogspot.com, Malunde blog news- malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html; Bukoba blog News- bukoba-wadau.com/ - well organized; Mwaipaya Blog News - abdallahmwaipaya.blogspot.com/; Kitoto News- kitoto.wordpress.com; Mroki Kidevu News - mrokim.blogspot.com; Mtaa News- mtaakwamtaa.co.tz - well organized. Harakati News - harakati360.blogspot.com, The habari-thehabari.commalunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html

The study used purposive to select five respondents for interviews. This sampling aligns with the recommendations of Bekele et al. (2022) and Wasihun and Creswell (1998), which are widely accepted in the field, suggesting that a range of 5 to 25 interviews is sufficient for a phenomenological study. The research was conducted using purposive sampling, a method that allowed the researchers to maintain control over the selection process based on criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). The researchers used this method to

select news bloggers and TRCA officers as important informants, ensuring the study's results were both accurate and relevant (Kothari & Garg, 2023). This method allowed the researcher to examine the content of certain citizen journalist media blogs. The use of purposive research sampling mitigates the inclusion of extraneous and irrelevant elements in the sample by chance, while facilitating an in-depth examination of the chosen items (Patton et al., 2002).

The researcher used content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to scrutinise textual, audio, and video materials to determine whether bloggers adhered to journalistic standards and ethical codes. The researcher used content analysis techniques, as shown by Webb Lynne (2013) and Krippendorff (2019, 2022), to analyse news published on ten blogs to assess if the bloggers regard news value and ethics. The researcher analysed audio, video, and all text content uploaded throughout the 10 blogs to discern patterns and conduct a thorough study (Webb, Lynne, 2013). The research included in-depth interviews to gather information from existing bloggers and TCRA officers about the news value and ethics of blogging, adding a robust and reliable source of data. This strategy accurately evaluated the professional practices of bloggers in both emerging and traditional media.

Data Analysis

The research adhered to the comprehensive guidelines established by Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2024), which detail the essential procedures for thematic analysis, including the identification of key themes and patterns. By employing this robust approach, the researcher effectively illuminates the intricate relationships and trends emerging from the entire data collection process. This thorough examination of individuals' experiences, perspectives, emotions, and knowledge allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter identifying themes and patterns. This approach allows the researcher to elucidate the patterns and correlations throughout the whole data collection. The researchers examined individuals' experiences, views, feelings, and knowledge. The researcher synthesised and correlated the data with the research questions, demonstrating the analysis's substantial contribution to the aims. The researcher conducted a qualitative study of data by identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns and themes in the information generated by citizen journalists. The description was presented in word and sentence styles. The content analysis technique is a practical study approach for delineating communication messages and quantifying message properties. These attributes include correctness, objectivity, credibility, and dependability. As a qualitative research data collection instrument, it conveys the significance of the topic or material of interest to the researcher (Maggio et al., 2012). The research's compliance with all aspects is crucial to ensure scientifically credible findings.

Findings and Discussion

Does Citizen Journalism Content Consider News Values According to Professional Journalism Standards?

The findings indicate that all blogs present news with accuracy. There are no misspellings, and the words are composed with competence and fluency, considering journalistic skills. About the credibility, the findings of the study indicate that the majority of news across various blogs consider proper sourcing or a designated spokesperson. However, certain news items are reproduced from other sources without proper attribution. Most of blogs pasted a copy of mainstream newspapers. Although pasting of newspapers seems as lack of credibility in old media, the majority of comments on blogs appreciated the bloggers effort to provide news from variate sourced.

Regarding the objectivity, research indicates that many blogs considered objectivity. The findings indicated that the street to street new- mtaakwamtaa.co.tz and Bukoba Stockholders Blog bukoba-waduu.com are well organized. All stories are well cited and balanced. The bloggers provided link to You Tube to enable readers to watch and listen audio (Sources Voices). The style enhanced the reliability and objective. The rest of globs have few brief stories which lack fairness and follow up which result to lack of objectivity. The findings revealed that lack of second part of story caused followers to discuss the story in detailes whereby some reader's information which cannot considered as official information from second side of the story. The findings are consistent with the research by Cristol (2002) and Kurtz (2002), which demonstrates that bloggers and traditional journalists discuss the degree of trust that should be attributed to information shared via blogs. The findings corroborate the research of Banning and Trammell (2006) and Johnson and Kaye (2004), which indicates that although bloggers frequently articulate strong opinions and critique prominent figures with whom they disagree, blog users persist in trusting and depending on the information provided in blogs. The perceptions of credibility empower blogs to unite followers and facilitate social change.

The findings about reliability reveal that the information sources utilised in blogs are frequently reliable. Majority of stories published to all examined blogs have reliable sources. However, some stories published in Harakati Blog- harakati360.blogspot.com, Malunde Blog - malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html and thehabari.com/ missed some clear sources and date the information released as they missed when and where, hence reduced credibility if the particular stories. The findings is similiary to the study of Professional journalists have to adhere to these media code of ethics; truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, privacy, avoid harassment avoid publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005).

Does citizen journalism's content obey the professional journalism code of ethics?

The findings revealed that all blogs examined violated media codes of ethics regarding news core values. The study's results indicate that blogs conform to journalistic ethics. A significant proportion of narratives are constructed according to the 5W+H framework in value-based ethics. In instances where shocking news, such as accidents or distressing events, is expected, there is instead a focus on caution regarding images and videos, reassuring the audience about the responsible reporting in blogs. They emphasize equality by avoiding gender discrimination and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups within society. Additionally, they disseminate information to the public in contentious developments and oversee news coverage by

accommodating both perspectives. The findings implied contrasts with the notion that blogs deliver news without applying journalistic skills and ethical standards.¹⁸ The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Barnes (2012), which found that **only professional³⁴ trained journalists can comprehend the ethics required for reporters**. Ross (2011) posits that **the history of citizen journalism is, in fact, the history of journalism itself**.

Do citizen journalists adhere to professional language in their media outlets?

The findings indicated that regarding language, all blogs focus on journalists' skills in news stories, especially those produced by government officials. However, in advertisements, bloggers used two different languages in one sentence: Swahili and English in one sentence. For example, in Harakati Blog- harakati360.blogspot.com, the main information blogs were written in English; many news stories are written well using Swahili language; in the narrative fiction stories, almost all blogs use Swahili spoken language. It's worth noting that Ku, Liang, and Chen (2006) share the same views about citizen journalists' language, emphasizing the consensus in the field. They agree that news articles own a larger vocabulary than blog articles, which means that news articles use professional language and professionally convey their messages to respective audiences.

On the other hand, blog sports articles, due to their lack of a professional vocabulary, often find themselves in a struggle to effectively communicate with the audience. The use of two languages (English and Kiswahili) can lead to a sense of unprofessionalism in journalism, highlighting the challenges faced by these blogs. The researcher conducted interviews with four bloggers and a key informant from TCRA³¹ obtain information on bloggers' adherence to journalistic standards and ethics. A member of **the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA-CC)** said the committee noticed that numerous bloggers missed registering or had their permits revoked for violating journalistic standards, which led them to pursue a journalism course. He added:

TCRA aims to promote effective governance by ensuring that individuals can access information freely and that bloggers can gather and disseminate information. However, it's crucial that such material is presented following journalism's standards and moral principles. As our country is still in its early stages of social-economic development, we do not allow the creation of platforms that could mislead the public.

He states that TCRA diligently monitors blogs and other electronic media platforms to guarantee that the material disseminated is accurate, unbiased, and conforms to journalistic standards and Tanzanian cultural principles.

Participant #1 stated that following the block of his blog, he enrolled in a journalism course after his blogging experience profoundly impacted his reporting style. This positive transformation,

guided by the strong influence of ethical guidelines and legal procedures, allowed him to deliver reports on local occurrences with a sense of integrity and precision. His journey is a testament to the potential growth and improvement that journalism education can bring, instilling optimism and hope in aspiring journalists.

Participant #2 said he had hired professional editors to edit the news from his blogs. Since then, he has become a major player in the news industry, increasing his readership, blog audiences and receiving much advertising.

she stated:

In the modern media landscape, bloggers have evolved from citizen journalists to fully-fledged professional journalists. Our publication provides trustworthy reporting, and its coverage is broader than that of traditional media outlets, which lack the same freedom to use multiple platforms as social media writers.

Participants # 3 and #4 said they had advanced journalism education, so they decided to start their businesses and hire their colleagues, who also had the opportunity to practice journalism by writing investigative news and stories about rural development.

Participants # 3 added, in rural areas, blogs have become the primary news source due to the old media's focus on urban centres, prioritising coverage of negative topics, including mismanagement of funds, criminal activity, and accidents, primarily to boost selling. Consequently, bloggers adhere to journalistic ethics as blogs satisfy the informational needs of Tanzanians residing in rural regions. Rural dwellers have been marginalised in development due to the absence of media that chronicles rural progress and offers citizens educational information that fosters development.

Tanzanian bloggers have formed their own association, to seek funds and sponsors for training, exchange experiences and make blogs a powerful pillar in the news sector. This study is similar to the research done by Brown (2005), who noted accurately that the work of professional journalists is only published after it goes through the checks and balances process, where the ordinary citizen journalists receive no training and editorial advice and have no such expertise to safeguard such accuracy. This indicates that citizen journalism neglects professional journalists' principles and ethics. However, the study is consistent with the studies of Fernando and Sham (2008) and Johnson (2008). Mutsvairo and Columbus (2012) suggested that blogs and social media have emerged as alternatives to traditional media. This study supports the gatekeeping theory, which helps journalists maintain ethical standards. This study substantiates the computer-mediated theory, indicating that technological advancements have facilitated information access for rural residents via blogs as alternative media. This study supports Onyango (2013), technology has increased the accessibility of citizen journalism worldwide and has made online content a vital component of social, economic, and cultural life in many societies.

Conclusion

Studies have concluded that Tanzanian blogs adhere to the same journalistic principles and ethical standards as traditional media outlets. The findings indicated that most news bloggers work as mainstream because they are monitored by TCRA, which bans any blog that violates the law. In response to the ban, bloggers have undertaken journalism courses and operated their blogs professionally, effectively serving as alternative reliable media for Tanzanians. Blogs operate distinctly by utilizing information from various media or other blogs, a practice not permitted in mainstream media. This unique approach, which allows for a diverse range of sources, significantly enhances the reliability of blogs compared to traditional media⁴⁴ and keeps the audience informed and enlightened. Blogs also frequently connect to other social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, allowing readers to discuss and comment on related topics.

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