

MOBILE CITIZEN JOURNALISM

AN EXPLORATION OF THE OPINIONS, EXPERIENCES AND
EXPECTATIONS OF SUB-SAHARA AFRICAN NEWS REPORTERS



by

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Introduction

Let's start with the fact that I have never been to Africa myself. So why write a master thesis about this continent, which is already too diverse and too complex to fully understand for those who travelled it a hundred times and for those who live there? The non-western world in general attracts my attention since I was a kid. Different cultures on the television screen but as well on the streets and at school provoked an increasing curiosity eventually leading to the choice to study Cultural Anthropology. After finishing my bachelor and travelling Latin America for three times I felt it was time for a next step: a master in Human Geography. Meanwhile the World Cup football 2010 in South Africa approached and I considered the increasing media attention on Africa as an opportunity for my study. In search for a topic for my thesis I especially studied western media representations of Africa and its influence on global power relations. Besides, due to an internship at SME Advies a growing interest in new media tools and new forms of communication arouse.

Last winter, after unsuccessfully exploring several research themes for my master thesis I approached Peter Vlam from media agency Africa Interactive for inspiration. He suggested to drop the 'representation part' as a possible topic for my thesis and to focus purely on new media developments in Africa. This was a helpful advice. With in mind the deterrent role of mobile uploads to Twitter for news coverage of the post-election violence in Iran in 2009, I decided to focus on the effects of the rise of mobile phones in a Sub-Sahara African context. The extended network of Africa Interactive enabled me to approach enough African professional and unprofessional news reporters in order to collect sufficient and variable answers to my questions, without the need to travel to the sub continent myself. Therefore I thank Peter Vlam and his colleague Tchitula Teuns for helping me out in the first stages of this process. Besides, I thank my supervisor Tine Béneker for her patience and assistance during the process of exploring different research topics and writing. And I especially thank Christel Brenninkmeijer for all her efforts editing and correcting my English vocabulary during her stay in Guatemala. But most of all I thank Watipaso Mzungu, Nana Walter Wilson, Benedict Tembo, Alwyn Viljoen, Mary Atolagbe, Fortune Phiri, Vincent Mugaba, Alex Kiarie, Femi Peters, Arnold Munthali, Ameyaw Debrah, Kemo Cham, Sanday Chongo Kabange and all the other reporters who offered their time and efforts to help me out. Without them it would have been impossible to conduct this research.

1 Citizen Journalism: theory and practice

Media today are truly “mass” in terms of consumption but are extremely limited in terms of participation in production.

- McChesney, 2000

1.1 *Introducing the concept of citizen journalism*

Society might have changed faster than it ever did the last two decades. The rise of Internet and other new technologies have had a deep impact on the way we live, the way we perceive information and the way we communicate. People might have spoken of time-space compression in the late sixties; they wouldn't have if they knew what the world would look like forty years later. Nowadays we live in an age that is by some deservedly named the Internet Era.

Due to Internet alternative forms of media arose, caught under the collective denominator “new media”. Subsequently so-called Web 2.0 applications changed the communicative possibilities through the Internet, and by that the way information is perceived, dramatically. Web 2.0 is the denominator for the second stage of Internet. It is no longer only a medium to extract information from. Now anybody can easily add and share content and publish it to the world. The audience nowadays is the producer and editor of information, resulting in Benkler's notion of a ‘networked public sphere’ (2006: 112). Technological devices allow the audience to become its own broadcasters and reach large numbers of people at trivial costs. These developments have major influence on the exclusive position media corporations used to possess. Nowadays, sharing and publishing news is no longer reserved to their reporters since a new form of journalism has originated: citizen journalism.

The first signs of this emerging concept became visible in the early nineties, but it took another decade to mature. In this thesis the term ‘citizen journalism’ will be used, despite the existence of other terms such as participatory journalism, citizen media or people's journalism. The concept of citizen journalism achieved global awareness when journalist and blogger Dan Gillmor published his book “We the Media” in 2006. He argues that while in “the 20th century, making news was almost entirely the province of journalists; the people we covered, or ‘newsmakers’; and the legions of public relations and marketing people who manipulated everyone ... Tomorrow's news reporting and production will be more of a conversation, or a seminar” (Gillmor, 2006: xiii). This power shift started with the journalists themselves who, like Gillmor, started to create and distribute material without reference to their publishers. Sequential, audience members started to author content themselves without reference to journalists or publishers. Widespread access to broadband Internet facilitated these pioneers.

Defined by Verclas (2008), the terms citizen media and citizen journalism refer to forms of content produced by private citizens who are otherwise not professional journalists. Everyday citizens producing, collecting, and sharing information characterize citizen media. Criticizers of citizen journalism emphasize that simply

performing these acts do not make anybody a journalist. And they are right. To elaborate on this, it is essential to deconstruct the concept. The concept makes reference to the terms 'citizen' and 'journalism'. Therefore, both the term and the concept of citizen journalism are subject of discussion and criticism.

To start with 'journalism', it is essential to elaborate on the substantive meaning of what and who a journalist is. Duffield and Cokley (2006: 6) mention that journalists are generally defined by how they perform "a bundle of facts and ideas, if expertly got together, judged expressly in terms of what might be crafted out of them, and used to make a product accessible to it's audience, is different from ordinary information, handled ordinary". The right to be called a journalist can also be obtained by a qualification or professional employment within a recognized organisation. An editorial intervention, when an editor comes between the author and the audience, can also be seen as a precondition for publishing content as a journalist (Tilley & Cokley, 2008). From this perspective it is hard to call citizens who produce, collect and share information journalists.

But the preconditions mentioned above have been subject of intense criticism themselves the last decades. Publications by van Dijk (1991) McNair (1998), Harvey (2005) and Moyo (2009) are relevant recent examples of offences on the existing power relation between publishers and media corporations on the one hand and the audience on the other. Even while such authors "acknowledge the centrality of traditional journalism in the shaping of modern democratic society, sociology of news scholars have over the years expressed growing dissatisfaction with the institutional forms of newsgathering, processing and dissemination which have crystallized into a rather narrow understanding of what is news ... Citizen journalism has been widely seen as heralding where the power to define what is news has been recast and decentred" (Moyo, *ibid*).

Moyo elaborates on the criticism towards traditional journalism for being market-driven and obsessed by negativity and sensation. Because a rather small and powerful elite possesses the dominating media corporations, the audience gets the elites representation of the truth and facts. Before the rise of citizen journalism this elite decided what the audience knew and how it was represented and valued (van Dijk, 1991: 41; Harvey, 2005; McNair, 1998; Moyo, 2009). Clearly journalistic production is not always as coloured as these authors accuse. Some (independent) journalists depend on the preferences of editors to a lesser extent than supposed. Fact is that journalists have to come up with good stories in order to keep their jobs. So even if reality of journalistic practice is halfway between both the principles of journalism and the accusations made by their critics, citizen journalism might be a welcome addition to the field. Although it does not cover all preconditions for being named journalism in its essence, it is clear that professional journalism frequently does not either.

The use of the term 'citizen' is also topic of a heated debate. Especially for professional journalists the term 'citizen' might be striking. Professional journalists are citizens of their country as well, so why not call *them* citizen journalists? For some of them the untrained content collectors and distributors called journalists now are a real threat to their profession. Given the fact that most of the citizen journalists are simply putting information together, shouldn't this be considered as a new form of communication rather than journalism? When Moyo (2009) faced these

questions on an African media conference he countered them by revealing the properties of citizenship. "Citizenship presupposes a set of rights that the individual is entitled to, including communicative rights. Yet repressive environments tend to strip individuals of their rights and leave them as mere subjects ... The new technologies of communication are therefore seen by many as potentially restoring a critical element of citizenship, which is the ability to communicate and express oneself without political or formal institutional constraints". The contemporary deprofessionalized, decapitalized and deinstitutionalized media environment, Moyo argues, is driven by a desire to share information, which is enabled by the new "technologies of freedom". He emphasizes that the agency and autonomy of individual citizens when sharing personal experiences and perception of occurrences are of public interest without a pursuit for financial gain.

Critics of citizen journalism mostly agree with the empowering features of the concept but stress important weaknesses as well. Tilley and Cokley (2008) summarize the main arguments in three points. First, citizen journalism tends to devalue the ethical and commercial value of the term journalist and the professional skills that are part of the job. Over time this might result in the loss of those skills by newsmakers. Second, it erodes the overall quality of information and news reporting. Not only because non-professionals produce lots of content but also due to a 'mirror ball effect' in which "a dazzling cacophony of competing raw sources overwhelms less colourful output from skilled information gatherers and disseminators" (Tilley & Cokley, *ibid*). Third, 'fake citizens' representing commercial parties, criminals or political groups with intentions to undermine society by spreading hatred and incite violence might misuse the possibilities of citizen journalism.

Despite the weaknesses of the concept, proponents of citizen journalism consider the devaluation of the journalistic notion inferior to its democratising features. As Gillmor argues "The emerging form of bottom-up politics is bringing civic activity back into a culture that has long since given up on politics as anything but a hard-edged game for the wealthy and powerful. The technologies of news making are available to citizen and politician alike, and may well be the vehicle for saving something we could otherwise lose: a system in which the consent of the governed means more than the simple casting of votes" (2006: 89).

In response to the assumption that a transition from institutional to individual journalistic production democratizes the field, Markham (2009) states that the *de*-structuring of journalism is not liberating at all. It should instead be seen as a *re*-structuring, since it is a substitution from one set of rules to another. He argues that "instead of ushering a freer media... ...in which media producers will simply be able to act in good faith rather than having to master an arbitrary collection of signifiers, the newly emerging economy of citizen journalism is marked by its own currencies and dispositions which we have no reason to assume are truer to an idealised neutral conception of news values and the public interest" (Markham, 2009). He emphasizes that citizen journalism "should not be seen as the disinterested pursuit of truth, nor as simply the cynical pursuit of status or power, but as a part of a broader struggle to determine what counts as authoritative." Therefore Markham suggests that the appearance of anti-elitist and anti-institutional authority is an expression of a wider shift in cultural authority, which should not be seen as

something “endemic” to citizen journalism itself. The emergence of citizen journalism, he concludes, reflects a broad societal change whereby authentic personal experience is increasingly perceived prior to institutional knowledge.

1.2 *Empowerment of the people*

While Gillmor bases his book mainly on United States cases, his argument makes more sense for developing or conflict countries where the powerful are losing control over one of their instruments, the media. However, most low- and middle class countries lack widespread Internet access, especially in rural areas. Besides, critics like Markham (ibid) argue that it is unlikely the “universalisation” of a Western culture of citizen journalism will occur. However, the general prospects on citizen journalism mention the rapid emergence of especially one media application that allow new forms of citizen journalism and that is often the only technology people in these countries have access to: the mobile phone (Moyo, 2009; Verclas 2008; West, 2008; Just Journalism, 2009).

In recent years many examples have clearly shown the way mobile phones change the political value of citizen journalism for good. For instance, in 1988 only a few images of mass protests in Burma reached the world. Ten years ago it took several weeks for footage of Burman state violence to be broadcasted by international media. In 2007 it took only hours before the world witnessed videos from mobile phones showing protesting monks being attacked by police troops. A year later, in Malaysia, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi mentioned the importance of new media after disappointing election results. "It was a serious misjudgement. We made the biggest mistake in thinking that it was not important. We thought that the newspapers, the print media, the television was supposed to be important, but the young people were looking at SMS and blogs." (Verclas, 2008).

Mobile citizen journalism is relatively new and developing fast. Verclas (ibid) summarizes the concept as follows: “Citizens posting media directly from a mobile phone to the Internet or other mobile phones, and an online public. The media published may include groundbreaking news, or stories, pictures, and information that is neglected by mainstream media organizations. Individuals with mobile phones and other media tools are able to capture ‘news’ in real or close-to-real time much more immediately and rapidly than professional journalists”.

Mobile media ‘guru’ Tomi Ahonen (2008) acknowledges these arguments and even argues that mobile phones are “the 7th mass media” shading the previous five: print, recordings, cinema, radio and television. In combination with Internet as the sixth mass media mobiles have a number of benefits, crucial for further development of citizen journalism. For instance, mobiles are relatively cheap, easy to use, permanently carried thus quickly employable and suitable for illiterates. That makes cell phones the perfect media tool for remote rural areas. Knight (2008) refers to these features and its importance for people who were voiceless before: “In today’s world, anyone and everyone is potentially a journalist”.

Therefore, expectations in the field of development are high. Considering different initiatives such as Voices of Africa, Ushahidi, FrontlineSMS, Witness and countless other NGOs promoting mobile reporting in developing areas for marginalized groups, the concept is gaining faith and accountability. The mobile

phone is not only extremely suitable for journalism, but is used in many ways in developing countries. It is widely considered the most promising tool to quickly inform poorly accessible areas and aids the accessibility of development organisations. Especially SMS is, according to Moyo (2009), “undoubtedly” the most potent tool for alternative communication in developing areas. Under restricted environments, he continues, mobile phones and satellite broadcasting are powerful tools for political mobilisation and citizen participation in the national political discourse. However, Moyo (ibid) and Verclas (2008) make notice of the dangers that could arise as well. Increased polarization amongst communities might accelerate through mobile phones. Ethnical violence in Kenya after the 2008 elections was regularly headed through SMS-forwarding promoting mobs to attack neighbourhoods (Goldstein & Rotich, 2008; Heacock, 2009). Therefore, although mobile phones brought opportunities to citizen journalism and possibilities for empowering marginalized groups, its rapid growth and innovative use should be embraced with caution in areas where conflict is easily catalyzed.

2 Media in Sub-Sahara Africa

Only those who understand the power of mobile as the newest mass media channel will be able to share in its success.
- Tomi Ahonen, 2008

2.1 Information and Power

When studying African media and its role in processes such as democratization processes, peace building and conflict, it strikes that precisely the most cruel example of the power of media is mentioned in many articles and studies: the atrocious role of Radio Milles Collines in the Rwandan genocide in 1994. In an already unstable Rwanda this radio station successfully agitated and mobilized Hutu youngsters to prosecute and kill Tutsi's (by Radio Milles Collines mentioned to as 'cockroaches') and moderate Hutu's. Within 100 days between 500.000 and one million people were killed. Although, sadly enough, this is the ultimate example wherein the power of the media to mobilize and "inform" people for a common goal is shown, it is more appropriate to focus on the opportunities for African media, spurred by social, political and technological change. In this chapter an attempt will be made to provide a broad overview of the Sub-Sahara African media landscape. Although it must be emphasized that the cultural, political, social and economic variety within this geographical area is immense, media development bears some similarities. Despite their mutual differences, media landscape in Sub-Sahara African countries corresponds at various points especially when compared to the West. Drawn on several case studies and official reports, a broad overview will be presented of recent trends and developments in Sub-Sahara African press.

First, to obtain the slightest understanding of African media culture, the influence of colonial rule and its historical backdrop is indispensable. While in 1989 all eyes focussed on the historical transition in Europe, facing the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the reunion of Germany, Africa also prepared for a new era. That year at the Conference of Benin almost half of its countries made a transition to democracy, following in the footsteps of Botswana, Mauritius and Gambia, until then considered the only democracies on the continent. This means that at some point after colonial rule and independency struggles, almost all African countries faced some form of dictatorship or one-party rule. But in the early nineties more than twenty constitutions were changed and broader political participation was allowed (Goldstein & Rotich, 2008).

For the African press the turn to democracy seemed to open possibilities when governments started to allow independent media backed up by media councils and laws. In 1991 this transformation was pushed by a UNESCO conference on media pluralism and press freedom in Africa. Participating countries signed the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press and showed their goodwill towards a changing society. But media pluralism is not necessarily an incentive for stable democracies. Scholars argue that a diversity of sources of information and multiple voices in the media might confuse the non-literate and

largely non-politically conscious people. This might undermine the already difficult process of nation building. Despite of this fear, access to different viewpoints by different media, including unpopular ones, have enriched African media landscape and are widely regarded as an instrument to catalyze democracy and good governance (Soola, 2009).

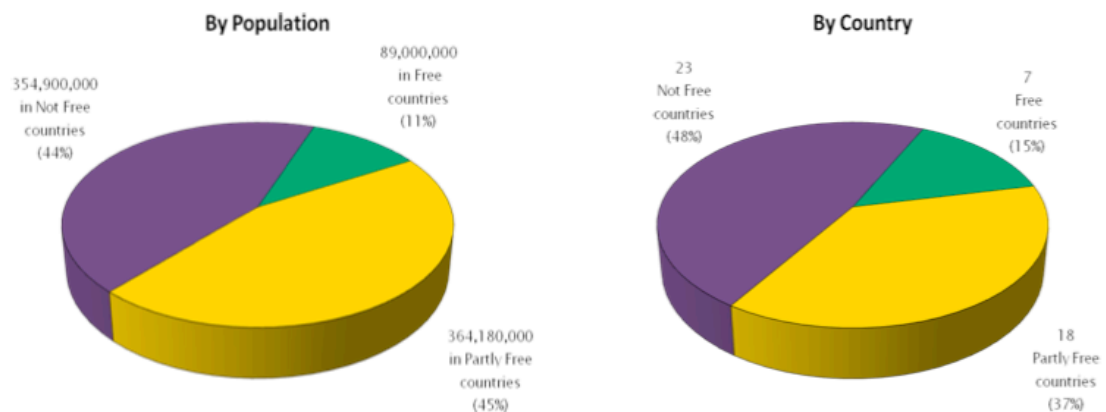
Nevertheless, the backdrop of colonial power held strong influence on media developments in the years after the Windhoek declarations (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004, Soola, 2009). The media remained characterized by an authoritarian concept where growth of indigenous press was restricted. In colonial times the media was a power tool propagating colonial vision on the news and attending subjects they considered valuable. Nowadays, although the Windhoek declaration fostered new media laws, elite discourses continue capturing the mediated public sphere, raising concerns about whose interests are served by the process of democratization (Tetty, 2008; Karikari, 2004).

Freedom House's "Freedom of the Press 2009" report provides a valid overview of the contemporary state of freedom of the press in the world. By measuring 23 criteria a ranking is composed which indicates the degree of freedom of the press for every individual country. For every individual criteria a country scores a certain amount of points resulting in a total score that indicates the state of freedom of the press. The country status is measured as follows: Free (0-30 points), Partly Free (31-60 points), Not Free (61-100 points). Iceland is on top, rating an overall score of 9 (The Netherlands score 13 points) and North Korea ranking last with an overall score of 98 (Freedom House, 2009).

The 23 criteria focus on three environmental categories in order to cover the main factors that determine the degree of freedom of the press. The first category is the legal environment, in which the laws and regulations that could influence media content and legally allow governments to restrict media's ability to operate are examined. Second is the political environment, for which the political control over content of news media is evaluated. This could concern issues such as editorial independence, access to information and sources, official censorship and self-censorship, and intimidation like threats, imprisonment or violent assaults of journalists by the state or other actors. The third category examines the economic environment wherein issues such as the structure of media ownership, transparency and concentration of ownership, the costs of establishing media and the impact of corruption and bribery are evaluated (Freedom House, *ibid*).

The report provides a clear overview of freedom of the press in Sub-Saharan Africa as well. The ranking indicates notable differences between the 48 countries, with Ghana having the freest media, scoring 26 points and Eritrea scoring worst with 94 points.

Figure 1 Press Freedom in Sub-Sahara Africa¹



Source: Freedom of the Press 2009

As demonstrated in Figure 1, Sub-Sahara Africa counts only seven countries where the press is considered to be free; besides Ghana these are Mali, South Africa, Namibia, the archipelagos of Sao Tome & Principe, Cape Verde and the isle Mauritius. In other words, only 11% of Sub-Sahara African population enjoys freedom of the press against 45% being informed by only partly free press and another 44% that lives in countries where the media have no freedom at all (Freedom House, *ibid*). These conditions are probably highly influential on the way people perceive and handle information. The general lack of media freedom, as demonstrated by the choice of the determining categories for measuring press freedom by Freedom House, should be considered a result of the inhibitory legal, political and economic state most countries are still in. Dictators and powerful elites are still the dominant factors in Sub-Saharan politics, controlling media in order to sustain their position. Therefore a closer look on the relation between information and power is helpful.

Hameso (1997) states about this matter: “Information has always been a basis for knowledge; and the latter is power. Lack of information contributes to knowledge deficiency, both leading to powerlessness. Freedom of information in that sense implies a form of empowerment or better still, it signifies freedom from ignorance, from servitude and ultimately freedom to choose. An informed person is an empowered person”. In this sense Hameso adheres to the Foucauldian discourse of power relations. Foucault (1979: 27) emphasised the interdependence of power and knowledge: “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.” He argues that knowledge is the power over others and the power to define others. This because power “produces reality”, it “produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, *ibid*: 194). Therefore power relations are often rooted deeply in society and hard to change. According to Foucault, societies will not change if the mechanisms through which power is exercised, outside, below and alongside the state apparatuses are not also changed (Sarup, 1988:79). The media are such mechanisms through which power is exercised.

¹ See annex 1 for the complete ranking and an overview map of Sub-Sahara Africa.

This makes recent media developments highly interesting and possibly very determinative for society in the future.

2.2 Obstacles for African media development

The media, as argued by Onadipe and Lord (1998), can help shape popular perceptions of the nature of a society. Thus, in terms of human rights, ideas of freedom of opinion and expression can be transformed into a concrete reality. The media functions as a “watchdog” on public institutions and leaders, promoting them to follow the law. However, most African countries have been and are still characterized by a lack of freedom to provide information that disfavours the government. In such a restrictive climate, media and its participants have never been able to fulfil the role media achieved in post-modernist societies. In a society where freedom of information is restrained and where politics are not transparent, corruption, abuse of power, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, and violations of fundamental human rights will not be rectified (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004).

Unfortunately most African countries face these social evils and governments regularly try to keep it that way by using their power to avoid the press reporting freely. In addition, Eti (2009) refers to Udomisor’s notion of the “environmental factor” wherein “the media takes on the forms and coloration of the social and political structures within it operates.” A poor democratic structure characterized by the social evils mentioned above, which are effectively positioned to participate in and wherein reporters are familiar, will have a telling effect on objective journalism. The press, Eti concludes, is only a reflection of the society in which it operates.

Except for an environment where freedom of speech and information is limited and the environmental factor impacts objective journalism, African media face lots of other difficulties and troubling factors that retain them from fulfilling their role successfully. Several studies mention a lack of training, basic skills and accountability, needed by African journalists for quality reporting (Onadipe & Lord, 1998; Acayo & Mnjama, 2004; Steyn & De Beer, 2004; Tettey, 2008). It is indicated “that the training needs vary enormously between individuals, but some basic categories in writing and editing skills, basic news values, coverage planning, interviewing and investigative techniques, photojournalism, layout, programme editing for electronic journalists, media ethics, conflict management techniques, legal frameworks, marketing and distribution are necessary. With many of the basic skills lacking, more specialised tasks suffer, such as political reporting, conflict reporting, legal affairs, financial and economic reporting, and social development reporting” (Acayo & Mnjama, *ibid*).

Even for journalists who possess these skills to some extent, the environment they perform in is frequently discouraging and demoralising. In general, media organisations in Africa are not properly managed and accountability is regularly absent. Editorial staff and managers are commonly inexperienced and constrained by economic or political concerns, not to mention media owned for political purposes, nepotism or clientelism (Tettey, 2006). Besides, the salary that journalists receive is frequently very low and not enough to feed a family. Journalists might even write for rewards, bordering on blackmail (Onadipe & Lord, 1998). Especially journalists of the print media are vulnerable to poor economic and social conditions.

In most countries newspapers are only distributed in the major cities, and heavily competed by radio stations. The newspaper business is not a goldmine in most countries, catalyzing Udomisor's "environmental factor" as its consequence.

This brings us to one of the main problems of African press. Mostly the larger media like newspapers, magazines or television are based in the major cities, while in most countries more than seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas. These areas are hard to reach for print media. High transport and distribution costs due to weak infrastructure make rural areas a market that is too expensive. Low literacy rates make distribution outside the city even more unprofitable. Radio remains therefore usually the only affordable medium for people in these rural societies, making radio audience still the largest on the continent. It must be emphasized that the quality of local radio stations is mostly very poor due to lack of the journalistic qualities mentioned above. In addition to the poor quality, Smith (2009) argues that the exclusivity of radio in rural areas has also been a power tool of the government in the last decades. The relatively sophisticated media landscape of the capital city did not reach the majority of the population and state broadcasters provided the only locally generated information. For different viewpoints than that of the government, rural societies were frequently appointed to English spoken BBC or French RFI. Until the emergence of new media tools, which will be discussed later in this chapter, these poor media conditions characterized most of Africa's rural communities.

2.3 Politics and conflict reporting

Broadcast monopolies in rural areas and underdeveloped media distribution are not satisfactory in order to manipulate the flow of information for most African governments. As mentioned above, in most African countries freedom of information is still rare when it comes to politics. Acayo and Mnjama (2004) found that in Uganda, journalists are regularly charged for repressive sedition or publishing false news, causing self-censorship. Press laws that date back from the colonial era are even used to prosecute journalists, such as the law on seditious libel. Furthermore, although in Uganda the Media Council is empowered to arbitrate disputes between the media and the state, the government prefers to rely on more severe criminal sanctions.

Despite the technical and skill-related obstacles mentioned above and governments who threaten, prosecute, imprison and even kill reporters, lots of African journalists manage to perform quality journalistic content. Given the circumstances of the environment they perform in, many African reporters might be considered real heroes, fighting for justice and good governance while risking their lives. Innumerable examples can be found where media organizations have achieved to expose acts of politicians that undermined good governance. Tettey (2008) names two cases from Sudan where newspapers heavily criticized their government. He cites a journalist who condemns the links between the government and the Janjaweed militias: "... a racist regime that is in many respects worse than the Apartheid regime in South Africa, which at least had the dignity not to employ rape as a tactic of suppression." Another journalist criticizes the role of China and Russia in the Darfur conflict: "it is not solely the government of Sudan that kills its own

people, but it does so in collaboration with whoever helps it reach these heinous levels of human rights violation.” The courage necessary for such statements is, according to Tetley (ibid), typical for the shift African journalism is facing the last decade.

Despite positive examples of courageous journalists and social or political change realized due to critical investigations and reporting, there is no reason to cheer when elaborating on politics and journalism in Africa. A fair part of the mismatch between governments and media might be found in the recent militaristic history of African politics. A journalist quoted by Onadipe and Lord (1998) describes it this way: "The military as an institution believes in a culture of secrecy, that if you have to fight and win wars you must keep your strategies close to your chest. This philosophy has passed into the governance style in West Africa. Military rule does not encourage transparency and this affects the relationship between the government and the media." In most African countries the military still has strong ties with the government, thus resulting in a misunderstanding and disapproval of media values and ethics.

Media that attempt to give objective representations of events in conflict situations, are under even more pressure than usual. The parties involved in the conflict expect nothing less than positive reporting in their favour. Therefore impartial reporting is rather difficult for most African media and rarely welcomed or supported by the government. Nevertheless there are always journalists who try to put things in perspective and to analyze conflicts impartially. Onadipe and Lord (ibid) summarize the possible impartial engagements by journalists in conflict areas in four categories, based on interviews with a number of African journalists. First, providing information to enable people to make the right decisions about how to respond to conflict. This could include interpreting the causes of conflicts and early warnings. Second, educating people about conflict resolution processes and encouraging debate on the issues. By providing a space for conflict resolution experts and other parties involved to share their views, an analysis can be made that helps to educate the public and conflicting parties. Third, providing a channel through which the different main players of the conflicting parties can be heard and can communicate with each other. Fourth, protecting parties and the public against false information by reporting events as they really happen, in a non-partisan manner, showing the consequences of conflict and exposing human rights violations.

These four impartial engagements are not only risky in many occasions; they require qualities that the often low-skilled journalists rarely possess. Although Onadipe and Lord (1998) advocate that journalists are proper “conflict specialists” because a lot of their energy is spent describing conflicting parties, Acayo and Mnjama (2004) demonstrate that this claim is only true to a rather superficial extent: “In Uganda, very few journalists have had exposures to any kind of war reporting training, instruction on how to protect themselves and their sources in a conflict situation, instruction on how humanitarian law and human rights law should apply in conflicts and how conflict resolution theory and practice can be of relevance to the media and the events they are covering.” The print media covering conflict reporting in Northern Uganda rely almost completely on information obtained from witnesses or victims (Acayo & Mnjama, ibid). Except for journalists lacking impartial reporting skills and possibilities given safety aspects, it is argued that the majority of the

audience is rather disinterested in balanced views and critical analysis. Kyazze (2009) speaks of widespread anti-intellectualism due to a lack of social knowledge or the fact citizens feel excluded from the decision-making processes.

Regarding the matter of conflict reporting, and reporting in general, it must be emphasised that there is one group of people that is more or less ignored by African press. Whether they are victims of government or rebellious violence, a drunken husband, discrimination or sexism, women's rights are frequently underexposed. Gender equality is hardly considered newsworthy. A reason may be that media on the continent is still dominated by men, both as newsmakers and as captains of the industry. Male journalists are simply not interested in gender related issues (Kyazze, 2009; Onadipe & Lord, 1998; Tom, 2008). Nevertheless there are promising signs, such as two Ugandan newspapers that allocate particular days of the week to female reporters.

2.4 New media, new opportunities

The above outlines a rather pessimistic view on African media development since the Windhoek declarations in 1991. The numerous seemingly insurmountable factors obstructing media progress and development will not be overcome without revolutionary change. But revolutionary change is already underway, thanks to the emergence and the rapid expansion of new media on the continent during the last decade. Besides, as argued by Tettey (2008), journalists' perceptions on human rights are changing, as illustrated by the critical Sudanese reporters mentioned earlier. A Ghanaian journalist describes the change as follows: "We just reported incidents like, 'A man in Saboba has raped a school girl,' but we wouldn't investigate it further. We wouldn't go in to the societal problems underlying it..." "We always looked at human interest, not human rights. We would just get the facts. We never followed up to make a change. Now we push to change things. We now realize there are human rights issues in every story" (Tettey, *ibid*). It must be noted that even if this potential shift to human rights consciousness within the media proves to expand throughout the continent, remote rural areas would hardly profit without better access to media. Therefore the emergence of broad availability of new media tools is a development that will have a far more striking effect on African media landscape than merely changing perspectives on human rights.

Especially "the relative weight of the mobile explosion" will have tremendous impact on the media as a whole in developing countries as a whole, and Africa in particular (West, 2008). "Mobile explosion" is probably the most striking notion of what is happening in Africa at the moment. Scholars concerned with new media in Sub-Saharan Africa emphatically stress the influence and rapid growth of the mobile phone market. The continent now counts more than a quarter of a billion cell phones and that number is growing faster than it is on any other continent. This has changed the playing field of the media dramatically, especially for rural communities (Smith, 2009; West, 2008). Estimates indicate that mobile networks now cover half of the rural population, meaning that although rural citizens are cut off from traditional media such as newspapers and television they have access to Internet and mobile media. Through SMS services alerts, breaking news, headlines, sports fixtures, weather and traffic can be received (Otieno, 2009).

Besides the fact that through mobiles rural populations are gaining more access to media as consumers, opportunities to become participants have increased as well. And this is considered at least as important. People from rural areas now have a voice. This is clarified by the way people can interact with radio now, which is still the main medium, particularly in the rural. Ten years ago, one had to visit the studio, a reporter had to come to the field, or a listener had to rely on the post office. These are time-consuming and expensive options. Nowadays radio stations run programs about subjects such as politics, sports, economics and society, totally based on incoming text messages or calls from listeners (Otieno, 2009; Smith, 2009). The empowering feature of mobiles is therefore assessed as extremely positive. "The text messages read out on the radio provide a sort of pressure release for the millions of people who previously felt they had no public outlet for frustrations with politics at home" (Smith, *ibid*).

However, it is impossible to say if Africa's digital and mobile revolution is going to foster pure positive change in the struggle between democracy and dictatorship. Goldstein and Rotich (2008) are critical to that matter. They exposed the leading role of group-SMS to spread hatred and to organize ethnic violence in the aftermath of Kenya's 2007 elections. Although they acknowledge the power of the digital tools, they stress that there is not yet enough data to determine the social and political impact of digital media on society.

Fact is that people who would not have had a voice without digital media, are now heard. This is best shown by the prize-winning Ushahidi platform. Using Google Maps, Ushahidi monitored text messages from Kenyans during the ethnic violence in 2008. Everybody could send a SMS to Ushahidi to report abuses such as mob- and police violence and killings. Within days a geographical overview was presented that provided an overview of occasions traditional media were not able to cover. Citizens whose voice would have never been monitored otherwise, now participated in news coverage and conflict reporting.

Ushahidi and similar platforms are deployed in other parts of the world since, penetrating the public sphere and in several occasions undermining state-controlled media. Tettey (2008) states: "The transformations in media ownership, control, and information dissemination made possible by the Internet means that counter discourses that challenge the hegemonic viewpoint of the state are being vigorously articulated within the virtual architecture of this reconfigured public sphere." He particularly stresses the possibilities for Africans located in the diaspora, who are able to access, assess and produce information their compatriots may not. In that sense the digital revolution is promising for African journalism in cases where official sources fail to provide sufficient information. However, the emerging millions of citizen journalists and media participants will have a striking effect on professional reporters and quality reporting in the long run. The future of professional reporters depends for a large part on how they interact and are able to adjust to the changing landscape.

3 Operationalization and methodology

3.1 *Operationalization*

This paragraph will discuss the central issues and main goals of this thesis, it will elaborate on the research questions and their operationalization into questionnaires and interviews, and it will justify the methods used and choices made during this process. To start with, however, the outcomes of the theoretical and contextual framework need to be examined further in order to determine the outline of this thesis and its relevance.

The motivation for this research originated from personal curiosity about the increasing amount of news flashes of how new media tools open doors for people that were voiceless before. A lot has been written in the media about the liberating effects of Iranian citizen journalism through Twitter last year. In Kenya the Ushahidi platform is embraced as a revolutionary 2.0 tool for democratizing conflict and crisis reporting. NGO's such as Voices of Africa, Witness and Frontline SMS rely on the assumption that access to information, both as consumers as producers, empowers marginalized groups. It is very likely that it does, however, literature on the subject is still rather scarce.

The literature study on journalism in Sub-Sahara Africa revealed some general representations that are crucial in order to determine the focus of this thesis. It is widely acknowledged that African media professionals generally suffer a lack of journalistic and managerial skills and accountability, resulting in low-quality reporting. The environment they perform in is mostly characterized by a certain degree of (self-) censorship, nepotism, clientelism and financial limitations. Due to these conditions, impartial reporting (when confronted with conflicting parties) is regarded rather rare in most African countries. The written press faces geographical limits and is mainly distributed in the larger urban centers only. Therefore, most African media consumers rely on radio as their main source of information, and state controlled broadcasts are regularly the only available choice in rural areas. Recent years' rapid increase of access to Internet in urban centers and the rapid growth of the amount of mobile phones in rural areas have a striking effect on general media consumption and production. Media participation today is far more accessible, providing space for alternative voices and disclosing geographical subordinated societies.

Despite the assumptions and the widespread belief in the democratic power of new media, the lack of scientific evidence keeps us in the dark about the long-term effects of increasing media participation by citizens in countries where media are restricted. Therefore questions rise. What are the effects on the long run for young but vulnerable democracies? What are the potential dangers? To which extent are traditional media able to participate when confronted with citizen journalists who are not committed to the same (government-) restrictions they are? Is citizen participation to media actually able to change things for the good of the people? And how do journalists from traditional media respond to the fact that they lost

their monopoly on news making and reporting, on the assumption that “in today’s world, anyone and everyone is potentially a journalist”? It is especially these last two questions that this thesis will try to answer.

With the results of the theoretical and contextual framework in mind, a central question is formulated that features both the practical as the substantive side of the subject. This central question this thesis is based on, is:

How do Sub-Sahara African reporters experience the rise of mobile citizen journalism with respect to their profession and its empowering effects for marginalized societies?

In this thesis “mobile citizen journalism” is the denominator for citizens who are not a journalist by profession but use their mobile phone directly or indirectly to report newsworthy content and thus participate in news making. They might contribute to a radio broadcast, a newspaper, an Internet site or any other media. In several articles the emerging phenomenon of professional journalists using their cell phone as a tool to catch and publish content is called “mobile journalism”. However, these professional journalists are excluded in the use of the concept in this thesis. The term “marginalized societies” needs additional explanation as well. Marginalized in this context should be considered as sort of a synonym of “voiceless”. It might concern rural societies that are marginalized due to their geographical disadvantage. It might concern ethnic groups who are victim of racism or prosecution. It might even concern the population of a whole country, because its government is suppressive. And it might also concern women who are sometimes marginalized just because they are women. The point is that it focuses on groups who are marginalized because they do not have a voice.

Because of the rather broad nature of the central question the thesis is divided into five different research topics, accompanied by research questions.

1. General attitudes on the nature of citizen journalism.
 - Which opinions are present about the concept of citizen journalism and its relation to traditional journalism?
2. The types of media and news that mobile citizen journalism complements.
 - To which extent is mobile citizen journalism embedded in Sub-Sahara African media?
 - For which types of news does mobile citizen journalism have additional value?
3. Mobile citizen journalism’s impact on local journalism.
 - How experienced are the respondents with using mobile reports and sources?
 - How important are ethical journalistic norms regarding mobile citizen reports?
4. Democratizing and empowering effects of mobile citizen journalism.
 - To which degree are mobile citizens able to address controversial topics in mainstream media?
 - In which way do rural communities benefit from the mobile revolution with regard to media consumption and participation?

5. Mobile citizen journalism during conflict and political crisis.

-Which additional value is ascribed to mobile citizen reports for conflict reporting?

-How is professional conflict reporting influenced by mobile reports?

After answering these research questions in the following chapters, a conclusion will discuss the central question. The results of this examination will not only provide insight in the influence of mobile citizen journalism on Sub-Sahara African media and the role it can play in empowering the marginalized; these results can be relevant for Western contexts as well. Compared to the West, Africa's media corporations may be considered weaker and more vulnerable to the changes society faces these days. Global media processes therefore might have a faster and more striking effect on African media than it has on their more flexible, more adaptive and more powerful Western counterparts. Considering the fact that several authors appoint African mobile citizen journalism as being developed further than mobile citizen journalism in the developed world, presumably due to the weakness of African media, and that we are only at the spring of a new information era, findings in this thesis might be a glimpse into the future of media development worldwide.

3.2 Methodology

In order to obtain relevant data that answer the research questions, different methods have been applied. A total of 43 African professional and citizen journalists participated through a questionnaire sent by e-mail. These reporters are from different countries and live and work in different circumstances; the levels of freedom of the press vary per country. They have totally different backgrounds, different experiences and different scopes, making them an impossible group to generalize. Besides, their full access to Internet is exceptional, especially for Sub-Sahara African standards. Thus, these respondents are not a random sample of African reporters or citizens. Therefore the results will not serve as a representation of a general opinion, but will only function as an indication of how these Sub-Sahara African reporters experience the upcoming phenomenon of mobile citizen journalism.

Their major commonalities are that they live in Sub-Sahara Africa, that they have, to some extent, knowledge of media developments, and their connection to Internet news site Africanews.com for which they subscribed themselves in order to produce content and share stories. On this news site African citizens and professional journalists produce all the text, photo and video content. Africanews.com is part of Dutch media agency Africa Interactive. They coordinate hundreds of African reporters who produce content for companies in need of text, video or photo material from Africa. Besides their work for Africanews.com, most of the participants are professional journalists, working for local newspapers, magazines, radio or Internet sites. Because of their connection to the network of Africa Interactive these reporters have several features in common that distinguishes them from many other African journalists:

- They have access to computers with Internet, which enables them to widen their scope.
- They live mostly in the capital or other major cities, decreasing rural perspectives.
- They are willing to participate in news making on a voluntary basis.
- They are familiar with the democratizing goals of Africanews.com: African news produced by Africans in order to improve fair representations and local perspectives.

The original purpose was to obtain a response from at least 100 participating reporters to the questionnaire. In order to reach these people, a request to answer my questionnaire was posted in the newsletter of March that Africanews.com sent to its 1100 subscribed reporters on March 23, 2010. This method seemed most promising since Africa Interactive was not able to share their full mailing list due to privacy issues. However this method proved very unsuccessful. A week after the newsletter was sent only four reporters had responded. Later, I found a way to scan the more than 7500 Africanews.com profile pages and collected the email addresses from those who had published it on their Africanews.com profile page.

Between March 30th and April 13th, semi-personal requests to participate in my questionnaire were sent to 179 Africanews.com reporters. It was an extremely time-consuming activity, with lots of email addresses out of order and a majority not responding. Since it proved hard to collect enough participants, a request was added to forward my questionnaire to their colleagues. Eventually 61 reporters indicated that they were willing to participate and the questionnaire was sent to them immediately. On April 14 and April 19 reminders were sent to those who had not yet filled out the questionnaire, with a warning that the deadline of April 20 was coming close. By that date, 43 reporters had actually filled out the questionnaire, and 14 of them had provided answers on the additional interview questions included in the questionnaire email.

The Questionnaire consists of 30 statements regarding citizen journalism, mobile journalism, their profession as a journalist and conflict reporting. The reporters were asked to rate to which extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements. They could choose between the following degrees; 1) I strongly disagree; 2) I rather disagree; 3) I rather agree; 4) I strongly agree. The results of these gradings give insight into the overall attitudes, experiences and expectations regarding the subject, as well as possible differences between reporters from different countries, of different age and with different backgrounds. Therefore statistic analyses were drawn on all 30 statements.

The combination of citizen journalism literature and literature on African media developments, quantitative data from the questionnaire and qualitative data from the open questions provides diverse views from different angles on the main topics. In short, in this thesis the assumptions and criticisms formulated by different authors in chapter 1 and 2 are applied to, and contested by the contemporary Sub-Sahara African context, a context that is subject to rapid change, especially with respect to mobile development.

4 The participants

Before we start analyzing the results of this research it is important to get to know the participating respondents. The amount of approached and subsequently participating Africanews.com reporters is limited by the difficulties of reaching them. It took some effort to find a decent amount of willing reporters, but eventually the reporters who published an email address on their Africanews.com profile page received a request for participation, regardless their nationality, profession, age, sex or activity on Africanews.com. This resulted in a group of participants with great variety

4.1 Where are they from?

Although every person is an individual, his or her environment and the experiences within this environment contribute to the development of how one perceives reality. A persons' national and cultural background can therefore be of major influence on his or her perceptions regarding media developments. Besides, when considering the immense differences between various Sub-Sahara African countries, and how freedom of the press varies amongst them, it is not only important to distinguish between the difference in cultural and national background; it is also important to distinguish between the various media environments that reporters operate in. Therefore, a divide will be made between those who live in a "free", a "partially free" or a "not free" country conform the Freedom House 2009 report.

In Table 1 a summary of the participating reporters per country and per press freedom status is presented. The 44 participating reporters live and operate in 14 different countries spread around the sub-continent. The amount of reporters operating in a "free", a "partly free" or a "not free" country does not represent the relative divide on the continent. Of the respondents 19% lives in countries with freedom of the press, 49% lives in countries with partial freedom of the press, and 32% lives in countries without freedom of the press. These research population values do not correspond to Freedom House's division of freedom of the press by population, measuring respectively 11%, 45% and 44%. Nonetheless, the respondents offer sufficient perspective to analyze possible significant differences on views and valuations.

Table 1
Reporters per country and press freedom status.

Country	Press freedom status	Reporters
Burundi	Not free	1
Cameroon	Not free	4
Gambia	Not free	3
Ghana	Free	3
Kenya	Partially free	5
Liberia	Not free	2
Malawi	Partially free	4
Nigeria	Partially free	10
Sierra Leone	Partially free	1
South Africa	Free	5
Tanzania	Partially free	1
Uganda	Partially free	1
Zambia	Not free	2
Zimbabwe	Not free	2
Total		43
<i>Free press</i>		8
<i>Partially free press</i>		21
<i>Not free press</i>		14

4.2 Gender and age

Personal characteristics such as gender and age can be an important factor when considering opinions and views on new technologies such as mobile phones. The respondents were asked to fill out these questions in order to gain a decent idea of their background and characteristics. Most of the respondents answered these questions but one of them chose to keep his or her gender a secret and six respondents refused to publish their age. Although exact statistics are hard to come by, most literature states the well known fact that men dominate the African media landscape. This can also be seen amongst the respondents, with 36 (84%) being male, and only 6 female respondents.

With an average age of 35, the respondents cannot be regarded young nor old. The youngest participant is 21 and the oldest counts 59. Although religion is an important feature for the shape of opinions and views for most Africans, it is not considered of any importance for the results of this survey and therefore no data regarding religion was collected.

4.3 Professional background

The concept of citizen journalism is based on the assumption that professional journalism fails to provide sufficient independent information and that the “democratization of news making” and participation of non-professionals is a welcome addition to media content. In the West, professional journalists are often sceptical and question the qualities of citizen journalists. Meanwhile, literature on African media revealed a lack of professionalism and journalistic education amongst professional journalists.

Table 2
Professional background and education

	Trained	Not trained	Total
Professional journalist	18	9	31
Citizen journalist	2	7	10
Total	23	17	

For this survey the selected respondents are approached due to their reporting for Africanews.com.com, a media platform where professionalism, education or

experience is not a precondition. The professional and educational background of the Africanews.com reporters is therefore very diverse. Table 2 provides insight into their professional and educational background.

Although two of the 43 respondents failed to indicate their level of professionalism and three did not indicate their level of education, an analysis was drawn on the above figures. These show that about 75% of the respondents are professional journalists; of which at least 9 of the 31 never acquired a journalistic degree or followed training in journalism ethics and methods. Although these numbers are striking, it corresponds with the image of professionalism amongst African journalists that is drawn in the literature. Naturally, for the 25% that are citizen journalists, the number that indicates absence of a journalism degree is a lot higher; 7 out of 10 never finished any kind of journalism training. Summarizing, a total of 58% of the respondents finished a journalism training, varying from university masters in mass communication or journalism to short trainings in ethics and methods provided by NGOs or other educational organizations.

Figure 2 shows that the respondents are employed by different types of media agencies. Most of them work for more than one employer, with examples of reporters who work for up to six different ones. The figure shows that most of the respondents are newspaper reporters. Writing for blogs and digital newspapers is also common, as well as participation in radio broadcasts and mobile media activities. Only a small group works for television or participates in commercial media productions. Under the category “other”, different kinds of magazines are mentioned. Respondents’ participation in a diversity of media results in a broad variety of perspectives and opinions as well as diverse experiences and expectations.

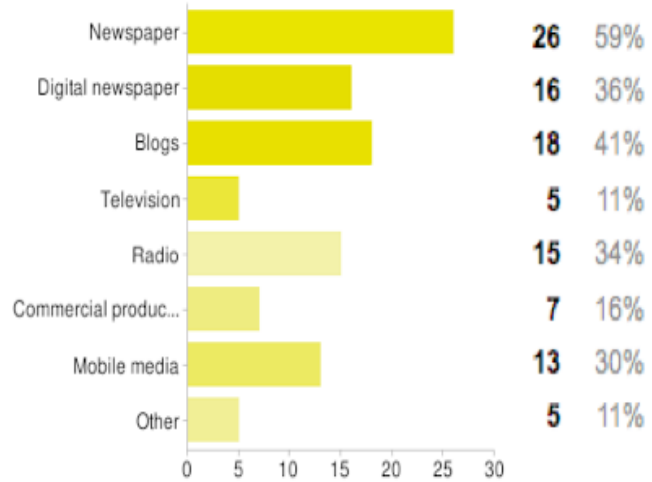


Figure 2
Media participation

5 Notions of the concept of citizen journalism

When analyzing opinions, experiences and expectations regarding mobile citizen journalism it is essential to be aware of the notions regarding the underlying concept: citizen journalism. As discussed in chapter 1, opinions regarding citizen journalism differ. Especially professional journalists fear the demise of their profession and criticize the lack of professionalism by citizen journalists. Meanwhile, citizen journalists and other advocates often emphasize the empowering value of citizen journalism, and regard it as the democratization of news making. Amongst the respondents of this research were professionals as well as citizen journalists; all of these respondents were asked to value four statements, their answers providing a general representation of their opinion of this concept.

Research question:

Which opinions are present about the concept of citizen journalism and its relation to traditional journalism?

5.1 Opinions of citizen journalism

The first statement the respondents had to rate, focused on citizen journalism's presumed democratizing impact on the production of news. A frequently returning argument in the literature that advocates of citizen journalism stress, are its democratizing qualities. Therefore the first statement examines the general opinion of this presumption; "*Citizen journalism democratizes news production*". Figure 3 shows that a majority of the respondents agreed with this statement, although 34% disagreed to a certain extent. No significant correlations were found between the variables "profession", "education" and "freedom of the press", which leads to the conclusion that professional background has no influence on one's opinion regarding the democratic value of citizen journalism.

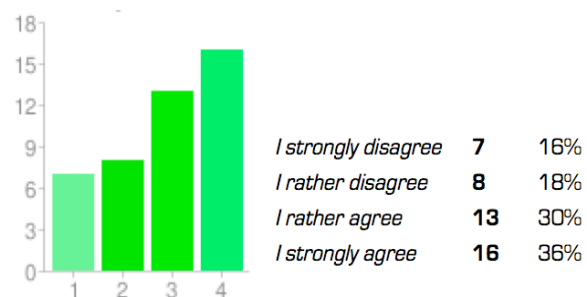


Figure 3

1. Citizen journalism democratizes news production

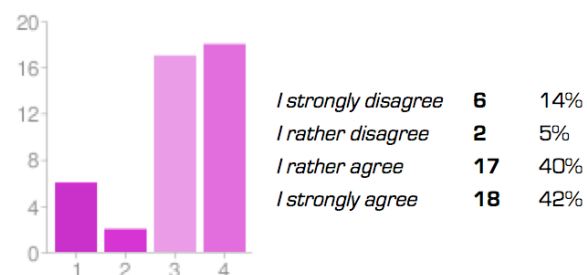


Figure 4

2. Citizen journalism contributes to empower the people

The second statement is less focussed on developments within the media and more on the effect that citizen journalism can have on the man in the street. Advocates consider the idea that “everybody” can participate in media production to be an important empowering quality of citizen journalism. The statement to rate was therefore “*Citizen journalism contributes to empower the people*”. Figure 4 clearly indicates that most of the respondents agree with this statement. 42 % Of all respondents opted “I strongly agree”, representing a vast majority. A small percentage strongly disagrees with this statement, but their disagreement seems unrelated to the respondents’ professional background. In short, these percentages show that the overall opinion of the respondents seems to correspond with the views of those who advocate citizen journalism in the literature.

The next two statements focus on the interface between traditional journalism and citizen journalism. In other words, these statements touch the intrinsic values of both types of journalism and the interaction between the two. The respondents were asked to elaborate on the possible demise of traditional journalism due to the fast growing group of citizen journalists. On the occasion of this subject Tilley & Cokley (2008) argue that according to critics, the devaluation of the ethical and commercial value of the term journalist is considered one of the main dangers to be faced. To gain more insight into the respondents’ views regarding this issue, they rated the following statement: “*Journalism as a profession is in danger due to the rise of citizen journalism*”.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the respondents incline to disagreement over this statement (59%) although this percentage is not high enough to draw hard conclusions from. It is notable that the two moderate options “I rather disagree” and “I rather agree” score best with a total of 68% of the votes. Also of interest is that no significant correlations were found between the opinions of respondents with similar educational or professional backgrounds. However, the minority that agrees with the statement is clear about their worries about the future of journalism. A South-African reporter foresees the “demise of

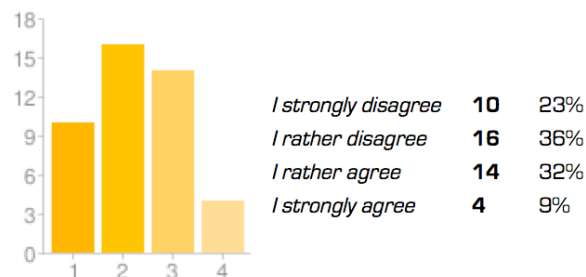


Figure 5
3. Journalism as a profession is in danger due to the rise of citizen journalism

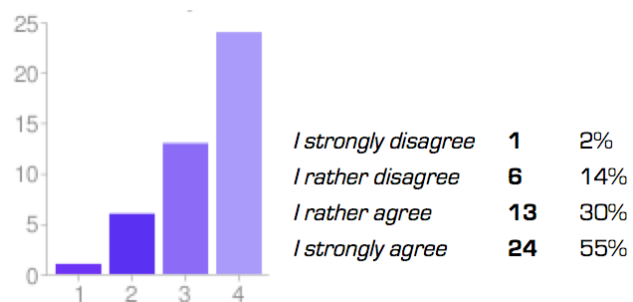


Figure 6
4. Professional journalistic skills are a precondition for quality reporting

paper based printing” (Alwyn Viljoen, 06-04-2010) and a Malawian journalist articulates his fears as follows:

“[Mobile citizen journalism will lead to a] ...lack of on the ground research. Most journalists will find it easier to source information through mobile phones instead of going on the ground to investigate. This, in turn, will lead to laziness in many journalists and eventually dilute the profession.”

-Watipaso Mzungu, Malawi: 13-04-2010

The next statement regarding this issue provides insight into a disagreement between the educated reporters and those who learned journalism skills by practice. Statement 4, *“Professional journalistic skills are a precondition for quality reporting”* focuses on Tilley & Cokley’s comment that critics of citizen journalism fear an overall erosion of the quality of news reporting, since anybody who knows how to write an article might decide to name himself a journalist (2008). Hence, it is interesting to elaborate on the opinions of the 43 respondents regarding this issue. One of the reporters mentions to that matter:

“The professionals or the journalists involved must know the ethics of the profession so as not to misuse the available technology. It is not the technology that is dangerous but the individual employing the technology.”

- Nana W. Wilson, Cameroon: 02-04-2010

Another reporter is worried about the loss of ethics within journalism when he states that:

“It will compromise the journalism professional and will promote a new cadre of communicators who may not see the need for them to train as journalists and become ethical.”

- Benedict Tembo, Zambia: 19-04-2010

A first glance at Figure 6 shows that there is a general agreement about this statement amongst the total group of respondents (85%). But when analysing the origin of the ratings (see table 3), a significant correlation shows up between those who are trained and acquired a degree in journalism and those who have not. 70% of the trained reporters strongly agree with the statement while only 35% of the untrained reporters agree. Most of the latter group “rather agrees” with the statement, indicating that they consider journalistic training only of reasonable importance.

Table 3Professional journalistic skills are a precondition for quality reporting.²

	Trained	Untrained	Total
I strongly disagree	0	1	1
I rather disagree	2	2	4
I rather agree	5	8	13
I strongly agree	16	6	22
Total	23	17	40

In chapter 7 a further elaboration on the issues between professional and citizen journalism will be provided.

5.2 Summary

This chapter shows that the respondents are generally modest to strong proponents of the concept “citizen journalism”. This might not be considered as surprising, since they are themselves part of, and were approached through a citizen journalism platform. However, since most respondents are professional journalists, some are critical on its influence on their profession as well. They do not consider their profession to be in great danger, but generally acknowledge that journalistic skills are a precondition regarding quality of content. Untrained respondents prove less convinced of the importance of this precondition. Important for the remainder of this thesis is the fact that more than 80% of the respondents believe in citizen journalism’s empowering qualities.

² See annex 2 for all significant correlations in Chapter 5

6 Presence in media and news

After the examination of general opinions regarding the umbrella-concept of citizen journalism in chapter 5, a closer look at the contribution of mobile citizen journalism is relevant. The first part of this chapter describes the presence of mobile citizen journalism in the countries where the respondents live. It indicates to which extent mobile citizen journalism is embedded in its media landscapes. The second part focuses on which additional value is ascribed to mobile citizen journalism in relation to different types of news.

Research questions:

- To which extent is mobile citizen journalism embedded in Sub-Sahara African media?
- For which types of news does mobile citizen journalism have additional value?

6.1 Mobile citizen journalism in the media

When analyzing how mobile citizen journalism is embedded in traditional media, it is necessary to map out to which degree regular citizens practice mobile journalism. In order to do so the respondents were asked to rate this statement: *“In my country mobile phones are widely used by citizens to participate in media”*. Figure 7 shows that a majority of 66% indicates that mobile citizen journalism is present in their country’s media; meanwhile 14% denies widespread existence of mobile citizen journalism in their country. The six respondents who declare an absence of mobile citizen journalism represent five countries (Cameroon, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia). However, notable is the fact that respondents who agreed with the statement also originate from these countries. Therefore personal perceptions seem deterrent on this issue.

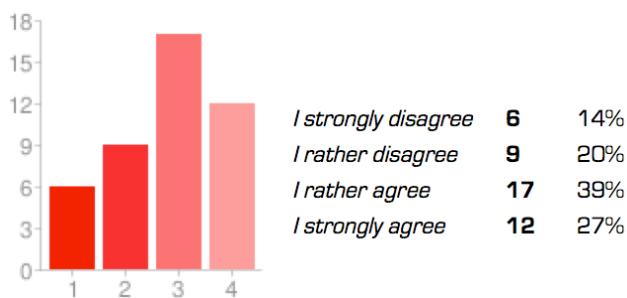


Figure 7

5. In my country mobile phones are widely used by citizens to participate in media

The following two statements are about mobile citizen journalism as addition to other media. It is well known that radio broadcasts are still the most widespread media in Sub-Sahara Africa. And although mobile citizens’ contribution to several Internet platforms have reached word wide attention, it is radio that has the closest ties to citizen journalism, since it is most accessible and most

widely consumed. What about the countries of the participating respondents? To picture mobile citizen’s perceived contribution to radio broadcasts in contrast to other media, a statement was designed: *“In my country citizens’ media participation by mobiles is rather limited to radio broadcasts”*. Table 4 illustrates that the ratings are almost equally divided between strong disagreement and strong agreement. A

total of 60% of the respondents agreed to the statement signifying that it is arguable that radio is at least as widely used as a transmitter for mobile reports and contributions by citizens. However, 40% disagreed with the statement, which indicates that mobile citizen reports are widely transmitted through other media as well. This assumption is stressed by one of the female reporters:

“Cases abound in my country, Nigeria, where the media: newspapers, radio and television encourage citizens to send news from their areas. These are used very extensively in the media. Some of the newspapers and dailies have now dedicated a page or two to such materials (text messages, pictures, etc. from readers.”

-Mary Atolagbe, Nigeria 20-04-2010

Table 4

	6. In my country citizens' media participation by mobiles is rather limited to radio broadcasts		7. Citizens' mobile reports distributed by media (such as radio and blogs) have become a substantial source of information for the written press	
I strongly disagree	9	20%	4	9%
I rather disagree	9	20%	15	35%
I rather agree	13	30%	13	30%
I strongly agree	13	30%	11	26%

This brings us to the next statement. The second most consumed media in Sub-Saharan Africa are the newspapers, which employ about 60% of the respondents. Newspapers are part of the “written press”, along with magazines, blogs and digital newspapers. The statement: *“Citizens' mobile reports distributed by media (such as radio and blogs) have become a substantial source of information for the written press”* was therefore rated. An overview of the respondents' perspectives on to which extent mobile citizen reports are embedded in the written press is presented in Table 4. An important difference between written press and radio is that mobile citizen reports that are published in, for example, a newspaper, have to pass an editorial board. This makes it harder for mobile citizen journalists to publish in newspapers. However, newspapers can be seen as a practical transmitter as well. Journalists are able to pick up stories from mobile citizens on other media and publish these. Although this way a mobile citizen report is indirectly transmitted, it can be argued that the reliability is increased. The opinions are divided (44% disagree and 56% agree) and no correlations are found among reporters that share a similar professional or national background.

However, there are two significant correlations³ that attract the attention when analysing these figures. It is striking that especially respondents who are in favour of citizen journalism, as illustrated in chapter 5, state that mobile citizen reports are a substantial source for the written press. Of the 24 respondents who agree with this statement (see Table 4), 19 respondents also indicated to consider citizen journalism as democratizing news making. Besides, a sum of 21 of these reporters believe that citizen journalism “empowers the people” to some extent. Thus it appears that opinions on the empowering character of citizen journalism relate to its presence in the written press. Or it means that those who are more strongly aware of the

³ See annex 3 for all significant correlations in Chapter 6

contribution that mobile citizen journalists make in the media, therefore consider this type of journalism to be more empowering.

6.2 Mobile citizen journalism and different types of news

Mobile citizen reports can deal with any subject, varying from sports fixtures to national elections, or from the latest fashion trends in the capital to cruel massacres of civilians in the bush. Topics of communication depend on various factors, such as the political, cultural, economic and religious environment, on personal interests and experiences, or on the medium through which a person is communicating. A question that often rises is to which types of news mobile citizen reports have an additional value. In order to measure the value of mobile citizen journalism for different types of news, a subdivision was made. The respondents were asked to which degree they considered mobile citizen journalism valuable for news coverage of “rather superficial”, “serious” or “extreme” subjects. They were asked to elaborate on their answer by providing examples from their country.

Table 5 shows us the results on “superficial” and “serious” news. As demonstrated a small majority is of the opinion that mobile citizen journalism adds value to news with a rather superficial content. News types that are regarded part of this category are sports, culture, society, music, etc. No hard conclusions can be drawn on these figures since they do not indicate striking patterns. These figures therefore would appear rather meaningless, but they are of value when compared to the answers regarding to the other types of news.

Included in the category “serious news” are themes such as politics, economics, corruption, environment, human rights, etc. These are topics that are not freely discussed in many Sub-Sahara African countries and therefore (self-) censorship is regularly applied when it comes to them. However, members of the diaspora of Internet blogs can freely discuss these topics.

Table 5

	8. Mobile citizen journalism is especially valuable for news coverage of rather “superficial” subjects		9. Mobile citizen journalism is especially valuable for news coverage of “serious” subjects	
I strongly disagree	9	20%	12	28%
I rather disagree	9	20%	14	33%
I rather agree	15	34%	7	16%
I strongly agree	11	25%	10	23%

The general opinion leans towards disagreement about the statement. Mobile citizen journalism is not considered to be especially valuable as addition to coverage of serious news items according to 61% of the respondents. Only 39% agrees to the statement, and this seems to be a small percentage when compared to the 82% that consider mobile citizen journalism as a contributing factor to empowerment (see figure 4). A Malawian respondent who acknowledges the value of mobile citizen reports for politics provides two examples wherein citizens participate in debates in the public sphere. He narrates:

“Currently, the Malawi government wants to change the national flag and media houses are using mobile journalism to source out the views of the local masses so that all the citizens should have an input on the issue before the implementation. The same system was also used when the pop star Madonna wanted to adopt a child in the country (which she succeeded after battling out in court). People gave their views on all most all issues that surround the adoption itself, the laws and the country’s adoption policy. At the end, it transpired that people where interested in the adoption.”

- Fortune Phiri, Malawi: 01-04-2010

In these examples the media houses sourced out the views of the public, but it is not known to which extent the decision makers were eventually driven by the opinions of the people. Still, the fact that popular visions were easily monitored on these issues indicates how mobile citizen journalism is able to contribute. However, the fact remains that only those with access to a mobile phone were able to share their opinion. Another example clarifies how mobile citizen journalism is applied during an environmental protest in Uganda:

“(…) mobile phones have been used to provide footage for television where no camera crew was, It has also been used by reporters as a basic and direct link to the stations when covering stories. During the protests against the cutting down of a tropical forest (Mabira) in Uganda, a lot of coverage of the events was run on mobile phones. Protestors were also mobilised by mobile phone.”

-Vincent Mugaba, Uganda: 19-04-2010

As illustrated, citizens with mobile phones were an important source of information during these protests. Especially where television cameras are absent, mobiles are regarded to be a useful tool when it comes to protests; to mobilise protesters on the one hand, and to inform the public with photos, videos and stories on the other hand. Although table 5 indicates that a majority does not consider mobile citizen journalism of special added value to news of regular “serious” subjects, these useful elaborations have shown the way it functions in different contexts.

When comparing these elaborations with those on news coverage of “extreme” news it becomes evident that the majority considers mobile citizen journalism more valuable for the latter. This might be partially due to the timelines that often characterize extreme news, and the difficulties of fast media response due to poor infrastructure and a centralised media landscape. The following example illustrates the role of citizens with mobiles in such situations.

“(…) I also refer to the January 2009 tanker tragedy in Western Kenya, where an oil tanker exploded and killed over 100 civilians who were siphoning petrol from the truck that had overturned. The information was relayed to the media houses trough mobile phones. And by the way, the most up-to-date video of the accident scene was recorded by a witness with his mobile phone camera. Rainy as it

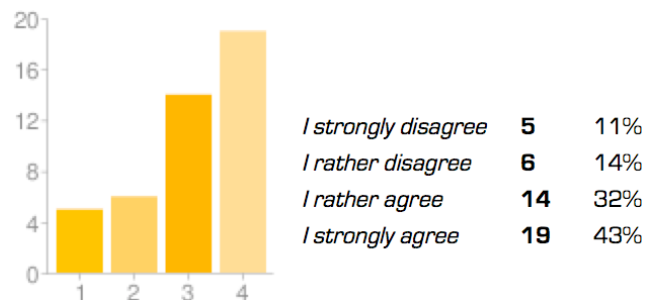


Figure 8
10. Mobile citizen journalism is especially valuable for news coverage of extreme subjects

was, it was the most graphic of all videos for it was shot just after the explosion.”

-Alex Kiarie, Kenya 01-04-2010

Several reporters note the post-election violence in Kenya and the role citizens played in covering the events across the country during that time. One of these reporters mentions that some people in the diaspora totally relied on mobile citizen journalism for proper updates (Benedict Tembo, Zambia: 19-04-2010). The general opinion of the value for extreme news is probably clearly summarized by a Nigerian newspaper journalist who states:

“Mobile journalism would eventually revolutionize the way news is reported around the world. Victims of conflicts are turning out to be sources of first hand reports of happening in rampages, strikes, terrorist attacks, disasters, famines, epidemics and environmental pollutions cursed by multinational companies, government and private individuals. Especially in Africa and around the world.”

-Femi Peters, Nigeria: 09-04-2010

Figure 8 summarizes the responses on statement 10; *“Mobile citizen journalism is especially valuable for news coverage of extreme subjects”*. When observing this figure it seems obvious that there is a broad agreement regarding the statement. When compared to the opinions of the other two news types mobile citizen journalism’s added value to news is regarded the greatest. In total, 75% agrees to some extent, and only 11% strongly disagrees. However, something interesting comes up when we take a closer look at the origins of these figures. The degree of freedom of the press in the country of origin seems to play a decisive role in shaping opinions on this theme. As table 6 shows us, only respondents from countries without freedom of the press strongly disagreed with the statement. This means that reporters from these countries are less convinced of the added value in extreme situations.

Table 6

10. Mobile citizen journalism is especially valuable for news coverage of extreme subjects

	Press freedom			Total
	Free	Partly free	Not free	
I strongly disagree	0	0	5	5
I rather disagree	1	4	1	6
I rather agree	2	7	5	14
I strongly agree	5	10	3	18
Total	8	21	14	43

6.3 Summary

Mobile citizen journalism is present in most Sub Sahara African countries, as the respondents indicate. However, the degree to which citizens are considered to use their mobile phone to participate in media differs. Meanwhile, there are respondents who indicate that mobile citizen journalism is rarely practiced in their country. These indications are contradicted by fellow citizens who state the opposite.

The most frequently used medium to transmit mobile citizen reports is still the radio, which matches with findings in the literature. When asked about the embeddings of mobile citizen reports in the “written press” something interesting comes up. Those who believe in the empowering qualities of citizen journalism and

its democratising effect on journalism, indicate a wider use of mobile citizen journalism by the written press. What does this mean? Opinions about a concept and its indicated presence are two independent variables.

There are three possible options. First, the presence of mobile citizen reports in newspapers and blogs that these respondents read in their country has accustomed them to the concept, and showed them its empowering effects. Second, these respondents are convinced of citizen journalism's empowering qualities to such a degree, that they are constantly focussed on detecting it in the written press, which would increase awareness of this kind of reports. Third, they are to such a degree supportive of citizen journalism that they use different standards when measuring its presence.

The types of news that mobile citizen reports are most valuable to are extreme subjects such as conflicts, crisis and disasters. In Africa, a lack of adequate (media) infrastructure often restricts timelines of news reporting and up to date footage of extreme events. Mobile citizen reports are considered most valuable for extreme news coverage, probably since they are able to cover such events faster than regular media. Striking is that the ones who disagree with that, are from countries where the media is considered "not free". It seems that the degree of freedom of the press is decisive in a way that the freer the press is, the more convinced respondents from that country are of the mobile citizen journalism's added value to extreme subjects.

7 Traditional journalism vs. mobile citizens

The previous paragraphs provided a broad representation of the respondents' background and their opinion of the concept "citizen journalism". Besides that, we now also have more information about the presence of mobile citizen journalism in the media landscape of various countries, and we know how valuable this kind of journalism is for different news types. This paragraph sheds light on the personal and professional experience of the respondents with mobile citizen journalism and their attitude towards its reliability.

The ratings of the statement on media participation by mobile citizens, depicted by Figure 7, show that a majority of the respondents live in countries where mobile citizen journalism is increasingly present and widely applied. The question is what this means for the practical aspect of traditional journalism and media. How do reporters handle the changes they face nowadays? Does it change their professional attitude? When asked about this, a newspaper journalist revealed his expectation:

"Mobile citizen journalism will revolutionise the way journalists (especially of newspapers) approach stories"

-Arnold Munthali, Malawi 20-04-2010

We don't know yet whether this expectation will come true, since it is impossible to look into the future. But what we can look at is how the respondents regard the reliability of mobile citizen reports, and how they personally experience the difficulties that surface with the rising amount of citizen journalists. Therefore in paragraph 7.3 two statements about both these issues that were presented to the respondents are discussed. Before that, we elaborate on the findings regarding two other statements. These statements were presented to the respondents in order to find out more about their personal experience with mobile citizen journalism in a professional context.

Research questions:

-How experienced are the respondents with using mobile reports and sources?

-How important are ethical journalistic norms regarding mobile citizen reports?

7.1 Personal experience

The first statement is about the general use of mobile citizen reports: *"When covering news I regularly use mobile citizen reports as a source"*. A clause complemented this statement by adding that both directly as well as indirectly obtained mobile citizen reports are included. Figure 9 shows that most respondents disagree with this statement (58%), and only five



Figure 9

11. When covering news I regularly use mobile citizen reports as a source

respondents actively use mobile citizen reports as a source. This means that the respondents are rather inexperienced in actually using mobile citizen reports themselves. The five respondents that actively use mobile citizen reports are all professional journalists, representing the trend that professionals use more citizen reports (52%) than non-professionals (33%).⁴

Meanwhile, mobile phones are regarded a very important medium when it comes to keeping in touch with sources. Figure 10 illustrates this. The respondents had to rate the statement “Contact with some of my sources would not be possible if they would not have access to a mobile phone”. As much as 56% declares that they strongly agree with the statement and another 30% rather agrees. These figures show that mobiles are regarded to be very important for maintaining contact with sources. Besides, these results further clarify the significance of the different meaning of the notions “mobile source” and “mobile citizen journalist”.



Figure 10
12. Contact with some of my sources would not be possible if they would not have access to a mobile phone

7.2 Reliability of mobile citizen reports

One of the most important criticisms of citizen journalism is its presumed lack of reliability, since professional and ethical norms are not necessarily acknowledged. However, the flow of news and information produced by citizens is increasing rapidly, making it impossible to ignore. This is particularly the case when it considers subjects that are ignored or avoided by professional journalists. When asked about citizen journalism’s threat to traditional journalism, several reporters mentioned the possibility that false or “unethical” stories might become part of the news.

“[Mobile citizen journalism will lead to] ...an enlightened citizenry. But it may also erode the impact of mainstream media as more people are going to rely on mobile journalism.”
-Benedict Tembo, Zambia: 19-04-2010

“The issue of believability and convergence is a problem facing mobile reporting in Ghana for instance because people still rely on tradition radio, TV and newspapers for info. Some of the dangers mobile reporting may bring would border on ethics, because the rules of professional journalism may not apply as people would report based on what they deem appropriate and not necessary what is 'allowed'.”
-Ameyaw Debrah, Ghana: 12-04-2010

⁴ See annex 4 for all significant correlations in Chapter 7.

“The first danger would be invasion of privacy and unprofessional reporting.”

-Sanday Chongo Kabange, Zambia: 30-03-2010

“In a word: Photoshop. When people opinionate without getting paid for it, “news” can quickly become a personal platform on which to play pranks or conduct vendettas. Hence citizen journalism on your mobile screen can never be wysiwig.”

-Alwyn Viljoen, South Africa: 06-04-2010

“I feel it is possible that people who give news via mobile phones (sources) may lie. And if that happens, it is the media house that will lose its credibility after publishing false stories, especially if journalists do not verify the information they get through cell phones.”

-Watipaso Mzungu, Malawi: 13-04-2010

Watipaso Mzungu not only mentions the danger of circulating false stories, but also of professional journalists who might pick up these stories and publish them in regular media. Since most authors on African media are rather pessimistic on the professional standards of African journalists is it not unthinkable that media houses would regularly adopt mobile citizen reports without proper check ups. Another Malawian journalist recognizes this:

“Since some professional journalists rely on mobile journalists to feed them with tips or breaking news, the trend might be abused by having wrong tips and breaking news hence the quality of journalism will be drained.”

-Fortune Phiri, Malawi 30-03-2010

To summarize the general attitude on the reliability of mobile citizen reports, the next statement was presented: *“I consider mobile citizen reports generally reliable sources”*. Figure 11 shows us the results. When looking at this figure, a distinct pattern is visible. The group that strongly disagrees is roughly twice as small as the group that rather disagrees and almost three times smaller than the group that rather agrees. Only a minor percentage of 7% strongly agrees with the statement. It seems that over 93% of the respondents share awareness of the possibility that mobile citizen reports could be unreliable. Still, on the other hand, 22 of the respondents (53%) regard mobile citizen reports to be a reliable source of news, at least to a certain degree. When analysing the professional background of the ones who agreed or disagreed about the statement, no significant correlations were found. This indicates that this opinion is not one that is particularly influenced by a reporters training or background.

Another correlation is nonetheless certainly interesting to analyse. The degree to which mobile citizen reports are considered reliable sources, relates to the degree to which it is considered to be empowering. 20 of the 22 agreeing respondents believe that “citizen journalism empowers the people” (see chapter 5). In other words, those who believe in citizen

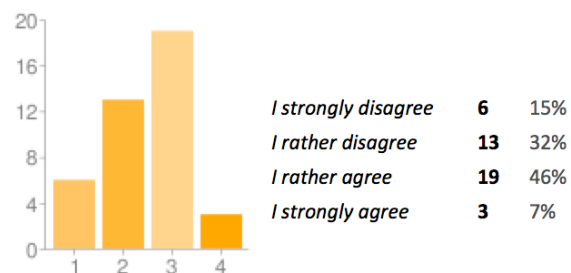


Figure 11

13. I consider mobile citizen reports generally reliable sources

journalisms' empowering effects seem to have more confidence in the reliability of mobile citizen reports than its critics do.⁵

Important to take into account when discussing views of mobile citizen reports' reliability are the contributions of two reporters who mention that not only citizens have better opportunities to reach larger audiences but commercial parties and politicians as well:

"It gives mass marketers, including retailers and politicians, a personalised platform on which to communicate through mobisites on cell-phones."

-Alwyn Viljoen, South Africa: 06-04-2010

Reaching an audience through mobisites or otherwise on a mobile phone is not deceptive if such a party is honest about its intentions and origins. However it does become deceptive when such a party pretends to be an independent citizen. A reporter from Uganda expresses this danger:

"Mobile citizen journalism can be easily manipulated by the political establishment to spread falsehoods. Also false news can spread so fast even without verification"

-Vincent Mugaba, Uganda: 19-04-2010

However, next to the potential danger of governments using this form of reporting, citizens with hateful intentions could also be dangerous. The last years Africa has suffered many conflicts where citizens are pitted against each other. One of the most recent examples of such a crisis, receiving worldwide media attention, was the post election violence in Kenya, January 2008. Ethnical differences were magnified and in several parts of the country people were driven away from their land and houses or brutally killed by angry masses. Mobiles were used by these masses to organize and promote their message:

"For example, before and during the post election violence that rocked Kenya after the disputed December 2007 general election, the mobile phones were used to fuel ethnic hatred through short messages and calls on mobile phones. In other words, dangers lurk in this industry because it is hard to regulate it, without infringing on the people's fundamental rights."

-Alex Kiarie, Kenya: 01-04-2010

In Malawi, mobile phones enabled people to "fight" the opponent, although in a more civilized way than in the example of Kenya:

"Since mobile journalism mostly involves non-professionals in my country, they may bring about change of reporting as some might use it as a fighting tool to others. This usually happens during the campaign period as general elections are around the corner. In Malawi as an example, during the last years' May general elections, people (mobile journalists) were using local media houses- radios in particular to castigate the opposing masses."

Fortune Phiri, Malawi: 30-03-2010

⁵ See annex 4 for all significant correlations in Chapter 7.

Since almost half of the respondents do not consider the content of mobile citizen reports to be reliable, it is interesting to see how they perceive the recent media developments, and how they process these developments. Some of the respondents indicate that they perceive the unreliable character of citizen reports to be a threat to professional journalism, especially since many journalists do not know how to handle information coming from citizen journalists. For example:

“The only danger I foresee lies with the professional journalists. Materials and fact from citizen journalists are meant to be verified before publishing, if this is not carefully handled by the professionals, then the essence of the concept is eroded.”

-Mary Atolagbe, Nigeria: 20-04-2010

“A potential danger could be inability for the professional journalists to have full control over objectivity.”

-Kemo Cham, Gambia: 08-04-2010

These reporters consider citizen reports to be a threat, but they do not mention how they they would deal with information that is not known to be objective or correct. Figure 12 shows us the results of the statement: *“I find it hard to honour the codes and standards of journalism in a media landscape where citizen journalism is increasing”*. The figure illustrates that no evident pattern can be recognized regarding this statement. 51% disagrees and 49% agrees to some extent. No significant correlations between respondents with different professional backgrounds were found either.

Interesting though, is that half of the respondents actually do experience difficulties in adjusting journalistic norms due to the rise of citizen journalism. And quite a large part of these reporters are citizen journalists themselves. A professional journalist who works for radio, television, and a digital newspaper in Kenya notes the following with regard to this matter:

“Here in Kenya, it is always good for any editor to verify any information availed through mobile journalists because some information can be misleading and hoaxes do also occur. Therefore, proper modes of analysing the information before publicising it is vital. This is based on the fact that mobile journalism works symbiotically with mainstream media. So it can be very wrong for one to rely on mobile journalists because some of them do not have the ethical aspect of journalism and hence may not be able to follow up the stories as required. Thus proper follow ups are necessary.”

-Alex Kiarie, Kenya 01-04-2010

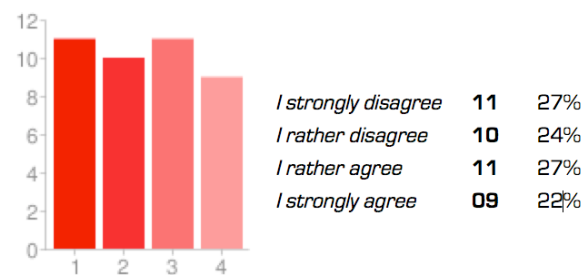


Figure 12
14. I find it hard to honour the codes and standards of journalism in a media landscape where citizen journalism is increasing

And from Malawi:

“I remember a time when some people phoned me to say there was an incident worthy a story when actually it was not newsworthy at all. Journalists are likely to lose their resources when mobile journalism sources are involved.”

-Watipaso Mzungu, Malawi 13-04-2010

The last sentence of this quotation is especially important. Although in this example we should speak of a mobile source instead of a mobile journalist, it is interesting what the consequences could be if media would rely on citizen reports as their main source of information. According to Mzungu this might cause the loss of traditional journalistic sources. That would mean that a journalist might weaken his position when relying too much on what citizens “deem appropriate”, to speak in the words of Ameyaw Debrah (12-04-2010).

7.3 Summary

The results presented in this chapter have provided insight into the personal experience with, and personal professional perceptions of mobile citizen reports. They showed that the respondents only make use of mobile citizen reports to a minor extent. Mobile phones are, however, considered to be very important and even indispensable when it comes to maintaining contact with sources. Professional reporters use more mobile citizen reports than their non-professional counterparts. This difference might be explained by the assumption that professionals produce way more media content anyway, since it is not a hobby, but their job.

Most respondents question the reliability of mobile citizen reports. Only 7% strongly believes in the reliability of these reports. One of the main fears that came to the fore lies in the idea that this platform can be used to publish unethical stories. These unethical stories can become even more harmful when professional journalists copy them and publish their content through mainstream media. The respondents therefore stress that proper check ups are important when using mobile citizen reports as a source. Apart from the fear of false and malicious citizen journalists, another danger is seen in governments or commercial parties pretending to be citizens. Examples show that these parties are known to send messages for their own purpose, to promote themselves, spreading false information. Malicious citizens, who use mobile platforms or group text-messages to promote hatred and to agitate people against others, also strengthen the awareness that mobile citizen reports might be very unreliable and dangerous.

Notable is the significant correlation between the degree to which respondents consider mobile citizen reports to be reliable sources, and the degree to which they believe in the empowering qualities of citizen journalism. It seems that the perceived reliability is quite high when based on the personal belief in the concept of citizen journalism, but less so when judged from a professional point of view. Thus, respondents who share faith in empowerment through citizen journalism have the tendency to neglect the dangers concerning ethics and reliability.

8 Empowerment through mobiles

Chapter 8 is the central chapter of this thesis in which a general indication of mobile citizen journalism's value as an instrument to empower the marginalized will be demonstrated. In the former chapters we have learned more about the background of the respondents, their general opinion on the characteristics of (mobile) citizen journalism and its presence in Sub-Saharan Africa. In chapter 7 we examined how the respondents think professional journalists should deal with the changes made through mobile citizen journalism. Since we have an indication of what mobile citizen journalism contributes to journalism, the one side of the spectrum, we will now look at the other side of the spectrum; what brings it for the mobile citizen journalists themselves.

This chapter consists of four paragraphs and a summary. The first paragraph handles two statements about rather general perceptions, introducing the expectations on empowerment through mobiles. The second paragraph focuses on the possibility to involve mobile citizens in two empowering themes. In the third paragraph an analysis is provided of four statements that concern more specific issues. The fourth paragraph focuses on mobile citizen journalism's influence on the remoteness of rural areas when it comes to media consumption and participation.

Research questions:

-To which degree are mobile citizens able to address controversial topics in mainstream media?

-How do rural communities benefit from the mobile revolution with regard to media consumption and participation?

8.1 *New perspectives in the media*

A quick search on the Internet shows that lots of NGOs are actively involved in media development in the developing world in general, and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Common goals of these NGOs are investments in promoting independent media and freedom of the press, as well as training journalists in ethical norms. Some of these NGOs are also actively involved in finding ways to benefit from the mobile revolution that is taking place. For example, such organisations text-message valuable information to farmers in remote areas, other NGOs collect and bundle information by receiving valuable information from the people with the mobile phones. To which extent this communication falls under the denominator "mobile citizen journalism" is questionable. It depends on both the type of information that is generated and on who send and receive this information. Besides, some of the best-known NGOs in the field of stimulation of mobile citizen participation are mainly active on the Internet. The Ushahidi platform, for example, is accessible through Internet, thus excluding the people who have no access to computers or smartphones.

Useful questions regarding the matter of empowerment are therefore; how NGOs relate to professional media in providing a platform where normal citizens are

enabled to participate in sharing information through their mobile phones, and how accessible these platforms are for people without Internet access. We already know that some NGOs actively embrace these possibilities and we know that Sub-Saharan African media increasingly use mobile reports (see the results of statement 5 and 7). However, the motivation to use or publish mobile citizen reports might differ between these two parties. Therefore a statement was designed in which this issue was directly presented to the respondents: *“The concept of mobile citizen reporting on empowering issues is embraced and applied more by NGOs than by traditional media”*. Figure 16 shows us the results. A total of 60% agrees with this statement, indicating that traditional media are poorly motivated by empowering issues when providing a platform for mobile citizen reports. Only six respondents strongly disagree, they consider traditional media at least equal to NGOs regarding empowerment motivations.

No significant correlations were found between these results and the national or professional background of the reporters. But when compared with the statement: *“Mobile citizen reports as a means to empower marginalized groups are mainly found on the Internet and therefore exclude most media consumers in my country”* (see Table 7), an interesting correlation comes to the fore. There is no broad agreement or disagreement with this statement, but the respondents who do agree are generally also the ones who consider NGOs more motivated to empower marginalized groups than local media. This group, with respect to the use of mobile citizen reports for empowerment, is critical of the motivations of local media, and of the accessibility of platforms provided by NGOs since Internet is often the transmitter.⁶

Table 7

	15. The concept of mobile citizen reporting on empowering issues is embraced and applied more by NGOs than by traditional media		16. Mobile citizen reports as a means to empower marginalized groups are mainly found on the Internet and therefore exclude most media consumers in my country	
I strongly disagree	6	14%	8	18%
I rather disagree	11	26%	12	37%
I rather agree	19	44%	15	34%
I strongly agree	7	16%	9	20%

The empowerment of marginalized groups is part of a broader struggle for equal rights and opportunities. This is a struggle for a more democratic society wherein everyone’s voice is heard and adequately represented. It is therefore that mobile citizen journalism’s presumed contribution to a democratization process is interesting. Benedict Tembo from Zambia states that he believes in “an enlightened citizenry” as a result of increasing mobile citizen participation in media. A Cameroonian newspaper journalist adds:

⁶ See annex 5 for all significant correlations in Chapter 8.

“It is going to bring technology closer to the man in the streets, especially in some less privileged African countries, the democratisation process and the right to air your informed views will improve. It is also an indication that many good things are still on the way for the journalism profession and professionals. Technology is there and will be there to prop their endeavours.”

-Nana Wilson, Cameroon: 02-04-2010

The following statement was presented in order to examine the long term future expectations of the respondents: *“Mobile citizen journalism will have a democratizing effect on the long term”*. An obvious majority of 79% agrees with this statement, as illustrated in Table 8. Logically, a large part of the respondents that agreed with this statement belongs to the group of citizen journalism advocates from chapter 5. An obvious significant correlation is also found when the opinions of this statement are compared with the opinions with regard to the reliability of mobile citizen reports. All 22 respondents who consider mobile citizen reports reliable (see Figure 11) believe in the *“democratizing effect on the long term”*, thus agreeing with the statement to some extent.⁷ Once again, a lack of faith in the reliability of mobile citizen journalism is strongly linked to a negative view of the empowering effects that this type of journalism could have. Alex Kiarie, a Kenyan television and radio reporter explains how reliable he regards mobile citizen reports to be:

“With easier access to Mobile phones, it is easy for the common people to participate in a big way towards charting their social, political and cultural discourse. Hence, mobile journalism will in the long term be one of the most reliable approaches as far as sharing information amongst the various people from different cultural backgrounds is concerned. This is based on the fact that due to competition from the mobile service providers, the cost of the handsets and calling charges will be greatly reduced, thus enabling people to communicate easily. There is also the aspect mainstream journalists relying heavily on the opposed to the mainstream media, where people rely on information transmitted through print and electronic media (Radio and TV). There is a possibility of the mobile phone being the most used and reliable source of information as opposed to radio as it is now in Kenya.”

-Alex Kiarie, Kenya: 01-04-2010

Part of the democratization process will always be the degree to which the media are independent and free. Most respondents are from countries where, according to international standards measured by Freedom House, the media is not considered to have a high degree of freedom. It is therefore very interesting to examine the respondents' expectations of possible changes that may follow the rise of mobile citizen journalism. The answers to the statement: *“The rise of mobile citizen journalism will stimulate the increase of independent media”* teach us that a broad percentage agrees with this statement (See Table 8). 79% believe that mobile citizen journalism will increase media independence. Respondents who agree are for a large part also the ones who believe in its democratic impulse to journalism and society, its empowering qualities and its reliability as a journalistic source. As a Zambian reporter notes:

⁷ See annex 5 for all significant correlations in Chapter 8.

“Mobile journalists will in the long term shape the way on-the-spot reports, mostly on conflict zone are conducted. It will also promote media independence in restrict areas.”

-Sanday Chongo Kabange, Zambia: 30-03-2010

Table 8

	17. Mobile citizen journalism will have a democratizing effect on the long term		18. The rise of mobile citizen journalism will stimulate the increase of independent media	
I strongly disagree	4	9%	5	12%
I rather disagree	5	12%	4	9%
I rather agree	16	36%	10	23%
I strongly agree	19	43%	24	56%

8.2 From ignorance to participation?

In this paragraph we will focus on what the effect of the increasing amount of mobiles phones on the ability of marginalized groups to consume and participate in media is. Former analysis of statements have shown that a rather broad believe in the empowering features of mobile citizen journalism is shared by the respondents. But how does this affect the practical reality of day-to-day reporting? Two respondents narrate on how mobile citizen journalism adds a new perspective to the media:

“I think in the long term, mobile reporting would allow people to tell their story as and when it happens with little or no prejudice to factuality. Mobile reports gives a voice to all, particularly those that mainstream media often ignore.”

-Ameyaw Debrah, Ghana: 12-04-2010

“Mobile journalism, where it exist, has actually effectively extended coverage of issues. Like the way technology in general has tremendously advanced journalism, we expect this aspect of it, mobile journalist, to take it to a higher height. Mobile journalism could be of greater help if the awareness is enhanced, because the need is high, especially in this part of the world.”

-Kemo Cham, Gambia: 08-04-2010

A statement to measure the general perspectives regarding mobile citizen journalisms’ contribution to the representation of topics that were avoided or ignored before should provide insight in the general opinions of the respondents. This statement is: *“Due to mobile citizen journalism topics that were usually avoided or ignored by traditional media in the past, are now discussed in local media”*. Figure 13 illustrates that 87% of the reporters agrees. Especially the respondents who have been

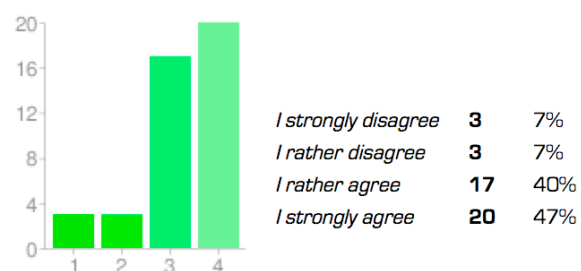


Figure 13

19. Due to mobile citizen journalism subjects that were usually avoided or ignored by traditional media in the past, are now discussed in local media

expressing their belief in the empowering and democratizing qualities of (mobile) citizen journalism in former chapters rated that they “strongly agree”. Those respondents that have noted to have personal experience in dealing with mobile citizen reports are also well presented in this group. A significant correlation is found between those who mentioned to rely on mobile phones for contact with some of their sources. Personal experience with mobile sources therefore seems to be a determining factor in whether or not respondents indicate an increased variety of addressed topics in the news.

Figure 14

20. Nowadays, marginalized groups have a better opportunity to discuss their position in the media due to mobile citizen journalism



The previous statement focussed on the influences mobile citizen reports have on the topics that are covered by professional media. The results of a slightly different statement confirm that there is a shared faith in the opportunity for marginalized groups to participate. This statement therefore emphasizes direct participation by members of the marginalized groups themselves. The results are illustrated in Figure 14. The statement they valued was:

“Nowadays, marginalized groups have a better opportunity to discuss their position in the media due to mobile citizen journalism”. The collected data show significant correlations with two personal characteristics of the reporters.⁸ The first is the degree to which they perceive mobile citizen journalism to be present in their home country. Those who indicate that mobile citizen reports are widely used in their countries’ media landscape, have more faith in the opportunities mobile citizen journalism brings for marginalized groups. Fortune Phiri from Malawi is such a reporter:

“Mobile Journalism brings about hearing the voices of the voiceless. Those who have no platform to have a say on any development they find it through the system. If this system is normally preserved, we are assured of equal participation on issues that affect our day to day lives.”

-Fortune Phiri, Malawi: 30-03-2010

A female radio reporter from Nigeria and a Sierra Leonean newspaper reporter support this opinion:

“The main effects are increased participation of citizens in news gathering and their ability to contribute to and bring to the fore, issues that affect them”

-Mary Atolagbe, Nigeria: 20-04-2010

“Mobile Citizen journalism will empower the people, especially those that are been oppressed and stifled by governments, thus preventing them from venting their opinions about issues affective their respective nations”

⁸ See annex 5 for all significant correlations in Chapter 8.

The second significant correlation is again found with those who indicate to rely on mobile sources for a large part of their information. The more they rely on mobile phones to stay in contact with their sources, the more they indicate to believe in de empowering features for marginalized groups.

8.3 Politics and injustice

The actual themes which citizens are now able to report on depend heavily on the context. Factors such as the country, the region, the type of media through which someone communicates or the will of professional media to participate in and add value to a discussion, determine whether citizens elaborate on controversial topics. There are dozens of different controversial themes that come to mind. Therefore, to get a general idea of the respondents' opinions on the matter, two broad statements on important themes were presented. These are: *"The increase of mobile phones in general has a positive effect on peoples' participation and/or interest in political matters"*. The same statement was designed for *"fighting injustice"* (See table 9).

Table 9

	The increase of mobile phones in general has a positive effect on peoples' participation and/or interest in...			
	21. Political matters		22. Fighting injustice	
I strongly disagree	3	7%	2	5%
I rather disagree	6	15%	4	9%
I rather agree	12	28%	10	23%
I strongly agree	22	51%	27	63%

"In Africa, and Uganda specifically, it will open up the political space and empower people. Some time back, a mobile phone user was the only person at a scene where there was a confrontation between security and some protestors. People are also becoming more politically aware because they can discuss political, economic, and other issues online. From the look the democratisation and awareness campaigns in Asia would come to pass even in Africa."

-Vincent Mugaba, Uganda: 19-04-2010

A broad belief in the positive effects of the increased amount of mobile phones on involvement in political topics and fighting injustice is present among the respondents. The percentages of respondents that agree are respectively 79% and 86%. Significant correlations are found with other statements on empowerment.⁹ However, a striking correlation exists between the "political matters" statement and respondents who regard professional journalistic skills a precondition for quality reporting. Strong agreement with both of these two statements shows that they are interrelated. Besides, the respondents that agreed with this statement, generally consider mobile citizen reports to be reliable sources. For the "fighting injustice" statement, two interesting significant correlations are found as well. Once again

⁹ See annex 5 for all significant correlations in Chapter 8.

indicated personal dependency on mobile sources relates positively to agreement with this statement. Besides, the ones who consider mobile citizen journalism “especially valuable for timely and extreme subjects” are convinced of its effects on participation and its contribution in fighting injustice as well.

8.4 Increased involvement of the rural

One of the main problems for Sub-Sahara African media development that is mentioned in chapter 2 is the rather extreme divide between urban centres and rural areas. Media houses are often established in the capital and their geographical scope is regularly limited by faulty infrastructure and a lack of financial and technical support. Since rural communities are unable to participate in and consume most media, they are excluded from a lot of information, remaining powerless. It is believed by most authors that the “mobile revolution” will sweep away this inequality of access to information for good. Fortune Phiri agrees:

“There are news worthy issues that take places in the rural communities where there are no eyes of the professional journalists and it is mobile journalism that helps to uncover such stories be it through tip offs or programme participation.”

-Fortune Phiri, Malawi: 30-03-2010

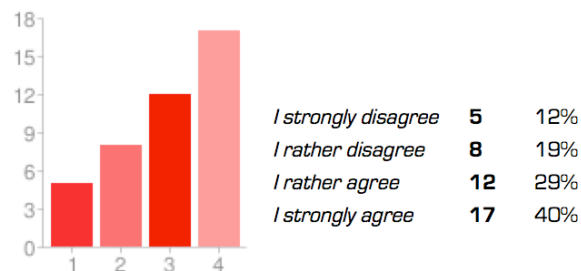


Figure 15
23. Mobile citizen journalism increases opportunities for rural communities to consume media

Two statements are rated with regard to this issue, measuring both the perceived media participation as consumption of rural communities through mobiles. These statements are: “Mobile citizen journalism increases opportunities for rural communities to consume media” and “...to participate in the production of media content”. The figures 15 and 16 present the results. Media

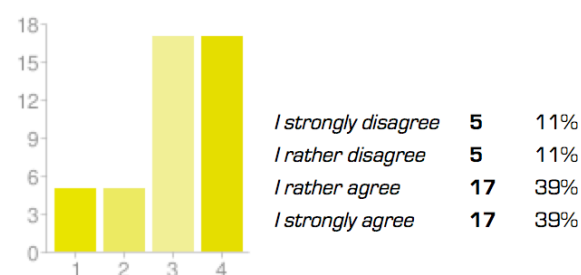


Figure 16
24. Mobile citizen journalism increases opportunities for rural communities to participate in the production of media content

participation is regarded to be stimulated more than media consumption. Both statements share a general agreement, but a reasonable part of the respondents also has doubts about the disclosure of information in rural areas.

Apparently professional background influences ones perception of these issues. About 70% of the non-professional journalists disagree with the “consume” statement, against 14% of the professionals. For the statement on media

participation, these percentages are respectively 40% and 13%. Between trained and untrained journalists the same trend is visible: Almost 57% of the trained respondents strongly agree with the statement on media consumption while only 24% of the untrained respondents do.¹⁰

8.5 Summary

Although the results in this chapter have shown that the respondents generally believe in increasing opportunities for marginalized groups due to mobile phones, they have doubts about the empowerment motivations of media houses. NGOs embrace these possibilities far more than media houses, but the accessibility of the former is low due to the fact that most of the information provided by NGOs requires internet access.

The respondents think that mobile citizen journalism will stimulate the rise of independent media and further overall democratization. Yet it is striking that the perceived reliability of mobile citizen reports relates to the degree to which mobile citizen journalism is believed to have a democratizing effect on the long term. As in chapter 7, it is indicated that those who strongly believe in the democratizing value of mobile citizen journalism also perceive this as a reliable source. The question to that matter is which is the initial perception, and which one follows. Do mobile citizen journalism advocates tend to underrate the difficulties regarding reliability, or have they become proponents because they perceive the concept reliable?

Another striking relation is found between those who, professionally rely for a large part on mobile sources and the degree to which they notice that new and controversial topics are increasingly discussed in the media. The more reporters rely on mobile sources themselves, the more they notice this process. Two examples of controversial topics are politics and different forms of injustice. A broad agreement exists that citizens are now enabled through mobiles to participate in news making and discussions on these two themes. Respondents who require professional journalistic skills as a precondition for quality reporting are surprisingly overrepresented amongst the believers of mobile citizen journalism's positive influence on political involvement. Those who believe that the fight against injustice will increase due to mobile phones are often relying on mobile sources for information themselves.

Media consumption and participation in rural areas is generally believed to increase due to mobile phones. The degree of professionalism, concerning both educational background and professional status, seems to determine to which degree mobile citizen journalism is perceived to increase media involvement in the rural. Non-professionals generally don't believe rural populations will consume more media due to mobile citizen journalism and they are overrepresented amongst those that don't believe in citizen participation either. Level of training also seems to determine opinions regarding this topic, since trained reporters mostly believe strongly in increased consumption while only a quarter of the untrained does.

¹⁰ See annex 5 for all significant correlations in Chapter 8.

9 Conflict

The ancient image of Africa as a continent torn by war, as the Dark Continent where violence is embedded in exotic cultures and natural beauty, is sadly enough still amply present in general representations. But it's hard to expect otherwise from ignorant people who only know Africa from news items on television and exiting movie tales. Awareness of an Africa wherein most Africans have personally never faced a war is hard to come across. Of course, it is true that Africa recently faced some cruel civil wars and conflicts. Images from Rwanda, Sierra Leone, DR Congo and Sudan influence and shape the lasting representations.

Since several African countries have faced conflicts in recent years, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa, and keeping in mind the influence of media reporting and access to information during conflicts, it is inevitable to examine this topic. Information has proven to be a powerful weapon for the powerless and this is not different during conflict. Or in other words, the assumption is made that normal citizens are able to "defend" themselves through calls, text messages and by shooting images instead of bullets. In paragraph 9.1 this assumption is examined through two statements, backed up by examples from the respondents. Paragraph 9.2 examines if the respondents are able to handle the flow of civic information and footage professionally.

Research questions

- Which additional value is ascribed to mobile citizen reports for conflict reporting?
- How is professional conflict reporting influenced by mobile reports?

9.1 *The impact of mobile citizen reports during conflict*

In chapter 6 we have seen that 75% of the respondents ascribes mobile citizen journalism to have important value for news coverage of "extreme topics". This term, "extreme topics", comprehends conflicts and crisis situations such as violent protests, uprisings and civil wars. As we have seen in chapter 7, in Kenya mobiles were used to organize angry masses in order to fuel hatred against other ethnic groups. However, this was the first African conflict wherein mobile citizen journalists played a major role. While mainstream media failed to cover the great amount of events that took place in just a few days, it were citizens who filled the gap:

"I refer to the post election violence period. Due to mobile journalism, a lot of information was availed to local and international media houses through citizen journalism. Through mobile phones, mainstream media houses were able to access the hotspots and highlighted the same to the world. Through these tip-offs, pressure was added to the two antagonists, Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki, to sit down and reason for the sake of the country."

-Alex Kiarie, Kenya: 01-04-2010

In order to measure the general attitude regarding this theme, constructed through the experiences and expectations of the respondents, a general statement was presented: *“Coverage, reports and footage from conflict and crisis areas have increased substantially due to mobile citizen journalism”*. The results are illustrated in Figure 17.

As shown, most respondents agree with this statement, as only 19% disagrees. Opinions of this aspect of mobile citizen journalism are scattered amongst all kind of respondents. These figures don’t correlate with any of the other variables. Therefore we can only conclude that a general belief in the value of mobile citizen journalism during conflict exists. It is striking that trained journalists are more convinced of an increase than untrained journalists. Where the former generally “strongly agree”, the latter mostly “rather agree”. An example shows how mobiles can help people from remote areas to build their case when facing a conflict.

“In Africa, land has been a major source of conflicts. I have witnessed occasions where conflicts have been reported by farmers in the provinces by mobile communications, narrating how mayhem is being leashed out on neighbouring villages over disputed

farming land and also in situation of cattle's dying mysteriously. The pictures where taken by mobile phones and sent by email for reporting.”

-Femi Peters, Nigeria: 09-04-2010

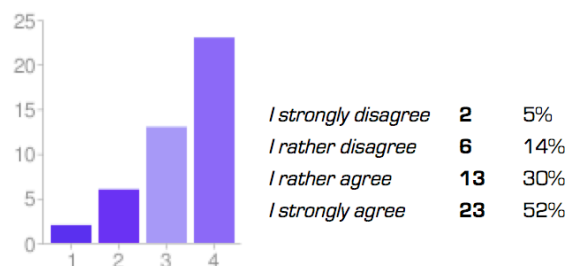


Figure 17

25. Coverage, reports and footage from conflict and crisis areas have increased substantially due to mobile citizen journalism

Another example from Nigeria is valuable, and asks for further elaboration, since religious tensions in the central-north have escalated several times in the last few months. This example shows how mobiles empower groups to protect themselves against religious and violent fanatics.

“A case in point is the recent communal crisis in Jos, Plateau state, North central Nigeria. The recent reports by the police authorities, religious and community leaders point to the fact that mobile text messages from citizens have helped to deploy security personnel to areas where crisis will be perpetrated next. Mobile phones have helped to allow information to circulate among church members, community members etc, so they will be on their guard to further mobilise to protect themselves or call in the police to further secure them against attacks by the opposing community.”

-Mary Atolagbe, Nigeria: 20-04-2010

With these examples in mind, it is not surprising that 8 out of 9 Nigerian respondents agree to the statement above and apparently cases like these are well known in Nigeria.¹¹ The next example is from Ghana, one of the most democratic countries in Africa where the status of freedom of the press is regarded “free”. A mobile citizen achieved something that was considered rather unthinkable before:

¹¹ See annex 6 for all significant correlations in Chapter 9.

“In some conflict prone parts of the Northern Region of Ghana, some military brutalities were captured on video using mobile phone. Once the footage was published, the perpetrators were brought to book. This is one landmark case in Ghana”

-Ameyaw Debrah, Ghana: 12-04-2010

These examples show how mobile citizen reports contribute to a safer environment since the reports caused direct actions of justice. In the broader picture such reports often contribute to mainstream media reports from different perspectives.

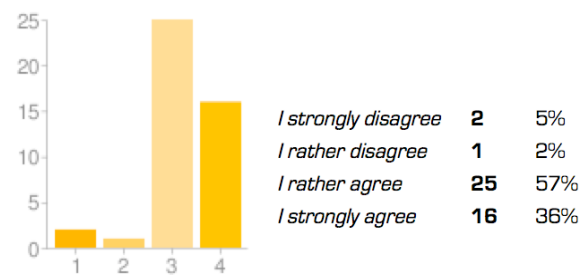


Figure 18
26. Reports from mobile citizen journalists are able to change general representations of a conflict

To elaborate on that, a statement was presented in order to measure to which extent this could be a weapon of the powerless in changing general representations of conflicts. Figure 18 shows that almost all the respondents perceive mobile citizen reports as such a tool.

9.2 Objective conflict reporting in danger?

In the literature on African conflict reporting it is stressed that impartiality is hard to achieve for journalists working under conditions of little or no freedom of the press. Self-censorship is a commonly applied defence mechanism for journalists who have nuanced or controversial opinions. With the increase of mobile citizen reports, sharing information from different, impartial or partial, perspectives to spread on the Internet, mainstream media might lose credibility if they don't adhere to popular views. When "professional" media reports deviate from citizen reports, which are available for the public as well, the question rises whether professional journalists are still able to do their job properly. Another example of Kenya's post election violence:

“Mobile Citizen Journalism is about live pictures and videos. Journalism is about news and timeliness but there is the social responsibility aspect of this profession. One of the video reports of my fellow colleague practicing Mobile Citizen Journalism in Meru, Kenya was sharply criticized by some observers. My Kenyan colleague was faulted for airing and shooting videos that rather propagated violence and intensified the civil strife in Kenya some two years. Some of the persons she talked to in her videos and pictures were promising bitterness, hatred and vengeance to another ethnic group in Kenya. Imagine the opposing people or camps watching such a video on TV or the Internet; it is dangerous. I argue that, while that my colleague was doing her job as a journalist, the rippling effect of her work is dangerous to a society we have to protect as journalists.”

-Nana W. Wilson, Cameroon: 02-04-2010

Two statements were presented in order to shed light on the respondents' opinions of this issue, illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10

	27. Impartial conflict reporting is harder for professional journalists when citizens participate in media production through their mobile phones		28. Mobile citizen reports from conflict areas endanger objective representations of events	
I strongly disagree	8	19%	6	14%
I rather disagree	9	21%	16	37%
I rather agree	18	42%	12	28%
I strongly agree	8	19%	9	21%

It seems that disagreements about these statements are present among the respondents, since the opinions given about the statements are not especially in full agreement or disagreement; there seems to be no general consensus on this matter. Considering the fact that no relevant correlations are found with other statements or personal characteristics it seems that personal experiences and professional or national background are not the determining factors when constructing opinions on this issue.

9.3 Summary

The respondents generally experience an increase of footage from conflict and crisis areas through mobile citizen reports. They also strongly indicate that representations of a conflict could be influenced by mobile citizen reports. This means that "normal" citizens who tell their story, their experiences during conflict, are heard and their contributions are taken seriously. Especially trained reporters are convinced of this process while the untrained reporters experience it only to a minor extent. A simple explanation cannot be found for this correlation

The provided examples have shown three different cases wherein mobile citizen reports functioned in favour of victims of injustice. The first came from Nigeria, where people from neighbouring villages attacked farmers. By taking pictures with mobile phones these farmers could easily and timely inform the public about events in order to convince politicians to intervene. The second example from Nigeria shows how mobile reports spurred fast mobilization of different actors, including the state, for protection of villages against violent religious fanatics. This case shows a preventive aspect of mobile citizen reporting. The third case is considered a milestone in Ghana. While the military has mainly been untouchable in African history, and still is in most countries, it was a regular citizen who achieved prosecution of some soldiers. A citizen filmed their brutalities and the court had no other choice than pursuing the perpetrators. These three examples show how mobile citizen journalism can function in different conflict settings for different purposes.

Whether decent impartial conflict reporting by professionals suffers or benefits from the increased amount of citizen footage remains unclear when analyzing the reporters' opinions. They generally tend to share the opinion that it has indeed become harder for professionals, but meanwhile a slight denial of the assumption

that mobile citizen reports endanger objective representations of conflicts is registered. This indicates that professional conflict reporters are able to adapt to mobile citizens' involvement and the increasing amount of footage, opinions and stories regarding conflicts.

Conclusion

In this thesis the ratings of 28 statements along with narratives and comments from several respondents have been analyzed. Based on findings in literature regarding the concept of citizen journalism and the development of Sub-Saharan African journalism, a central question was designed to frame the statements and questions presented to the respondents. This central question is:

How do Sub-Saharan African reporters experience the rise of mobile citizen journalism with respect to the journalistic profession and its empowering effects for marginalized societies?

The respondents' experiences, expectations and opinions of two central issues were measured and analyzed in order to obtain their general views on mobile citizen journalism. The first issue is the influence of the mobile revolution on mainstream and traditional journalism and the journalistic profession as such. The second issue is the supposedly empowering effect of mobile citizen journalism on marginalized groups. In this thesis, the term "marginalized" is used in a broad sense, which is reflected in special attention for two marginalized groups: rural communities and civilians during conflict.

Most respondents share a positive general attitude towards the concept of citizen journalism. They generally believe in its empowering features and consider it only a minor threat to traditional journalism. However, it is emphasised in general and particularly by the trained reporters that professional journalistic skills are still very important for quality reporting. Journalism is generally regarded as a profession, which requires specific qualities, background and knowledge to participate in. When it comes to the personal experience of the respondents with mobile citizen journalism, it appears that they themselves make little use of it as a source, despite an indicated presence of the phenomenon in all their countries. Meanwhile, a general acknowledgement of mobile phones' crucial importance in maintaining contact with news sources is emphasized.

Whether it is due to or despite of their poor personal experience with mobile citizen reports, it is notable that most respondents question its reliability. Concerns about "fake citizen reports" produced by a commercial party or government in order to promote its agenda, are distinct. In addition, examples from Kenya and Malawi represented a general fear for malicious citizens who are able to promote hatred during crisis situations through mobile reports. Striking in this matter is that the respondents who do consider mobile citizen reports to be reliable are also strong believers in citizen journalism's empowering features. Since most reporters consider mobile citizen reports to be rather unreliable, this raises questions about the objectivity of these strong believers. Additionally, the respondents that advocate mobile citizen journalism have also indicated a wider presence of mobile citizen reports in Africa's written press than moderate or non-believers. Therefore, the question is whether they have become strong believers because of their experience

with- and habituation to- reliable mobile citizen reports in newspapers, or does their belief reduce their objectivity and criticism and promote positive perceptions? No indications favour one of these two options and therefore an argument can be made that this is a case where continuous interaction takes place.

Despite the doubts about its reliability, a general belief in mobile citizen journalism's role as a tool that empowers marginalized groups and promotes democracy on the long term is present. The respondents regard mobile citizen reports as a contribution to popular participation in politics as well as in fighting injustice. However, the concept is considered most valuable for reports on extreme topics such as disasters, violent conflicts and other crisis. While mainstream media often fail to cover such news properly, with timely, accurate or balanced footage, it is the mobile citizen reporter who complements or adds other perspectives. In contradiction with the general opinions, five respondents regard mobile citizen reports very inappropriate for coverage of such extreme news. Striking is the fact that these reporters all come from countries without freedom of the press, which raises questions about their motivations. Whether their opinion is based on experience or on a restricted feeling in expressing themselves leaves space for guessing.

The general belief in mobile citizen journalism's empowering effects is reflected by the expectations on its use for rural areas and victims of conflict. It is perceived that both media consumption as well as media participation increases in rural areas, resulting in increased social involvement of remote societies. Trained and professional reporters have more confidence in the positive effects this can have for the rural population than their untrained citizen reporter counterparts. During conflict mobile citizen reports are regarded to be of additional value as well. Several examples have illustrated that mobile reports can play a crucial role in preventing the escalation of a conflict in different ways. Besides, footage and content that covers conflicts can function as a weapon of unarmed civilians when such reports are published, forcing the powerful to respond. Although most respondents have a positive response to that matter, it is important to realize that the opposite is also possible:

“The major danger mobile journalism would cost would be in the explosion of citizens to prosecution by the Government and eventually intimidation by authorities or people who are affected by this reports. Law suits would occur and severe penalty could be given to persons involved in mobile journalism, the extent to which ones fundamental human right stops where someone else begins. Seditious reports are still major offenses in African Countries”.

-Femi Peters, Nigeria: 09-04-2010

Despite the mentioned professional dangers regarding ethical, privacy and quality issues, expectations of an improved and more democratic media landscape due to the mobile revolution dominate the views of the respondents. Is it the already poor quality of African media that makes these reporters confident about the success of mobile citizen journalism? Despite of criticism on the quality of mobile citizen reports, a devaluation of the essence of professional journalism is not expected nor feared. The general opinion is that journalism as a profession is not in danger, and that it will be able to adapt to the changing media landscape. Regarded most important is that increased popular media consumption and especially participation

can open opportunities for marginalized groups to improve their position, resulting in an empowered society as a whole. The respondents seem to agree with Foucault's approach on power relations. Since access to knowledge and the production of knowledge is no longer the domain of the powerful, and the media is no longer an exclusive mechanism to exercise power through, a societal shift of power relations comes in sight. Such a power shift is best illustrated by Ameyaw Debrah's example from Ghana, where soldiers were convicted of brutalities because a mobile citizen journalist videotaped them. Such jurisdiction was unthinkable before, and sadly enough still is in most African countries. But the call for justice will more often be heard and due to increased footage and reports, the call from the marginalized will become increasingly more difficult for the powerful to ignore.

Reflection

When I started this thesis in January my goal was to be finished before the start of the World Cup football in June. I know myself and I know that during a world cup my brains are usually occupied by football and everything that surrounds it and that is not the perfect state of mind for graduating. I almost succeeded and at this moment I figure that the burden of finishing this thesis while the World Cup is already started is not as hard as I expected.

The fact that I almost succeeded indicates that the process of conducting this research and writing the thesis went almost as planned in my timetable. With exception of the failure to effectively reach large numbers of reporters through the newsletter of Africa Interactive, and the additional time it took to reach them through email, everything went according plan. It indicates also that I had a good and instructive time conducting this research. From the start I felt confident that a research by questionnaires and open questions through email would prove the right method and that the results would provide interesting points of view. I realize that a case study would offer more detailed information and more detailed anecdotes but that was not the purpose. Besides, a case study is spatially limited while the original purpose was to find out more about the impact of mobile citizen journalism in a broad Sub-Saharan context. Therefore, the choice to ask local reporters from different countries about their opinions, experiences and expectations provides a proper general indication of mobile citizen journalisms effects. No official statistics are measured and the results of this thesis can impossibly function as generalizing for the whole of Sub-Sahara Africa, but it indicates that something big is going on in African media landscape and that lots of people believe in its empowering effects for the future.

Studies on the effects of increased access to mobile phones and mobile Internet in the developing world are still relatively rare. This is not surprising since the mobile revolution has only recently started, especially in the developing world. But its long-term impact might be huge, as expected by the respondents in this thesis. The media are more and more forced to adapt to the increasingly participating citizens and losing its monopoly on news making. Despite my respondents' expectations it is still unknown what the real long-term effects of increasing mobile citizen journalism will be. However, in the West we should watch this process closely. The way mobile citizen journalism functions during conflicts, in crisis situations and for marginalized groups in Sub-Sahara Africa might teach us how to deal with the phenomenon and its influence on professional journalism in the West. Especially in these times, wherein the backdrop of the global financial crisis, an increasingly unstable Euro and the contemporary economic recession might be worse than many would expect. Besides, since polarization, religious tensions and state control have increased in contemporary Europe in recent years, the role of both traditional and new media tools will be important. Under these circumstances I hope that unless the spatial context of Sub-Sahara Africa my thesis is a useful contribution to the field of media developments regarding mobile citizen journalism in general.

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Annex 1 Freedom of the press

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Rank 2009	Country	Rating	Status
1	Ghana	26	Free
	Mali	26	Free
	Mauritius	26	Free
4	Cape Verde	28	Free
	Sao Tome and Principe	28	Free
6	Namibia	30	Free
	South Africa	30	Free
8	Benin	31	Partly Free
9	Botswana	37	Partly Free
10	Burkina Faso	41	Partly Free
	Mozambique	41	Partly Free
12	Lesotho	48	Partly Free
13	Comoros	50	Partly Free
	Tanzania	50	Partly Free
15	Madagascar	51	Partly Free
16	Guinea-Bissau	52	Partly Free
17	Congo (Brazzaville)	53	Partly Free
	Senegal	53	Partly Free
	Uganda	53	Partly Free
20	Nigeria	54	Partly Free
21	Malawi	56	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	56	Partly Free
23	Mauritania	58	Partly Free
24	Seychelles	59	Partly Free
25	Kenya	60	Partly Free
26	Angola	61	Not Free
	Central African Republic	61	Not Free
28	Liberia	63	Not Free
29	Niger	64	Not Free
30	Cameroon	65	Not Free
	Zambia	65	Not Free
32	Guinea	66	Not Free
33	Cote d'Ivoire	67	Not Free
34	Gabon	69	Not Free
35	Togo	72	Not Free
34	Djibouti	73	Not Free
37	Burundi	75	Not Free

Rank 2009	Country	Rating	Status
38	Chad	76	Not Free
	Ethiopia	76	Not Free
	Swaziland	76	Not Free
41	Sudan	78	Not Free
42	The Gambia	79	Not Free
43	Congo (Kinshasa)	81	Not Free
44	Somalia	84	Not Free
45	Rwanda	85	Not Free
46	Zimbabwe	88	Not Free
47	Equatorial Guinea	90	Not Free
48	Eritrea	94	Not Free

Status	Number of Countries	Percentage of Total
Free	7	14.6%
Partly Free	18	37.5%
Not Free	23	47.9%
TOTAL	48	100.0%



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