

Editorial

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Race for Virtual Reality Monopolization and the Predatory Arise of News Media Monoliths

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The New York Times has announced its gate-crashing into the world of virtual reality news presentation with heavy marketing strategies, even though there have been many innovative and creative attempts of virtual reality news explorations that have already made land marks. NYT's systematically designed market shaking virtual reality attempt has been made real by covering millions through Google collaborations. The refugee crisis and their struggles in the no man's land have been filmed and titled as 'The Displaced' for the first virtual reality view of The New York Times through the Google cardboard viewer. Over and above, a news worthy experimentation, it can be cited as an intelligent and throat cut market strategy of the NYT to sell the news as a global product.

The convergence of technology and platforms such as smart phones, apps, lenses and satellites have enabled both the Google and NYT to tell the stories of refugee kids from South Sudan, Ukraine and Syria. The sad stories of the soul searching refugee kids have become a free and sponsored staple diet for millions of NYT subscribed readers across North America. Those readers have experienced close-ups, panoramic views and pans by subscribing a printed newspaper. While celebrating the tears right in front of their eyes, the NYT expect that their news consumers may get a unique sense of empathy with the subjects and news events. Diversified geographies may frequently appear in front of the consumers' eyes by subscribing a print enhanced with apps, smart gadgets and lens.

Is this a new form of news dissemination/story telling or promoting a technological product for a brand recognition? As cat video tech ventures such as Snapchat, Vine, and Periscope have started redefining the time and space concept of news formats, mainstream media moguls have sensed the heat and pressure to innovate and compete. Being in the limelight is important to make one's presence visible. More Virtual Reality experiments are coming from tech ventures of Oculus Rift, T Brand Studio, Framestore, General Electric and MINI. Hence, yet another virtual reality explosion in the news world is definite.

While the symbiotic relations between the news media and technology reach a crucial juncture, the consumers are becoming more selective and narrow casted. The new challenge is to increase the consumers' participation in this diversified and technology enhanced news presentation. Hence forgetting the rivalry and the throat cut competitions, new corporate alliances are taking into shape. The giant media corporations of the world are initiating aggressive merging and acquisition strategies to tighten their ownership control and retain their customer base. Takeovers and buy outs in the media industries are becoming the everyday catch phrases in the global stock markets. Along with business strategies and associations, these acquisitions and mergers bring forward technological innovations to tighten the ownership control, increase profit and widen the user experiences for brand loyalties.

Facebook with its new internet.org and its acquisition of LiveRail, a San Francisco/California-based online video advertising company, gate crashed into the blue chip 10 most valued stock club among the Standard & Poor's 500 index listing, whereas Google launched its news data center which is labelled as the power plant for the Internet in Alabama to tap the scribes and monitor the news media under their radar. Along with establishing a 'news lab' that collaborates with journalist and entrepreneurs in providing quality news and information to the world, Google is also on its way to an innovative project—Project Loon—a balloon powered internet (wireless) facility to connect rural and remote areas of the world. NBC is undergoing radical shift and remodeling whereas The New York Time's collaboration with Microsoft and Apple for their mobile presence is proving successful with its popularity reaching even the Russian readers. Data and value utilization form the main target for all of these corporations.

News and its gatekeepers are getting more influenced by the new start-ups and social media ventures that dominate the social web. Everything is becoming instant and homogeneous. Shifting audience demographics and new entrepreneurship in the information and communication world are eagerly looking at sustaining the marketing and advertising revenues. The *Journal of Media Watch* presents this issue with more diversified content and uncompromising quality. Enjoy reading the research from scholars across the world beyond time and space differences.

Prof. Cecilia Fe L Sta Maria from *University of the Philippines Baguio* writes about the social mobilization happening in the World Wide Web. Her research paper clearly focuses on the political agenda setting and social mobilization happening around the world. This research paper clearly illustrates the hybrid space forming in the cyberspace.

Robert Necek and Krzysztof Gurba from *The Pontifical University of John Paul II of Poland* evaluate the social media use and gratification of Polish journalists in their day to day professional needs. Arguing on the inseparability of social media in news dissemination, the Polish scholars challenge the check and balance done by the Polish journalists in ensuring objectivity, truthfulness, accountability and transparency on the daily news casting in their profession.

Scott Timcke and Derek Kootte from Canadian Universities (*Simon Fraser University and The University of British Columbia*) contribute a thought provoking research paper highlighting the transformational changes happening in the political economy concept in relation to the organized global institutions. Framing collective actions problems, take account of trade-offs, coalition building reductive treatments of states and corporate conglomeration are evaluated in depth and contrasted by the Canadian academics in their contributions.

Nicholas Ryan Ward from *Carlton University, Canada* investigates into the expedient commodification of modern hipster culture as a motif of contemporary capitalism. Culture and capitalism are getting into new zones of debate and discourses. Ryan uses the Canadian *VICE* media as platform to assess and evaluate the interaction of local culture in modern capitalist societies.

Gurpreet Kour, a research scholar from *MICA* writes about the modern mediated societies with smart gadgets, which are thinking of an inevitable detoxification from the wired world of tweets, tags, shares, likes and buzz. This research paper absolutely points towards a period where human beings become more and more mechanical and objectified because of gadgets. Digital detoxification is both mental and physical.

Dennis Moot from *Ohio University* looks into the media democratization happening in the most vibrant African democracy: Ghana. News media play a pivotal role in the African modernization but the media ownership concentration and conglomeration are becoming unpredictable in spite

of many participatory alternative media experiments. Dennis has chosen the most dynamic African country as the time tester.

Wang Changsong of *Universiti Sains Malaysia* analyses the changing perspectives on the Chinese film portrayals in an American context. An emerging economy with a soft product of entertainment to the most commercialized market is clearly illustrated by Wang. The research paper underscores Confucianism as an alternative that greatly affects the depiction of young characters and the causal relationship of morality and fate of the characters in Chinese films.

Renowned documentary film maker Friedrich H. Kohle from *Edinburgh University* correlates the metamorphism created by the social media in the evolutionary phase of modern day documentary film making. Kohle is critical and complimentary in assessing the technology enhancement and the use of two media platforms in telling a news story for the establishment of a global collective consciousness: it is an online extension of the user's persona.

Okpoko Chinwe and Abodunrin Kemi from *University of Nigeria* analyse the corporate social responsibilities behind the televised live reality show "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire". The triads of advertising, competition and prize money through a glamorous media and the after effects in society is very well scrutinized in their research.

Soumya Jose from *Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT)* reviews a thought provoking subject. The paper looks into the indispensability and inevitability of curriculum and syllabus revisions needed in the media and communication education at the higher learning and research centers in India. Jose explores how the tech trends, digitalization, virtual/augmented reality can be cybernetically incorporated in the Indian pedagogical and research paradigms on media and communication.

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