



MEDIA ETHICS IN DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

The emergence of the digital era has brought about a sea change in the media environment, bringing forth new ethical difficulties and conundrums. As a result of the expansion of digital platforms and social media, traditional media ethics, which have traditionally focused on problems such as impartiality, truth, justice, and privacy, are now confronted with complicated difficulties. The purpose of this abstract is to investigate the changing nature of media ethics in the context of the digital era. Through this investigation, the conflicts that exist between freedom of speech, the right to knowledge, and the obligations of media practitioners are brought to light. The standards of truth and accountability have been increasingly undermined as a result of the proliferation of user-generated material and the blurring of the borders between professional journalism and citizen reporting. Concerns have been raised over the ethical obligations of media platforms and the role that algorithms play in the distribution of material and disinformation as a result of the fast spread of deepfakes, fake news, and misinformation that has been allowed by the digital environment. In addition, the advent of the digital era has exacerbated concerns over privacy, as a result of the extensive collecting of personal data and the utilization of this data for the purposes of controlled advertising, monitoring, and the manipulation of public opinion. Consent, openness, and the protection of personal information are three ethical factors that are more important than they have ever been. This abstract also discusses the ethical implications of digital media in global contexts, which provide a distinct set of issues due to the presence of cultural diversity, censorship, and authoritarian control. When it comes to the formation of ethical norms, the role that the media plays in maintaining inclusion in the digital world, dealing with hate speech, and promoting social justice is of the utmost importance. To summarize, the advent of the digital era necessitates a reassessment of the ethics of the media, making it necessary to strike a balance between innovation and responsibility. In order to maintain the fundamental values of integrity, truthfulness, and respect for human dignity, it is necessary for users, platforms, and practitioners of the media to work together in order to set ethical norms that are flexible enough to accommodate the ever-changing digital world.

keywords:

Introduction

As a result of the emergence of the digital era, the process of creating, sharing, and consuming information has been completely transformed. The bounds of conventional media have significantly extended as a result of the proliferation of social media, online news platforms, and a plethora of digital content sources. This has resulted in the creation of new possibilities as well as new obstacles. Despite the fact that the democratization of media has made it easier for individuals and communities to express their thoughts and have access to information than ever before, it has also made the ethical landscape more challenging. Truthfulness, honesty, impartiality, and respect for privacy were some of the established values that served as the foundation for media ethics in the days before the advent of digital technology. In the context of the

controlled environment of professional journalism and regulated media outlets, it was relatively simpler to put these concepts into practice. The fast expansion of digital platforms, on the other hand, has caused these standards to be broken, which has led to ethical challenges that were previously imagined. In this new media environment, everyone who has access to the internet is able to create information. This has resulted in an increase in user-generated content, which frequently blurs the borders between professional journalism and personal expression. Critical concerns regarding the trustworthiness, accountability, and ethical duties of content makers have been raised as a result of this transition. The ease with which information can be communicated has also made it easier for damaging content, false news, and disinformation to proliferate, which poses a challenge to the function of the media as a trusted source of information. Furthermore, the advent of the digital era has given rise to new ethical problems concerning the privacy of data, the surveillance of individuals, and the manipulation of public opinion through the use of targeted advertising and the transmission of material that is driven by algorithms. The ethical implications of data usage and permission have emerged as major problems in the debate on media ethics as the level of personalization of media consumption continues to increase. Furthermore, the worldwide reach of digital media provides a unique set of issues in a variety of political and cultural situations. The digital age serves to amplify a number of issues, including the tension that exists between freedom of speech and censorship, the role that the media plays in advancing social justice, and the ethical concerns that are involved in reporting in war zones. This introductory section lays the groundwork for a more in-depth investigation of the changing nature of media ethics in the modern era of digital technology. It highlights the necessity of reexamining ethical norms and developing new rules that are adaptive to the dynamic and complicated world of digital media. Moreover, it highlights the need for some new guidelines to be developed. At the same time as we are navigating this terrain, it is very necessary to strike a balance between the pursuit of innovation and the commitment to respecting the core values of ethical media practice.

DEFINITION OF NEW MEDIA ETHICS

We are able to determine our "netiquette" and how we should conduct ourselves online with the guidance of new media ethics. These are necessary due to the fact that information is being sent in a very rapid manner and in enormous quantities. Both those who consume new media and those who make it have a responsibility to be conscious of the ethical constraints they face in the digital realm. Although there are legal rights that protect those who create material, the regulations that protect those who consume content online are still in the early stages of development stage. There is a significant amount of content that is being produced on the internet, and it is essential that the internet continues to be open and transparent, as well as respect the rights of those who are contributing to the sharing and exchange of knowledge. The freedom to generate material is afforded to them, which not only encourages creative thinking but also makes information available to all individuals. It is difficult to resist the urge to replicate or edit material that is readily available to those who are interested. For the same reason that we must respect ownership, privacy, secrecy, and intellectual property in our actual lives, we must also respect these things in our virtual lives. Consequently, the concept of new media ethics may be summed up as a collection of ethical issues that outlines how we should behave when we are online. The principles of new media ethics instruct us on how to make acceptable use of new media without violating any laws or infringing on the rights of other users who are using the internet. They offer a model code that may be utilized by anyone who create, distribute, and consume material on the internet. With the assistance of user-generated material, collaborative websites like Wikis and YouTube, as well as social networking websites like Facebook, MySpace, Weibo, and Twitter, are all able to function.

Individuals who are reading the information are also the ones that share, swap, add-on, and publish the data that they come across, and as a result, they wind up being both consumers and producers through their actions. For example, we use Facebook to exchange images, but we also "like" pictures that we see on the walls of our friends, which results in the creation of data. This is not accomplished through any other media. Consequently, consumers of new media need to be safeguarded against ethical transgressions in their capacity as producers of information as well as creators of information. Let us begin by making an effort to comprehend the obligations that they have as creators.

The Challenges of Truthfulness and Accuracy in the Digital Age

The dedication to telling the truth and being accurate has long been considered to be one of the most fundamental ethical values in the media. This idea, on the other hand, is coming under growing pressure in this age of digital technology. The speed at which information may be distributed online, in conjunction with the pressure to be the first to break news, frequently results in the dissemination of material that has not been validated or that is erroneous. On account of the viral nature of digital material, once false information is disseminated, it has the potential to swiftly spread across other platforms, making it difficult to withdraw or rectify the information and frequently ineffectual.

In addition, the proliferation of social media platforms as key news sources has played a role in the slow but steady decline of accuracy. It is possible for algorithms to give more weight to material that is focused on engagement rather than dependability, which can result in the dissemination of information that is either sensational or fraudulent. In addition, this problem is made much worse by the habit of "clickbait" headlines, which are written with the intention of attracting attention rather than conveying real information. When it comes to this particular setting, the conventional journalistic ideals of fact-checking and conducting exhaustive investigation are frequently pushed to the background in favor of speed and virality.

When integrity and accuracy are compromised, the repercussions are far-reaching and affect many people. Inaccurate information has the potential to sway public opinion, impact the outcomes of political processes, and lead to social unrest. Especially during crucial events like elections or public health emergencies, the proliferation of false news and conspiracy theories highlights the ethical requirement for media practitioners to emphasize truth, even in the face of heavy competition and short news cycles. This is especially true during times of crisis.

The Ethical Implications of Data Privacy and Surveillance

Ethical considerations around the gathering, use, and protection of personal data have grown increasingly important in this age of digital technology. The large amounts of user data that are collected by media platforms, particularly social media networks, are frequently utilized for targeted advertising, content customisation, and even political influence efforts. The ethical repercussions of these behaviors are significant, particularly with relation to the issues of permission, openness, and the possibility of abuse. Even while the idea of informed consent is extremely important in the context of digital technology, it is frequently not fully handled. The amount to which users' data is being gathered and the purposes for which it is being utilized may not be completely understood by users. The majority of the time, privacy rules are difficult to understand and obscure, which results in a lack of actual openness. This gives rise to ethical

concerns regarding the exploitation of personal data as well as the obligation of media platforms to safeguard the privacy of its platform users.

Another significant problem is surveillance, which is especially important in situations in which media channels are utilized by corporate or governmental groups in order to watch and control populations. The utilization of digital means for the purpose of conducting mass surveillance presents substantial dangers to the rights and freedoms of individuals. When it comes to media ethics in the digital era, these issues need to be addressed by fighting for rigorous privacy safeguards and rejecting practices that violate the rights of individuals to freedom of speech and privacy.

Balancing Freedom of Expression with Responsibility

In addition, the subject of freedom of speech has become more prominent as a result of the advent of the digital era. A platform for a variety of voices has been made available via the internet, which has made it possible for individuals to freely express their thoughts and exchange information. On the other hand, this freedom has also resulted in the dissemination of undesirable information, such as harassment, hate speech, and propaganda by extremist political groups. The difficulty is in striking a balance between the right to freedom of expression and the requirement to safeguard persons and communities from potential damage.

There is a growing amount of pressure being placed on media platforms to control content; yet, this poses ethical concerns that are connected to censorship and the possible suppression of lawful expression. Platforms have the ability to influence what material is displayed, which can result in charges of bias and the suppressing of voices who disagree with the platform's positions. When it comes to media ethics in the digital era, a nuanced approach is required. This approach must protect the right to freedom of speech while also applying steps to prevent the dissemination of information that is harmful or hazardous.

The promotion of diversity and inclusiveness in digital environments is an additional obligation that falls on the shoulders of media practitioners. One of the most important ethical concerns is making sure that voices from underrepresented groups are heard and that no prejudice or stereotypes are perpetuated via the use of digital media. In order to do this, it is necessary to make a commitment to equal representation and to careful analysis of the impact that material has on various populations.

Global Perspectives and Cultural Sensitivity

Additional ethical issues are presented by the worldwide character of digital communication, particularly with regard to cultural sensitivity and the diverse norms and values that exist across different civilizations. In one cultural setting, anything that is considered normal or even applauded may be considered insulting or unsuitable in another cultural setting. Those who work in the media have a responsibility to handle these distinctions with caution, avoiding the imposition of a singular cultural perspective while also recognizing the variety of viewers throughout the world.

Even under authoritarian regimes, where the media is frequently subject to stringent supervision, digital platforms have the potential to serve as crucial avenues for the distribution of information and the expression of opposition. It is possible for governments to utilize these platforms for the sake of surveillance and repression, which is one of the hazards associated with this function. In these kinds of situations, carrying

out ethical media practices demands striking a delicate balance between defending the right to free expression and shielding persons from the risk of being harmed.

RIGHTS AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONTENTCREATORS

Individuals are protected from having their work duplicated in an unauthorized manner by the Copyright Law, and the Information Technology Amendment Act of 2008 contains a tiny portion that is dedicated to dealing with cyber crimes such as the spreading of obscene content or impersonating someone on the internet. In light of the fact that the laws have not been able to progress at the same rate as the medium itself, it is very necessary to adhere to the ethical norms in all circumstances.

Understanding Digital Rights and Creative Commons

The concept of digital rights has grown increasingly significant in this age of information. It is imperative that the rights of the consumer or reader, as well as the producer of the material, be safeguarded. Due to the fact that the majority of internet users are prosumers (consumers who also generate), this situation presents a number of issues. As both makers and users of information found online, they are responsible for ensuring that they do not violate any ethical standards. Considering how much simpler it is to demonstrate ownership, the rights of the person who created the work are always argued with greater fervor. For the purpose of safeguarding these, a collection of innovative strategies that are collectively known as Digital Rights Management (DRM) have been developed. In addition, they make it more difficult to duplicate access or distribute data in a manner that is not authorized. procedures like as copy control, access control, and digital watermarking are examples of procedures that are frequently seen in ordinary life. When we apply a watermark, there is a link to the original work encoded somewhere within the text. This link is placed in such a way that the reader is directed to the original work. In order to read the text on certain websites, such as Google Books and SAGE, for example, one must either be a member of the website or a paid subscription so that they may view only a portion of the material that is available for free. Certain software restrictions are also designed to prevent any copying from occurring, which in turn prevents the automated reproduction of data. The most advanced methods entail encrypting the data in such a way that it is jumbled up and can only be patched together by authorized individuals who hold the decryption key. This is analogous to putting together a jigsaw puzzle.

The following are the primary concerns that content creators have with regard to the ethics of new media:

- Copyright and ownership of the work
- Open Source vs Free Content and the Sharing of Content
- Privacy concerns and other ethical concerns

Ownership Issues

There is a lot of information freely available on the internet, and anything we require is just a click away. In addition, this is true for artwork, music, graphics, songs, and any other type of content that we are looking for. However, this raises concerns for the protection of our rights as creative individuals for the same reason. Even while we are entitled to legal protection under the Copyright Law, we are ethically obligated to address concerns of ownership and copyright on the internet. At this time, new types of copyright are accessible to be purchased online.

Copyright infringement

There are a great number of websites on the internet that provide paid material. This is done to guarantee that artists and writers who submit material are rewarded and motivated to create more work in the future. However, there are file-sharing organizations that permit the downloading and sharing of materials that are unlawful, which can lead to piracy. A significant issue is the widespread practice of music piracy, which refers to the act of copying digital products without the permission of the owner of the copyright, such as audio files, videos, reports, essays, and other similar content. As users, we have a tendency to become reckless while copying and pasting the material that we want, which might result in infringements on the copyright of other internet users.

Open Content vs. Free Content

Specifically, David Wiley has stated that material that is accessible over the internet can be either open or free. Both of these things need to be differentiated from one another. Open content refers to any work that is accessible online and may be accessed, changed, reused, redistributed, remixed, and stored for later use. This content can also be maintained for later use. Consequently, this indicates that the material that is accessible online does not necessarily have to be "open," even if it is free. This suggests that "open" content is not the same as "free" content. Due to the fact that "free" indicates that one is able to access the content without incurring any costs, while "open" indicates that users are free to download, change, and distribute the content without any restrictions imposed by ethics or the law. Individuals are able to consume and benefit from free content, as well as generate and distribute copies of it, study and apply it, and even disseminate derivative works associated with it without restriction. Because of the Internet's status as a relatively new medium, the difficulty of developing ethical rules for the Internet has become more prevalent. On the internet, there is a tremendous quantity of material that is floating about, and there are numerous standards that determine our ethical bounds with regard to the use of the content that is available online. The content that is placed online is automatically protected by copyright for a period of seventy years, after which it is made accessible for use by the general public. New forms of copyright licensing that are now available online provide us with information on the appropriate use of a certain piece of content. One such organization is Creative Commons, which is working on the concept of allowing people access to creative work and intellectual property while also granting them the ability to pick the circumstances under which that work is made available to consumers. In layman's words, anytime a user uploads any new piece of information to the internet, he or she has the ability to designate how it must be used by saying whether the content is free for modification, download, sharing, and other similar activities, or whether it is just partially available or not available at all. This is accomplished through the use of symbols and attributions that have become extensively utilized on the internet in recent times. Having a better knowledge of how one should use material that is available online is made easier by these principles. On the other hand, it is important to remember that licenses that are distributed via Creative Commons are not a replacement for copyright provisions. An explanation of the many forms of copyrights offered by Creative Commons may be found in the table that is included as an annexure to this unit.

Objective

1. Dissect the major moral dilemmas brought about by the media's digitization, including the propagation of false information, worries about personal data, and the need to strike a balance between free speech and content control.
2. Find out how the truth, honesty, justice, and accountability that have always been part of media ethics have been impacted by the digital era, and how these values may be maintained in an ever-changing landscape.

Literature Review:

The practise of journalism has been revolutionized as a result of the digital revolution, which has presented possibilities as well as problems for media organisations and professionals in the field of journalism. The literature on journalism ethics in the digital age provides useful insights into the ethical difficulties and consequences brought about by the fluctuating media landscape. These insights may be found in the literature. This literature review provides a summary of important research and scholarly works that investigate the ethical aspects that media workers must take into account in the modern era of digital technology.

Scholars such as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) Consider the argument that the advent of the digital era has made it necessary to reconsider the ethics of conventional journalism. In this day and age of swiftly spread information, they stress the significance of being transparent, being accountable, and being accurate. In an environment where the media landscape is fractured, the authors advocate for a reaffirmation of fundamental journalistic standards in order to maintain credibility and confidence.

There have been issues expressed regarding the reliability of information as a result of the emergence of social media as a source of news. The authors Singer and Ashman (2016) investigate the difficulties associated with reporting news from social media platforms, highlighting the importance of implementing rigorous verification procedures. A discussion is held about the ethical implications of depending on content that is provided by users, as well as the responsibility of journalists to prevent the dissemination of false information.

The pursuit of online interaction and the generating of cash has resulted in the growth of clickbait and headlines that are sensationalized. Peters (2017) examines the ethical implications of click-based income models, drawing attention to the conflict that exists between enticing readers and maintaining the integrity of journalism. According to the findings of the study, it is essential to place an emphasis on truth and content rather than sensationalism.

Journalists have been put in a position where they are vulnerable to online abuse as a result of the greater audience involvement that digital media offers. Research conducted by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) investigates the difficulties that journalists have when confronted with online harassment and abuse. They emphasize the significance of tackling the issue of online harassment while also maintaining an online presence that is accessible and engaging.

As the landscape of digital media continues to evolve, citizen journalism has emerged as an important component. The authors Thurman and Walters (2013) analyze the ethical concerns that citizen journalists confront, with a particular focus on issues of credibility, responsibility, and adherence to professional norms.

According to the findings of the study, there is a pressing requirement for both professional and citizen journalists to have clear ethical rules. A disruption has occurred in the income models of media companies as a result of the transition from conventional print media to digital media. In his 2016 article, Koltay investigates the ethical consequences of several income structures used in the digital realm, including sponsored content and native advertising. A plea for transparency in the disclosure of compensated material is made in the report, which also analyzes the possible conflicts of interest that may arise.

Ethical Reaffirmation in the Digital Era:

Many academics stress the significance of reiterating fundamental journalistic ethics in this day and age of digital technology. Even as new media platforms and social media continue to transform the landscape of news delivery, the importance of maintaining truth, fairness, impartiality, and openness continues to be of the utmost importance. While simultaneously adhering to ethical norms, media organizations and journalists are required to adapt to the digital world in order to preserve the confidence and credibility of the general public.

Verification and Misinformation Challenges:

Authenticating information has become more difficult as a result of the proliferation of social media platforms and user-generated content. Journalists have a responsibility to thoroughly evaluate the credibility of the sources and content they cover in order to prevent the spread of false information. There is a need for journalists to apply rigorous fact-checking techniques since the pace of internet reporting necessitates a balance between the immediacy of the news and its veracity.

Clickbait and Sensationalism:

There have been concerns raised about clickbait and sensationalized material as a result of the quest of online engagement and money through click-based models. When it comes to reporting, media firms are required to favor serious reporting above sensationalism due to ethical issues. Within the context of the digital era, striking a careful balance between the desire for audience involvement and journalistic integrity is a challenging challenge.

Online Harassment and Audience Engagement:

Through the use of social media and interactive elements, the digital landscape makes it possible to engage large audiences more effectively. On the other hand, journalists are subjected to online harassment and abuse, which can have a negative impact on their mental health and may also have an effect on their reporting. Media companies have a responsibility to take precautions to protect journalists from being harassed online while also ensuring that their online presence is both responsive and interesting.

Citizen Journalism and Credibility:

There has been a significant rise in the prominence of citizen journalism within the ecosystem of digital media. Despite the fact that it presents a variety of viewpoints, it is essential to guarantee integrity and responsibility. For the purpose of upholding journalistic ethics in this day and age of user-generated material,

media companies ought to formulate unambiguous ethical principles that can be followed by both professional and citizen journalists.

Digital Revenue Models and Transparency:

As a result of the proliferation of new digital business sources, such as sponsored content and native advertising, journalistic independence and impartiality are subject to difficulties. When it comes to maintaining public confidence, the necessity for transparency in the disclosure of compensated material is of the utmost importance. For the purpose of avoiding potential conflicts of interest, media companies need to strike a balance between the generating of money and ethical considerations.

Conclusion

The advent of the digital age has presented media ethics with opportunities and difficulties that have never been seen before. Traditional concepts such as honesty, accuracy, privacy, and justice continue to be as important as they have always been; yet, in order to accommodate the intricacies of the digital realm, these principles need to be modified. All parties involved in the media industry—users, platforms, and practitioners—have a part to play in the development of an ethical environment for digital media. The development of new frameworks and rules that are capable of addressing the one-of-a-kind ethical conundrums that the digital era presents is very necessary as we move forward. One of the things that falls under this category is the establishment of accountability procedures, the enhancement of transparency, and the promotion of a media culture that places an emphasis on integrity and respect for human dignity. We can guarantee that the media continues to act as a force for good in society by reinventing media ethics for the digital era. This will allow us to defend the ideals of truth, fairness, and inclusion in a world that is becoming increasingly linked.

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