

CITIZEN JOURNALISM: THE SWEET FEMINIST

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What is Citizen Journalism?

‘Journalistic acts that are performed by citizens themselves and where professionals have little or no influence on what gets published’ (Bakker & Paterson, 2011)

Who is The Sweet Feminist?

Rebecca Bea-Holloway, also known as ‘The Sweet Feminist’ is an online instagranner who’s goal is ‘building community through frosting’. Her profile features cakes and cookies with political messages iced on top of them. Many of the issues she presents are female centered and she works at raising awareness of these issues by presenting them in a different way to traditional media.

Relationship with the Public Sphere:

‘A discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgement about them’

‘The principle of the public sphere is not confined to a single domain of social coordination’

‘A public sphere can be invaded by the special interests or the state’

(Hauser, 1998)

‘The multiple public spheres now existing online, on TV, and on talk radio help citizens of all ages, socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, sexual orientations, or political leanings develop their ideas and viewpoints, making them better prepared to contribute to larger public debates’ (Marchi, 2012)

Relationship with Mainstream Media:

‘The aesthetic of social media - immediacy and interactivity - are still castigated by critics of online activism, who doubt not only its efficacy, but also its authenticity’ (Axford, 2011)

‘CJ sites used fewer sources overall, but were less likely to rely on official sources, using them in only 30.3% of articles’ (Linder, 2017)

‘Social networks may play a supportive role at best’ (Khondker, 2011)

‘Most content that appears on alternative outlets originates from mainstream media’ (Bakker & Paterson, 2011)

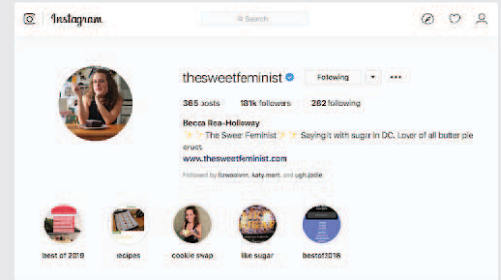


Figure 1: Instagram Profile



Figure 2: Instagram Posts



Figures 4-5: Instagram Posts re. Abortion and Student Loan Debt

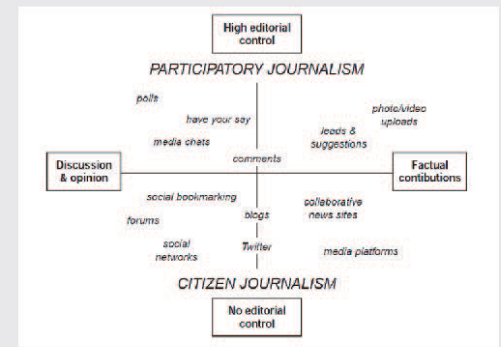


Figure 3: Participatory Journalism vs Citizen Journalism
Backker & Paterson, 2011

Summary of Findings:

The Sweet Feminist is a Citizen Journalist who uses elements of participatory journalism.

She pushes the boundaries of the public sphere and works in conjunction with traditional media to encourage young people to participate in politics.

She gatekeeps her own content to ensure it follows the Instagram community guidelines and that it fits within her profile aesthetic.

Relationship with Gatekeeping:

Gatekeeping is the process by which media workers select among happenings, ideas, and competing perspectives to produce the “news” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, in Lindner, 2017)

Instagram as a gatekeeper: ‘We created the Community Guidelines so you can help us foster and protect this amazing community....Overstepping these boundaries may result in deleted content, disabled accounts, or other restrictions.’ (Instagram Community Guidelines, 2020)

References:
[1] Axford, B. (2011) Talk About a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA Uprisings, *Globalizations*, 8(5), pp.681-686. [2] Figure 3: Bakker, T. P., & Paterson, C. (2011) The new frontiers of journalism: Citizen participation in the UK and the Netherlands In (eds) K. Brants and K. Voltmer, *Political communication in postmodern democracy: Challenging the primacy of politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp.183-199. [3] Hauser, G. A. (1998). *Civil Society and the Principle of the Public Sphere*. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 31(1), pp.19-40. [4] Instagram (2020) *Community Guidelines*. Available at: <https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119> (Accessed: February 25th 2020). [5] Khondker, H. (2011). Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring. *Globalizations*, 8(5), pp.675-679. [6] Lindner, A. M. (2017). Editorial gatekeeping in citizen journalism, *New Media & Society*, 19(8), pp.1177-1193. [7] Figures 1-2; 4-5: Instagram (2020) *The Sweet Feminist* (2020) Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/thesweetfeminist/?hl=en> (Accessed: February 25th 2020).