CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Comments in news were the most popular feature for audience participation in online news sites. For citizens, it was a very easy way to react to current occasions and discuss about them, immediately after reading the story. For journalists on the other hand it was a very comfortable way to open up their websites to participation, as it define the role of audience as audience and does not challenge the professional identity of journalism (Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Domingo et al., 2008;).

Before the era of the internet and 80 years ago Harris and Hooke, (1923) recognized the values of interaction, between the readers and the newspaper and claimed, “the paper of the past has been passive, the paper of the future must be active and aggressive” (Harris and Hooke; 1923). In their view a paper without the engagement of the citizen would demise. In this era where the landscape of the production of news had changed, the views of Harris and Hooke; (1923) accentuate the truth.

According to a government study “A Nation Online, Entering the Broadband Age (2004),” more than 143 million roughly 53% of American use the internet and 2 million American go online monthly. To add to it the most important photos and videos in recent news history were the production of the amateurs. More recently, as video cameras have become popular, average people have covered important events such as police beatings of suspects, and approaching tornados, and even in the case of Tsunami much footage were from the amateurs. It was again the amateurs who caught the most horrific images of United Airlines 767 fireball as it crashed into the second
World Trade Center tower in September 11, 2001. In each of these cases, the public was communicating through the mass media, the amateur videos rapidly made its way into news stories.

Juxt Consult, India’s leading online and new media research organization had released its research report titled “India Online Landscape 2011” which profiles ‘Online Indians’ as internet users and consumers. The study identifies the consumption and online spending patterns of India’s online citizens. This study shows “Active’ Internet users in India stand at 65 million (28% from 51 million in the year 2010) and 61 million ‘regular’ users (46 mn urban users, 16 mn rural users) (Juxt Consult 2011).

The media were grabbling at the tremendous changes in technology and shifting online. As one journalist from the Economic Times contended that their organization was completely going online but had no cue to what it was leading them too.

### 2.2 Status of Online News Stories

(Fredin, 1997) conceptualized online news stories as being truly non-linear documents that "through their invitational structure may bring a more flexible and profound understanding of issues than many people were currently able to get as a practical matter from existing media" (Fredin 1997, p. 39). He challenged that simply offering external links in stories was insufficient to satisfy the needs of online news consumers. Fredin envisioned that narratives built in sections and associated via hypertext that blurred the distinction between traditional, individual stories offered by news outlets. These narratives, he called "metastories," included features such as on-demand glossaries of frequently referenced names and issues, and also functions that would allow users to apply their own summaries to explicit story elements. The aim
was to let the users to construct their own stories by choosing the story elements that interested them.

In reality, few media outlets have taken up the challenge of offering news in narrative structures as complicated as Fredin envisioned. While (Massey, 2004 p.100) found "the practice of non-linear storytelling for daily news was rare" in a survey of 38 U.S. daily news sites. He speculated that this could be related to findings in the (Brill, 2001) survey that few online journalists were producing original stories. However, the fundamental element of Fredin's vision -- narratives built from sections and related by hypertext links -- was a structure that many researchers see as useful for online audiences.

(Ketterer, 2001) found that news consumers wanted more from their online publications than they could get from printed offline newspapers. His study found that they drew important value from being able to follow links in a news story based on their interest. He stated that, "participants who had links [in the version of the story they were exposed to] "spent more time reading and were better informed than those who did not” (p. 11). He concluded this supported a story model of layered information, where "links provide more information to those who want it" (p. 100).

2.3 Uses and Gratifications perspective

Research scholar (Blumer, 1979) points out the changing news consumption patterns in the ground of users and gratification theory. The users and gratification viewpoint proposes that individuals make active choices and have expectations of the media content. These expectations along with social and psychological causes of needs facilitate media use and lead to different patterns of media exposure (Katz, Blumer and Guruvtch, 1974). According to each individual interest, media would be uses and
needs fulfilled. In addition (Blumer, 1979) suggested that social circumstances or needs produce a desire to compensate through media consumption.

News sharing behavior was studied by (Long Ma, et al., 2011) where they tried to explore the underlying motivations behind the user’s news sharing behaviour. Their study examined the role of gratification factors and users experience in explaining user’s news sharing intention on social media. In their research, they tried to explore the user’s news sharing behavior and also the user’s gratification behind the news sharing in the social media. There were other concepts also to find out in relation to this topic.

The study tried to differentiate the impact of different types of news in this particular study such as hard news like politics and science and soft news like entertainment and sports. These concepts would be relevant for future research work in similar topic. In this particular research work, the researchers tried to cover all the aspects of user comments, its effect on the reader’s news consuming habits and the way the users select certain news to satisfy their needs and there by react to it. The study also covers different types of news and its effect on the audience.

This research also deals with news commenting pattern and whether it invokes a new idea among the readers which could also be a source to the journalist for news sharing among the readers and the gratification factors behind their selection of news for sharing. This research which helps to know the attitudes of the audience news reading system and from the empirical results it also helps to identify the influence of sharing opinions in different types of news feed among the audiences.
2.4 Decline of traditional sources and rise of social networking sites

(Howard Vogl & M.S, 2010) focused on online news to gain a deeper understanding of the news media usage habits of youth. Their study mainly examined the decline of traditional news among the youth and also the motivation behind choosing social networking sites and online media for news consumption. The result from the survey showed that the people with proper education were the heavy news consumers through social media networking sites and online media. Another major finding of this research was that mostly young readers attempt to watch news at regular intervals of time through social media and other news media websites. The study also found that while the internet was accessible anywhere at any time the youth preferred to watch the news sitting in their home. However, the findings indicated accesses of information through the internet were free of cost, which influences the youth to decline the traditional sources of information. Other than social and online media, the Mobile devices also played a small role in disseminating information to the public. The results concluded that the most of the youngsters prefer to switch from one media platform to other.

(Nicolla Cavella, et al., 2009) explores the decline of traditional forms of sources, dependency of youth on online content, and their ability in creating content and familiarity with the new digital technologies. This particular research was a longitudinal study using survey method over a period of two years, the survey results showed that in the first year most of the students who have been part of this survey were unaware of social networking sites and mostly were dependent on newspapers to get news while in the next year, they adopted the Facebook and about 59% of youth were using the social networking sites to consume news. The study observed that students consume news related to university matters, communities with their friends
and also consumption of audio visual material was common among them. The interactive features like chatting with friends through online, effective entertainment purposes, instant messaging tools were the key areas which magnetize the youth into the upcoming web 2.0 technologies. The study derived that the socio economic status and cultural capital was still an important predictor of how young people incorporate the web into their everyday life to create and share online content.

Andrew Kohu, (2010) suggests that Americans changed their platform for consuming news by 2010. Scientific results tell that the Americans consume news through social networking sites have doubled from 9% to 19% since 2010. The interactive mediums like Emailing, text messaging and social networking sites were the latest forms of communication which dominated among the different forms of communication. The study reveals the critical side of the communication in the present era.

The experiential result showed that there was no increase in the number of persons those who were reading newspapers and books but at the same time there occurred a tremendous increase in the number of persons those who were consuming news through online media. Two years before only 9% of the people were gathering news through social networking sites, but the situation completely changed after two years with an alarming rate of about 50% of people reading news through online media.

2.5 Qualities of Online News: Factors of Credibility

According to a Media Consultant (Martha Stone and Howard Finberg, 2001) included from reports based on more than 50 interviews with reporters and industry executives, that the public had largely accepted digital news as an important source of credible news. Thirteen percent of the online public saying that Internet news was their most trusted source of news. However the Online News Association survey also
showed that most of the online public surveyed remained neutral on credibility issues surrounding online news.

While (Cassidy; 2007) studied the online news credibility through a survey of U.S. journalists found that Internet News Information was viewed as moderately credible overall and that online newspaper journalists rated Internet news information as significantly more credible than did print newspaper journalists. The professional role conceptions were a significant positive predictor of online news credibility, while adversarial role conception was a significant negative predictor. Demographic characteristics of print and online newspaper journalists did not influence their perception of online news credibility.

2.6 News Worthiness of Online News

Kim, (2005) examined the nature of news content in online journalism. Kim studied the effects of organizations on the news concept with two types of online news sites- portals news sites and the sites of traditional newspapers. The study used seven newsworthiness indicators as predictors of news content: statistical deviance, potential for social change deviance, normative deviance, political significance, economic significance, cultural significance and public significance. The study adds to the understanding of the predictors that determine online journalism. The study concluded that the internet changes the nature of the journalists, sources and news content. It added as different formats of news delivery develop, some of what formally was about news production had also changed. In the present era anyone who had access to the computer could create and deliver news on the internet along with the journalists and their sources contribution of many individuals – people who formerly were not represented in the news were active in the production process. (Kim, 2005) concluded
in her studies that online readers were more interested in reading news that relates to social issues over conventional content provided by traditional news sites. Kim emphasized the difference between conventional news sites and portal sites, which re-circulate the news content of traditional online news sites. Much popular portal news sites included Google and Yahoo news, along with more user-generated content like Fark.com and Digg.com. Kim added that portal sites were less socially responsible for published journalism content, and therefore have more freedom where and when they post stories. Kim was of the notion that portal news sites do not satisfy the criteria of traditional journalism, yet these sites appeal the most to online journalism users, the study concluded.

2.7 Readers Perception and Preference of Online News

Research had shown increased users of newspaper websites. Many users were seeking local news sites. More women were reading online (Falgg, 1999) while increasingly larger audiences were using the Web technology. Many studies have concluded that although people were moving online there seems to be a digital divide in the society, some of the gap was based on economic level but race were also factors (Pavlik, 1998).

The Pew research for the People and the Press recently reported that Internet news audiences were becoming “ordinary” in addition to becoming larger. Among its findings were that weather was the most popular online news attraction in 1999, replacing technology news and information that had been top subject in earlier years. The report also noted that users were less well educated two years ago, included females and more users with modest incomes. The study also indicated changing News Interest. Weather and entertainment were the growing interest in the online
news; many news organizations do not emphasize it nor satisfy the demand for it. Web editors admitted that they were still learning how to use the Web (Strupp, 1999).

According to online authority (Steve Outing, 1998) observed that the newspaper’s archives were of interest to readers and was also a potential revenue system. He found that majority of sites had yet to make their available archives of interest to readers and increase their revenue stream. He determined that a good number of sites either included no names of staff members or included staff listing but no electronic mail addresses, offering no way for readers to interact with the newspaper staff. Outing also found a large absence of obituaries, birth notices and other matters of interest to local readers especially on small town Newspaper Web Sites.

(Cochran, 1995) noted that the San Jose mercury Center was one the best examples of sites using interactivity. It incorporates ways to send electronic mails to groups related to the topic of the articles, links to related sites and connection to sites that offer more information on the topic in feature called Modern Driver. Coheran summarized that these features were used so readers could learn important issues, would gather additional information not provided by the news article, Coheran also said that The Wall Street Journal, offers a personalized version of the newspaper that will contain news on just the topics the reader selects.

(Massey and Levy, 1999) in their study used a five-dimensional conceptualization of interactivity to study online English language newspapers in Asia. They looked at the complexity of content choice, responsiveness, ease of adding information, facilitation of interpersonal communication, and immediacy. The analysis found a relatively complex choice of content.
2.8 Online news and Interactivity

We Media, Blogs and Citizen Media sites have revitalized the idea and as (Bruns, 2005) noted “Internet will make journalism more dialogical, turning the audience into active collaborators of journalists” news production work in the early 1990s the research was on interactivity and now it was more on participatory.

(Kit Lau, 2007) points that with the improvement of technologies; the process of disseminating information becomes an easy process. He observed that the process of exchanging and absorbing the information was an easy process in this Digital era. The audiences were actively participating in the news sites, which allowed them to share and gather lot of information. The results show that the readers would mostly read news through news websites.

(Howard Vogl & M.S, 2010) focuses on to gain a deeper understanding of the news media usage habits of youth. The study mainly tried to examine the reason for the youth to deter traditional news and actively choose social networking sites and online media for news consumption. The result from the survey showed that the people with proper education were the heavy news consumers through social media networking sites and online media.

Although the technology was developing in bounds independent of this was the changing relationship of the journalist with its readers. (Rosen 1999, Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001) Legitimacy in complex modern democratic societies was thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of common concern (Benhabib, 1994, p. 26).
(Novak, Yung, and Hoffman, 2000, p. 27) stated that, online skills represent "a consumer's capacity for action during the online navigation process." Greater skills allow consumers to experience the more complex and challenging features of interactive websites, which could lead to more satisfying consumer experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Hoffman and Novak 1996). While (Chyi and Sylvie, 1998) believed that online newspapers offer interactive features and customize the news to individual readers' needs through concurrent news updates, navigation function, and options to react to articles. To recognize and take advantage of this augmentation, consumers must have sufficient online skills (Wu 2000).

2.9 The Boom in Participatory Journalism

Today the newspapers were exploring newsroom convergence and the boundaries between print, broadcast and online media were slowly disappearing and participatory journalism seems to add another dimension that was a cause of concern to professional journalism. The borderline that separates professional journalists and their audience seems to be blurring (Bruns, 2005; Jenkins, 2006).

Until recently, the working routines and values of journalistic culture had remained highly stable for almost a century (Schudson, 2003; Tuchman, 2002). Traditionally journalism was a profession and was attached to a media house and the job was to gather and disseminate information. The term ‘‘gatekeeper’’, used to describe a main task of journalists, who decide what the public needs to know, as well as when where and how such information should be provided. The gatekeeper role was maintained and enforced by professional routines and conventions that were said to guarantee the quality and neutrality of institutional journalism (Shoemaker, 1991).
But today researchers and critics have proposed alternative models such as public journalism (Massey and Haas, 2002; Rosen, 1999) where the need for a more reciprocal relationship between reporters and audience, suggesting news should be a conversation rather than a lecture (Gillmor, 2004; Kunelius, 2001).

(Domingo et al, 2008) constituted a model which implies that some of the institutionalized communication functions of agencies and journalistic media can be performed by individual society members and institutes, while others still lie in the hands of the communication institutions. He says the re-inclusion of the social networks and also the ensuing de-institutionalization were closely connected to the emergence of recent communication technologies that expand the reach of the individual network points again. Computer technology and the Web permit users, as individuals or in team work efforts to devise and deliver a piece of news that were collected by computers and other technological supports. Thus the gathered news article was grouped and passed into entire networks.

According to Domingo’s study of 16 online newspaper websites of 8 European countries, most of the websites had not adopted citizen media cities in these online newspapers. A majority of the examined websites were limited in giving citizens opportunities to comment and ratings and post comments on the existing news of journalistic content. Very few websites only allow the users to create content, of which the most popular features were to submit audio clips, visuals, photo albums and links to social networking sites and space allowed for citizen blogs.

Some online newspaper used a specialized tool which was effective in community buildings among the users. These tools of participation propose to have to be an
important aspect to involve participants and also impose responsibility on the citizens to the quality of their contributions (Schaffer, 2007).

USA Today searched the participatory options exhaustively thus creating users’ profile pages, further tools to recommend other user’s contributions and also to report abuse. (Domingo, 2008) added “even though they provide a clear platform for user’s interactions such as passing comments, user centric management of comments was comparatively less and all the decision making process still remained as an exclusive authority of the journalists.

2.10 Online News and Gatekeeping

The public was aware of the information that’s happenings from the outside world only by media exposure and the contents shared by media. This kind of culture had resulted in the media playing a dominant role in disseminating information and the influence the media had on the agenda, views and main concerns of the public. Stories and ideas that were prevalent and popular within the media quickly become prominent in the public mind (Bruder, 2008).

The online newspaper had changed the way people receive news and information by providing hyperlinks to an enormous list of news articles. The users also have an option of receiving message from fellow users through an e–mail. Also online news sites provide an open forum that permits the users to discuss on a variety of interesting topics via bulletin boards, chat rooms, group notes etc. (Roberts et al., 2002).

According to (McCombs, 1986),” due to the shortage of time and spaces the news directors of the various networks and affiliate with a news program, usually decide
and select stories which will be broadcast for that day leaving behind a huge number of stories uncovered”.

On a typical day 75% of potential news were omitted and were not being viewed by the audience (McCombs, 1986). Due to this scenario editor, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play a significant role in determining and shaping reality. News readers were not entirely expecting to learn concerning issues. Readers not only learn concerning the issue, but prioritizing the news was based on the amount of information in the story and its position in the report (Bruder, 2008).

As far from past decades great scholars and writers have examined and forecasted that the mass communication was greatly influenced by the updated technology and the utilization of the Internet (December, 1996; Bruns, 2007; Bruns 2008). Many leading media organizations like CNN, BBC, collect news right form public and they do compose it into news for delivery (Nguyen, 2006; Singer, 2006; Storm, 2007; Domingo et al. 2008; Bakker & Pantti, 2009). To be more specific the great scholars have concluded that the news has become more participatory.

The old theory of news transmissions of Gatekeeping was no longer applicable. So the writers and scholars to create new models and theories related to the paradigm shift from the traditional methods (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Scott, 2005), where the information exchange would run freely among the public and the journalist and dominated by technology like computers, cell phones, and the internet (Beard and Olsen, 1999; Scott, 2005; Bruns, 2008).

Some scholars have observed that the society was witnessing an end of mass communication (Chaffee and Mertzger, 2001). (Morris and Ogan, 1996) believe that the internet has opened up new areas to include advanced mass communication
theories. Meanwhile (Friedland, 1996) noted that an electronic democracy will pave way to more transparent and delivery of information to public. This methodology of news transmissions had boomed greater opportunities among people to discuss intricately. (Bruns, 2006) argued that a paradigm shift from old theory to new transmission was still in progress. While (Noguera Jose Manuel et al., 2008) described that the online media was a platform where we were transforming the news content to different places via the web where many people were there to receive and respond for our news, it’s like a social media. Here creating and sharing were pertinently new.

He also argues that “Media were thinking more about how to put their contents in other communities than how to obtain valuable answers (‘feedback’) and contents from them.” (Noguera Jose Manuel et al. 2008) also stated that the most popular bookmaking tools in the media, Delicious and Digg do not have more than 20% of presence and the most used searcher to look for the conversation around the same topic. Media were now realizing that they need some important tools to get the “buzz” in the Web. He emphasized that the roll of future journalist was to get the main buzz in the Web by arranging, classifying and offering to their audiences’ information in the best and most useful way.

Although many scholars have studied the effects of the digital media in relation to the traditional media and journalism (Singer, 2001; Willis and Bowman, 2003; Nguyen, 2006; Singer; 2006) but the scholars were slow in establishing new relevant theories for the new media. These researchers have however pointed out the disadvantages of the gatekeeping theory (Beard and Olsen, 1999), newsroom adoption (Boczkowski, 2004), and participatory media (Bruns, 2008). This study, therefore, seeks to answer
the question: how was the adoption of user comments in a mainstream news organization affecting gatekeeping?

Gatekeeping was a process by which journalists collect, integrates and presents exact information reports to the media and other news organizations (White, 1950; Shoemaker 1991). Also the theory of mass communications depicts the information gathering, analyzing and conveying content (White, 1950; Berkowitz, 1990; Beard and Olsen, 1999; Storm, 2007). This strategy of transmitting news had been followed for more than sixty year. But the new online mass communications have changed the mode disseminating items. Here the old theory of gatekeeping process was not applicable.

While (Bruns, 2003) conveyed that” the vital function of media was morphing itself from gathering information to directing it. He suggested that the well emerging online news environment was made up of open communities where the common people were able to share as well as add to a collective knowledge. He also emphasizes that the gatekeeping theory was evolving into gate watching function, where the journalist redirects the viewers and readers to their published information via internet.

Many scholars were studying the phenomenon of how the newsrooms were adapting to the new media (Boczkowski, 2004; Bakker and Pantti, 2009; Dueze, Bruns and Newburger, 2007; Domingo et al., 2008). Thus the participatory media have made a paradigm shift that from the old way of transmitting news to newly updated (Bruns, 2006; Jenkins, 2006). To circulate proper updated news one has to encourage people to participate. This mixed method study examines the user comments of mainstream news sites in a converged network news operation.
Internet and technologies have evolved in the way news was gathered with one result being the phenomenon of participation (Singer, 2006; Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger, 2007, Gordon, 2007). Thus the public even gather news immediately by using their mobile camera and this user made news information was passed into public by sharing it on YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs and so on (Van Dijck, 2009). (Scott, 2005) on the other hand provides a comprehensive analysis of the changing digital journalism landscape by noting challenges brought about by internet and the technical advancement in the internet. He suggests that the Internet has been very troublesome to traditional media, stating, the internet has demanded new models, threatened satisfaction, and responded to innovation” (Scott 2005, p. 93). This response encompasses adopting practices that now includes news gathered from the public, which was commonly referred to as user generated content or open publishing or citizen journalism, or collaborative journalism, participatory publishing, to mention a few of the terms (Nguyen, 2006).

2.11 Gatekeeping and online news

(Shoemaker, 1991) states that within the journalism studies, gatekeeping was the every day process by which the much information in the world were reduced by news decision makers and shared with the public (Shoemaker, 1991). (Singer, 1998) believed that gatekeeping was still a compatible study to see how online journalists select newsworthy stories. In a recent study of online newspaper editors, (Singer, 2006) adds that, “The Internet defies the whole notion of a “gate” and challenges the idea that journalists (or anyone else) can or should limit what passes through it” (p. 265). Many scholars recently were focusing on the media and participatory practices and it affects in the gatekeeping activities (Beard and Olsen, 1999; Singer, 2006;
Before deeply looking into how gatekeeping may be affected in this digital realm, a historical theoretical perspective will be considered.

The earliest gatekeeping model (Lewin, 1947) dealt more to the eating habits and less to mass communication. (White, 1961) was the person who seized upon Lewin's comments and turned it solidly toward journalism in 1950. In the 1970s McCombs and Shaw gave anew meaning to the effects of gatekeepers' decisions. Their perspective of gatekeeper was to show how to prioritize a news item from the emphasis the media places on the news item. McCombs and Shaw pointed out that the newer concept of agenda-setting was related to the old concept of gatekeeping (McCombs et al., 1976). However, the traditional gatekeeping model cannot be applied to the present intermedia agenda-setting research anymore in the online environment. The case with the online environment was different in that the, news readers of online news papers were able to bypass traditional gatekeepers who were considered influential as to their role in shaping the media agenda.

According to (Paterson, 2005) the readers were able to seek information in meeting their own interests while ignoring the intermediary processors of news (Paterson, 2005). Subsequently, (Hargittai, 2004) interprets the function of gatekeeping as “has shifted from the decision about what should be produced to control of what materials get to consumers and of what material they become aware”. The internet had brought about a profound change in the dissemination of news and prioritizing the news to the readers of the news and traditional gatekeepers. Today, communication studies on digital media use and its effects need to take into account the significance of online content to which readers are easily exposed from what was just presented on the web (Hargittai, 2004).
Additionally, in broadcast newsrooms, gatekeeping activities were dictated by daily deadline pressures and the ability to capture visual video elements (Harmon, 1989). The internet's affects on gatekeeping was also considered (Beard and Olsen, 1999), although other scholars have more recently focused on the effect the Internet and citizen-produced content was having on journalism (Storm, 2007; Bakker and Paanti, 2009). (Singer, 2001) noted that print journalists could be relinquishing their traditional gatekeeping roles because the Internet empowers the readers to decide what was newsworthy, and (Singer, 2004) summarized that online newspapers were including participatory newsgathering practices that adopted blogs of both the editor and the citizens and also form discussion boards. Previously discussed studies suggest that online editors could be stepping outside of their traditional gatekeeping roles by giving users a voice in the news producing process. More recently, (Bruns, 2008) asserts the internet had brought in an era of open news, where producers and consumers interact together in the distribution and creation of information. (Storm, 2007) in her study on insights of citizen-produced news, concludes into how a print and online paper called Bluffton Today integrated public media. She found that although the newspaper allowed citizens to participate in the online news, the same was not printed in the paper. (Storm, 2007) ascertains that “The lack of freestanding attributed Web-generated user content at Bluffton Today... signifies that Web-generated user content was not published in its newspaper as a new dimension of credible journalism, but rather was used by the newsroom’s professional journalists to add breadth to their own work,” said (Storms, 2007, p. 22). To summarize the content generated by the users were not used as news by the journalists, but the news users were used as news sources.
2.12 From Public Journalism to Citizen Journalism

As more and more news organizations adopt new participatory practices that include reporting content gathered from the public, a few journalism activists have worked toward a more community-oriented media. Known as public journalism, this movement attempted to include the community’s voice in the newsgathering process (Nip, 2006). Within the public journalism model, public discussion and involvement allow individuals in the community to directly influence and benefit from news coverage (Witt, 2004). The emergence of this movement was a result of observations that newspaper readership was declining; that there was a growing gap between the citizenry and journalists, and that there was a growing dissatisfaction in the population regarding the news industry’s devotion to profits (Rosen, 1994). Despite the ardent and passionate work of those involved in the public journalism movement, it made little impact on day-to-day news operations (Witt, 2004).

The news industry, however, was now experiencing great change. (Nip, 2006) suggests that the second phase of public journalism was here, and identifies five separate models that exist, being: traditional journalism, public journalism, interactive journalism, participatory journalism, and citizen journalism. The definitions were as follows (pp. 216-218):

1. Traditional Journalism - In traditional journalism, professional journalists act as the gatekeepers, filtering, and reporting on world events. The only public involvement was from news sources that provide information and opinion to the journalists. Interaction from the public comes from letters to the editor, or complaints made after the news was published.
2. Public Journalism - Public journalism attempts to engage citizens in both the news making and in the news consumption process. Journalists use town hall meetings, and polls to understand community concerns, and provide feedback to the citizenry in an attempt to help create discussions to reach solutions. The professional journalists maintain their traditional role as gatekeeper, in framing and presentation.

3. Interactive Journalism - Interactive journalism was a concept that has been discussed by scholars but has not been clearly defined. It refers to communication and news consumption that was facilitated through the Internet. Content interactivity allows users to select the stories they read, and interpersonal interactivity allows the public to become engaged with the reporters. However, this only happens when the reporter responds to emails, chats, or communicates in online forums.

4. Participatory Journalism - Participatory journalism allows news users to take an active part in the news gathering process, and work with journalism professionals to distribute the content. Users create the content independently, but the outlet provides the platform to publish it.

5. Citizen Journalism - Within this mode, independent news content was generated, and produced by a non-professional individual or organization that was not paid staff. Examples of citizen journalism include blogs, independent news websites, community radio stations, or newspapers. Other writers like (Jarvis, 2006) have proposed alternative definitions related to participatory media. He calls it networked journalism, which explains how professional and amateurs work together to share facts, questions, and perspectives to get to the
real story. These amateurs were often said to be a part of Generation C. They produce “an avalanche of consumer generated 'content' that was building on the Web” (Trendwatching, 2005). The “C” in this case refers to content and doesn’t define a demographic group, but rather identifies individuals who participate in the creation and distribution of information. Though there were specific differences in all of the aforementioned definitions, this paper was not attempting to analyze the various terms used to describe participatory newsgathering, but rather will examine how a mainstream news network gathers, selects, and integrates user-generated news into its online news site and the redefined roles of the journalist in this new paradigm of sharing news content.

(Bakker and Pantti, 2009) provide relevant insights regarding the adoption of amateur content by professional news outlets. (Baker and Pant, 2009) studied and examined broadcast, print, and online outlets in the Netherlands that utilized user-generated content. The authors concluded that there was a lack of standard practices and there were disparity in the way each outlets used user-generated content throughout the platforms. Although one of the main perceived benefits was the community building that occurred when the public was allowed to share its media, another notable finding was “the role audience members were increasing taking on – or which was given to them – was that of a source, not of collaborator” (p. 485).

(Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996) viewed that the “reader-audience member receiver” model had much more authority and responsibility in the online media. They also added that almost all the aspects of the internet can be studied because the content of communication in the internet can be easily observed, recorded and studied.
2.13 Citizens Blogs on Mainstream News sites

News organizations have taken various approaches to including citizen blogs on their Web Sites. Some offer blogs hosting services, allowing anyone in the community to start a blog. Others were more selective, inviting specific people to blog on specific topics. Bloggers writing under news site’s brand were often monitored or edited (Friend and Singer; 2007 pg. 154). They added that the oversight can be as heavy as having every submission read and vetted by professional journalists before publication, or it can be light as an editor only periodically pursuing submissions or responding to complaints about specific posts.

2.14 Citizens’ Reporting

The interactive nature of Web and the effort to tap into the reservoir of citizen expertise have prompted an effort to engage citizens more deeply into news-gathering process. Some news organizations were even setting up open-source distributed reporting projects-online collaborations between reporters and users. In open-source reporting, a reporter might announce a topic under investigation and invite readers to contribute leads, sources, or idea. The idea was that the site’s users may know as much or more about a topic or have more sources or resources than the professional journalists. Opening up the reporting process to engage the online user community may allow reporting with greater depth and speed than could be produced by a single journalist (online journalism review, www.ojr.org/ojr/wiki/reporting).

2.15 Polling and the Web

Engaging the audience through the interactivity made possible by the Web has made unscientific audience polling more ubiquitous than it was print media. It also has
made the election polls online more problematic and controversial. Even before the advent of the Web, many news organizations ran opinion polls in print in an attempt to involve readers. Instead of using a random sample necessary for an accurate measure of opinion, news organizations print question coupons or call-in numbers that only newspaper customers have access to. Al Tompkins, broadcast and online group leader at Poynter Online commenting on the Herald and similar polls says no matter how many responses were received on online polling the results always show as 100% accurate (Curtis, 2004). Critics also argue that even news stories about reliable polls can fairly influence public opinion at times. People tend to be influenced by the opinions of others in their community, so reading about prevailing views can affect election results, critics says.

2.16 Interactive dialogue through E-mail

News organizations traditionally welcomed readers’ views and story reaction in letters to the editor. Reader expectations for feedback have risen with the tide of digital interactivity, however, engendering a culture where readers expect not only to be able to talk back, but also to heard and acknowledged. Many news organizations have responded by offering long resistant to what it regarded as digital gimmickry, even added a click able e-mail form with reporter’s bylines in early 2006 (Friend and Singer; 2004). According to (Jan Scharffer reviewing and culling reader e-mails requires time, but it can also be opportunity and a resource if used in an organized way (Schaffer, 2006).

2.17 Computer Mediated Communication

(Owen, 1997) noted that the first researchers to study computer mediated communication (CMC) were not from the field of mass communication but rather
from other disciplines such as education, management information science, and library science. Owen wrote, “CMCs were seen as interpersonal communication, with the computer used as a technological tool in order to communicate. Likewise, researchers in communication placed CMCs in the division of traditional communication study and minimized the role of media and channel” (Owen, 1997, p. 9-10).

(Morris and Ogan, 1996) stated, “Not only have theoretical models constrained research, but the most basic assumptions behind researchers’ theories of mass media effects have kept them from being able to see the Internet as a new mass medium” (p. 40).

(Morris and Ogan, 1996) defined four categories in which the Internet could be grouped. They were (a) one-to-one asynchronous communication (e-mail), (b) many-to-many asynchronous communication (EBBs), (c) one-to-one, one-to-few, one-to-many synchronous communication organized around a topic or object (i.e., role playing, chat rooms) and (d) asynchronous communication, which was characterized by the receiver’s need for information (i.e., Web sites) (Roberts et al., 2002).

Further, Pew study visibly defines news consumers as Integrators, who get the news from both traditional sources and the internet, were a more involved, highly sophisticated and demographically sought-after audience segment than those who mostly rely on traditional news sources. It was not only the nature of the audience which was changing but also the growth of the interactivity which had made the online news even more popular. Initially, the user control allowed was largely through “navigational interactivity” (Deuze, 2003), though in the recent years, “conversational
interactivity” (Jensen, 1998), which allows the user to interact with journalists and other users (Deuze, 2003), had become more popular.

This nature of interaction around online news media was becoming increasingly social and facilitates sharing and commenting directly to news articles either through RSS, Twitter or other forms of Social Media. As (Nicholas Negroponte, 1995) who popularized the “Daily Me”, an electronic News Paper suggested that digitization would result in the user playing a bigger role in news selection, (Negroponte, 1995:153).

A recent Pew survey, “Understanding the participatory News consumer”, found that 37% of online news users (and 51% of 18-29 year olds) think that commenting on news stories was an important feature to have, and that 25% of users have contributed their comments to online news articles .

According to (Purcell, 2010) in a Pew study “To a great extent, people’s experience of news, especially on the internet, was becoming a shared social experience as people swap links in emails, post news stories on their social networking site feeds, highlight news stories in their Tweets, and haggle over the meaning of events in discussion threads. For instance, more than 8 in 10 online news consumers get or share links in emails”, (Purcell, 2010).

With the blending of interaction in the news and News organizations opening up to user generated content and participatory journalism the question of Agenda Setting and Gate keeping has emerged. This journalism practice appears to follow the thoughts of (Nguyen, 2006), who states that, “future journalists will need to be trained to not only become critical gate-keepers but also act as listeners, discussion and forum leaders/mediators in an intimate interaction with their audiences.” (Nguyen, 2006) the
present research looks into the agenda setting attitudes of the journalists as in the online news sites and the new role they play as mediators in an interactive environment.

2.18 Online News and User Comments

Against the backdrop of the changing information environment, emerging communication technologies have altered the landscape of information production and distribution in significant ways (Shirky, 2008), straining and at times displacing the traditional role of journalism to inform the public (Tumber, 2001). Mainstream news organizations, no longer having unique access to information and the advantage of distribution, were experimenting with ways to exploit new technologies to reinvigorate journalism and address contemporary needs (Zamith, 2008).

Indeed scholars have been inquiring about the potential of online journalism to employ interactive features in a way that may promote citizen participation and engagement (Schultz, 1999; Roseberry, 2005; Nip, 2006). Many researchers identified interactive features according to three dimensions of public journalism: connecting to the community; engaging individuals as citizens; and helping public deliberation in search of solutions (Nip, 2006). Looking at the third the present research specifically concentrates on the User Comments: John Dewey had suggested in his book in 1927, *The Public and Its Problems* that the newspapers of the future will have to reorganize its relationship to all the institutions that promote public life, from libraries to universities and even cafes (Dewey, 1927).

According to (Rosenberry, 2005), the combined effects of immediate response, unlimited spaces, and minimal censorship, open up an opportunity for citizens to
anticipate in public deliberation, and a direct link between the paper’s voice and citizens’ voices, thereby combining institutional and public voice.

(Manosevitch and Walker) argue Reader comments to online opinion journalism have the potential to promote public deliberation in a several ways. Readers may provide insight on aspects of the issue not well thought-out in newspaper content. In particular such comments may draw out testimonies from personal experience or indicate individual concerns and inferences necessary for creating a source for journalist.

Scholars have been inquiring about the qualities or attributes that constitute a spontaneous deliberate discussion. For example, in analyzing online deliberation specifically, research had measured the deliberativeness of online discourse against metrics such as argument quality (Albrecht, 2006; Min, 2007; Stromer-Galley, 2007), representativeness (Albrecht, 2006), reflexivity (Dahlberg, 2001), knowledge gains (Min, 2007), opinion diversity (Stromer-Galley, 2003; Wilhelm, 2000) and civility (Benson, 1996; Hill and Hughes, 1998; Papacharissi, 2004). In this research, the researcher draws on the conceptual definition for deliberation as recently formulated by political communication scholar John Gastil. (Gastil, 2008) draws on and combines Jurgen Habermas’ notion of an “ideal speech situation” and Benjamin Barber understands of talk and conversation (Habermas, 1989; Barber, 1984).

On the one part, Habermas emphasizes rationality – the rigorous rational analysis of an issue as necessary for pursuing enlightened understanding. Barber, however, highlights the equal importance of an open-ended conversation that was as (Gastil, 2008) says was much about mutual discovery as well as problem solving. (ibid) explains that Barber’s notion of talk does not refer to the simple exchange and aggregation of individuals’ predefined interests, but rather, a more complex form of
thinking involving imagination, thinking aloud listening to fellow users and understanding. Merging these two notions, Gastil argues that there are two processes that occur simultaneously in an ideal deliberative discussion: the analytic process or the substance of the deliberation as it pertains.

(Edith and Walker, 2009) contended that the reader comments section in online opinion journalism had a potential to embody a space of public deliberation, thereby offering citizens new ways to participate in the public sphere within the context of journalism. They also interpreted; there were indications in this pilot data that commenters’ did not simply “parachute” their knowledge, at no point did the editorial writer ever enter back into the conversation via a comment or additional post. In this study the researcher argues that there was a potential opportunity to connect professional journalists with readers, thereby allowing a unique context of public conversation and deliberation that differs from community discussion boards or blogs.

Interestingly, readers’ personal experience had little presence in the data of researches carried out so far. (Ryfe, 2006) believes that such personal narratives are an important part of public discourse because they can help overcome barriers to deliberation by helping people understand the complexities of an issue through a process of personal reflection (ibid).

In the context of online journalism first, earlier studies confined to the possibility of promoting online deliberation to two features, chat and message boards found within online journalism. On the other hand, news organizations have a whole variety of interactive features available to them that may promote public deliberation and focusing only on these two features was too limiting. In particular, this research concentrates on the importance of online feature was the invitation for users’ to
comment on newspaper content. The research also lays its foundation on what (Manosewitch and Walker, 2009) opinion that offering the opportunity for lay citizens to think about and contribute their viewpoints, opinions or expertise to journalistic content, thereby providing space for an open forum and discussion between the users and producers of news.

Second, while these studies were an important in mapping the implementation of a variety of online features within the realm of online journalism, earlier studies did not investigate in-depth at how such features were actually used. Thus far the focus on online journalism and interactive media has focused on blogs (Barlow, 2008; Bloom, 2003; Reese, et al 2007). Little research, however, has been conducted on the actual content of reader comments to newspaper sites themselves. The change from top-down model of communication to a connection between public and journalistic commentary could have important implications for democratic practice. Such connection could lead important implications for journalistic practice as these readers are actively engaging with the newspaper, its journalists, and the content it produces. This study begins to fill in some of the empirical detail as to the actual use of user comments in online journalism.

2.19 A shift from Industrial Production of Journalistic Content to “Prod usage”

The emergence of digital interactive technologies has fired up a – still ongoing – debate about the potential transformation of the audience’s role, as well as the well established notions of “producer”/“consumer” and “active participant”/“passive recipient”. Several theorists have been quick to declare a shift in power to the benefit of users and the rise of a new open and participatory form of communication.
(Jenkins, cited in Van Dijck, 2009, p. 42 - 43), in which the boundaries between production and usage become blurry and porous. (Bruns, 2007) argues that the growth of blogs, social networking websites, wikis, citizen journalism and other forms of interactive tools and applications signify an ongoing paradigm shift, where notions such as “production” need to be conceptualized outside the industrial socio-economic models. Further he suggested a hybrid model of “produsage”, in which he explains that the creation of ideas takes place in a collaborative, participatory environment which shatters down the boundaries between producers and consumers and instead allows all participants to be users as well as producers of information and knowledge.

However, other theorists remain doubtful regarding the efficiency of bipolar terms, like production-use, in describing complex issues such as user agency. (Van Dijck, 2009) argues that in order to understand user agency, it was important to identify the multifarious roles of users in a current media environment where the lines between trade, content and information were currently being rebuilt. He suggests that user agency in digital media involves various levels of engagement and diverse types of communities, ranging from lower level groups at the grassroots till higher levels of consumer groups. Thus, (ibid) calls for a multidisciplinary approach, which accounts for the multiple roles assumed by the users, as well as for the online features which play a significant role in steering users’ actions and shaping the characteristics of online communities.

Nevertheless, despite the diversity of approaches and expectations concerning user comments and user generated applications, many academicians recognize a wider tendency towards the adoption of user-led technologies, as well as the importance of delineating their main characteristics (Schweiger and Quiring, 2005; Ornebring, 2008; Paulussen and Ugile, 2008). The professional institutions of news are no
exception, as they were also upgrading in making participation with users possible. Many researchers as seen earlier in this review have turned to the study of the phenomenon of citizen journalism, which was closely associated to user generated content and its potential implications on Institutions of mass media. (Bowman and Willis, 2003) say, “Citizen Journalism”, refers to individuals’ active role in the elaboration and distribution of news content. In the same vein, (Bruns, 2007) on the other hand argues that citizen journalism was not only discursive and deliberative, but that it can also be understood as a form of collaborative filtering of information and elucidations, demanding the role of the established mass media in disseminating and interpreting the news.

2.20 User comments and its Impact on Journalism

Generating mass media content with the help of media audiences has a very old tradition. Feedback in the form of Readers’ letters to the editor are the most common example of audience participation opportunities offered by the mass media, as an early type of user produced content, before the emergence of digital media. However, the development of digital media has signaled a new era in audience participation – one that was interactive and more accessible – as (Van Dijck, 2009) states that the availability of cheap and easy-to-use digital technologies but a more important urge are the many internet channels, particularly UGC sites that allow for do-it-yourself distribution (ibid). The trend in most of the mass media institutes is increasingly integrate user generated content applications in their websites, asking users, to submit videos and pictures and to rate their stories, to create their own blogs, post or comment on news articles. These developments and their potential impact on journalism, the mass media and public belief, have involved many scholars’ attention who have attempted to record and analyze several aspects of this phenomenon. Some
researchers have focused on tracing the various types of opportunities for content generation which are offered to users, and to analyze the manifold levels of user participation in content production (Domingo *et al.*, 2008; Ornebring, 2008). Their findings suggest that a variety of features for audience participation are available, enabling users to engage in numerous ways and levels, while websites features have been found to vary in terms of the offered types for user involvement, the type of content produced, as well as the degree of interactivity allowed to users. This assortment of features and opportunities for audience participation further complicates the task of understanding its potential effect on journalism and the public sphere. Much research has been conducted concerning the effects of user generated content on professional journalistic norms and practices. Most of these studies concluded that journalists are aware yet concerned about the growing importance of user generated content in the newsroom.

(Paulussen and Ugile’s, 2008) findings suggest that media professionals recognize the growing importance of user generated content for journalists’ everyday work routines. However, they are concerned about how time-consuming handling UGC was; they also worry that amateur journalism may not correspond to professional journalistic standards of credibility, objectivity and accountability. Similarly, Singer and Ashman, (2009) presented evidence that “journalists are struggling with how to ethically accommodate the opportunities for freedom and dialogue presented by user generated comments while safeguarding their credibility and sense of responsibility” (Singer & Ashman, 2008: p. 18). On the other hand, Neuberger & Nuernbergk (2010), having surveyed media professionals employed in online newsrooms, found that editors and journalists think that user generated content as additional sources which could complement professional media, rather than as competitors or as a threat
to their profession. Overall, most researchers conclude that there was no actual boundary shift between journalists and their audience as users still maintain the role they already had in traditional media.

However, as Neuberger & Nuernbergk (2010) argue, higher levels of audience participation remain to be achieved, as user participation was still at its very beginning. Goode contends that UGC “growth rates allow us to speculate on but not to assume a more popular uptake and mainstream engagement in the coming few years” (Goode, 2009: p. 1292). Although, available analyses of interactivity and user generated content’s impact on journalism have mostly been based on the view of the journalists’ self-reported accounts, while the quality and effects of the actual content users produce remain an under explored aspect of UGC.

2.21 User comments’ Role vis-à-vis Journalist’s Role

Few attempts have been made to record and analyze the role of user comments on mass media websites vis-à-vis the journalistic functions and its potential impact on the public sphere and public opinion. Despite the fact that much theoretical discussion was carried out regarding the potential effects of users’ contributions, empirical accounts, based on the study of the actual content users produce, have so far been scarce. (Singer, 2009) applied content analysis on users’ comments posted on the websites of three Scottish newspapers, intending to understand the characteristics of the political communities formed in these spaces, as well as its effect on the political discourse occurring within these online environments. Her findings shows that these discursive spaces perform a linking function, as users even from far off and remotely located spaces can come together and debate issues of common interest, while at the same time act as a common forum for social interaction and community building.
However, Singer’s study makes no attempt to examine how users’ comments may challenge mass media in their core journalistic functions.

On the contrary, (Karlsson, 2010) focused on how users’ comments posted on four Swedish newspapers on specific new report of swine flu. His findings advocate that users’ contributions challenged the prevailing media frame, and took a critical stance towards mass media coverage of the issue. In tune with Karlsson, (Robinson, 2009) compared how professional and amateur journalists covered the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in 2006. The most noteworthy finding of Robinson was that in several occasions users challenged the newspapers’ version of the story and expressed anti-media feelings, or considered themselves as collaborators with journalists. These two studies propose that users’ contributions widen the public sphere, while they also confront mass media’s role as gatekeepers. A common argument for the importance of the mass media was that professional journalists and editors possess the necessary expertise to select which stories make the news. The term “gatekeeper” was used to describe the role of journalists in deciding what the public should know, and also what and how such information should be provided. (Goode, 2009) criticizes this characteristic of mass media for its non-transparent and over-determined deciding process of story, which the public cannot question.

Whereas (Domingo et al., 2010) said, modern media critics have called for a more reciprocal relationship between media and their audiences. Several authors have talked about user generated content’s potential to challenge the role of the established media as gatekeepers and to offer alternative methods, in parallel to professional journalism. (Goode, 2009) on the other hand argues that the democratizing force of citizen journalism lies within its potential to bring citizens into the agenda-setting process. Goode further believes that the emergence of new interactive media
challenges the term “gatekeeper” itself, as audiences are most often posting materials in the wake of abundance of information in comparison to the scarcity of information in the pre-digital era.

2.22 Content Customization

In the era of the new media and digital management of information makes it technically possible to filter and produce content based on the preferences of individual users. This empowers users, to customize the product and consume it in the way that best suits their needs (Kenney et al, 2000) Several researchers and scholars have stated their concerns about the consequences of customization of information and as (Dahlgren, 1996) observes that the social cohesive role of mass media might be in danger. The use of RSS feeds and news aggregator can remove from the news diet of the citizens those current events that editors believe to be of general interest from journalistic criteria. Dahlgren assumed that other forms of interactivity can balance for the drawbacks of customization. He further stated that such pre-selectivity may both eliminate elements of serendipity in user’s news experience and further splinter the public, interactivity however does open up the potential for new relationships between journalist and their publics (Dahlgren; 1996: 65).

2.23 Audience Feedback

One of the specific materializations of these possibilities has enhanced audiences’ feedback. The public availability of reporters’ email addresses on news websites, next to their news stories, turns readers and viewers into commentators, critics and collaborators. Even the old method of letters to the editor has sped up as they now can be emailed. The relationship becomes richer for the journalist as they get to know their users and as (Deuze, 1999:378) observes reporters can systematically know what
their audience want from them. The role of the journalist as watchdog has extended to its users who serve as quality checkers, pointing out wrong data or unsatisfactory coverage.

Such a user practice could also have possibly affect the agenda setting process, which has traditionally been a task executed by the mass media. In the same vein, (Domingo, 2010) argues that certain areas, the actors of alternative agenda setting do exist, although it was a known fact that the mass media still dominate the public space as agenda-setters. Still, the effects of user generated content and especially the user comments on news-making and its impact on the formation of public opinion remain an understudied area. In summary, the open and interactive nature of user applications has led many scholars to assume that audience-generated content in mass media websites have the potential to complement journalistic content, also broaden the public sphere and confront the mass media monopoly in the news-making process and a sole institution in influencing public opinion.

2.24 Users Comments: A Cause of concern or a Benefit

(Domingo; 2008) in his paper on the myths of interactivity of online papers concludes that interactive policies of online one portal news sites were significantly different from those in the traditional newsroom was not only visible the transparency act of having individual journalists’ email or comment on every story. He added that the journalist felt closer to their audience in the online forum as users could directly criticize, comment and suggest links on news stories. On the other hand the reporters visited their stories regularly several times a day to check the comments and they engaged in small conversations in the comment area answering the most direct proposals. He observed that for the editor of the online portal, both openness of debate space for
comment and the fact that journalists write on them, were the keys for the quantity and quality of user participation. This conduct of journalists and the users was a radically different experience from traditional media.

2.25 Users Comments and Moderation

With news becoming open and collaborative and audience actively involving in the production process in the online news portals the roles of the journalist are changing drastically. As (Gillmor, 2004) observed if online users can become “citizen journalist” the media would better have them in the team rather competing with them for hard earned readers attention. Again another step from traditional journalism advocated by online journalists, would be to transform the online publication (a unidirectional producer of news) into a fully horizontal virtual community, where sources/users (both will be readers and producers of news) would exchange information and opinions fluently (Guissani, 1997). In this context journalist would just be the “conductors of the public debate” (BardoeI; 1996:299) setting aside their monopoly as news producers. The online broadcasters and the local online newspaper forum spaces obliged users to register before posting. Many sites did not want the users to reveal their names, but their nickname could be banned if their attitude was not adequate. In all cases messages were reviewed after being published on the website, because journalists argued that moderation prior to publication “killed the debate”. The same roles that dealt with audience emails in each newsroom performed forum management routines (Domingo, 2000). Thus interaction with users tended to concentrate in few hands. This meant that, besides the case of online–only portal, reporters seldom accessed the forums and user discussion had no effect on content production (Domingo, 2000).
User comments in media organizations websites takes many forms and involves diverse levels of engagement. Few of these features let users to get involved in several stages of the news making process (Domingo et al., 2010), although the results of the current research has shown that users have not yet adapted the new roles, and still maintain the role they had before the emergence of digital media (Neuberger and Nuernbergk, 2010). Nevertheless, as audiences get more engaged in content production, several scholars assume that UGC and user comments will transform the role of the mass media.

User comment applications allow users to get involved in the processes of selecting, disseminating, prioritizing and interpreting news stories that challenges media professional’s control in deciding the framing and priming of news and the news agenda and acting as watchdogs of information. Another point of (Milioni et al., 2011) is that the users were a significant point: the understanding of user agency and the various meanings of participation in the unique media environment. Thus, the main objective of this paper was to assess the influence of users’ contributions on the journalistic product, by examining the ways in which user complements or differentiates the meaning and interpretations journalists choose to communicate in their news story and to the comments following the news article. To also understand that such open space provided to the users for discussion bring about a public deliberation.

2.26 Theoretical Framework

The theory of communicative action was applied by Jurgen Habermas to politics and law, advocating a "deliberative democracy" in which governmental institutions and laws would be open to free reflection and discussion by the public therefore in which
actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). He believes that within his form of democracy, men and women aware of their interest in self-governance and responsibility would seek to adhere only to the most rational argument. Applying this theory to the online media where the users at one side discuss issues with one another and on the other part were able to voice their opinions to the journalist which was impossible in the earlier days of journalism, such discussions leads to decision which would help to bring a change in the society.

In the context of traditional journalism, journalists were the gatekeepers who filter the happenings of the world. They perform the entire news process, coming up with stories, gathering the news, writing, editing and publishing. This process happens free from any contribution from members of the public - other than as sources - that were otherwise relegated to commenting via a reader representative or letter to the editor. Under this one-way-flow-of-communication model, news organizations inevitably set the news agenda.

In making this argument, McCombs and Shaw first established a few hypotheses: that most of what people know comes to them via second- or third-hand from the mass media or other people that voters learn most of what they know from the mass media and that people vary greatly in their attention to the mass media (McCombs, 1972).

The under explored literature, however, was the role that audience feedback plays in shaping the media’s agenda, so-called agenda building? Research has shown that while reporters clearly set the agenda for readers in the online comments, the extent to which readers help develop those agendas was less clear.
Fig. 2.1: Operational Model

A WORKING MODEL

JOURNALISTS

N1 N2 N3 N4

GATE
N5
N6

AGENDA SETTING

ORIGINAL POST BY JOURNALIST

VERTICAL INTERACTIVITY

U3 U1 U2

U4 U7

U6

AUDIENCE
(Users of Online News)

N1
N2
N3
N4

NEWS SELECTED

N5
N6

NEWS REJECTED

U1, U2, U3, etc. are the users' comments