ROLE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS IN SUSTAINING THE LOCAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT
Local media developed in Mongolia since the 1940s. Today, 126 local media operate normally. However, it is lacking research and study of their sustainability and existence way. This study tries to clarify local media theory based on "good neighbor" journalism norms, participatory journalism, and citizen journalism theory. Therefore, the study clarifies the following: 1) how the local media can simultaneously uphold regionality and cooperativity, and 2) the possibility of local media cooperating with citizen participation and, the method for future establishment and development of the local media in Mongolia through individual online participation.

KEYWORDS
Local Media, Online Platform, Citizen Journalism, Participatory Journalism

1. INTRODUCTION
Local media are "communication media that cover a certain local region," where local region is defined as "an entity that includes characteristics such as regionality, commonality, solidarity and cooperativity of people living there" based on spatial or geographical range (Takeuchi 1989, pp. 3–4). Mass communication, or mass media, closely relates to the "imaginary community," which transcends regional characteristics, and is linked to the cooperative formation of a nation-state (Anderson, 2006). It is certain that the local media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, have played a part as one of the mass media roles of cooperativity. Moreover, the local media have become widespread in human lives and, by creating relationships between people in the respective areas, they have activated the senses and expanded the realms of individual consciousness and memory. Thus, the local media attempt a national and global expansion of spatiality to transcend regionality; simultaneously, they are deeply involved in the regional reality, thus mediating people’s commonality and local characteristics and functioning as social memory (Battsogt 2017). In the concrete regional context of their activity, the ambivalent nature of local media — national, global, and local — is a topic that deserves closer analysis. This study clarifies the following: 1) the ways in which the local media can simultaneously uphold regionality and cooperativity, and 2) the method for future establishment and development of the local media in Mongolia through individual online participation.

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF LOCAL MEDIA IN MONGOLIA
In 1942, the “Jana Omir” newspaper was published in Bayan-Ulgii aimag (Zulkafil, 1997, pp. 13), and the first local newspaper factory was established in Arkhangai aimag in 1947 through a decision of the Politburo of the Socialist Party Central Committee (Norovsuren, 2001, pp. 177). In the 1980s, the establishment of a full-fledged system that included local TV and radio stations was a key event in Mongolian journalism (Norovsuren, 2001, pp. 12,78). Since 1990, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Mongolia’s transition to a market economy, the media — which had previously been under the auspices of the state and directly transmitted party ideology — have faced significant challenges (Norovsuren, 2001, pp. 98). From 1990 to 2000, the local media sector was financially unstable and lacked its own ideology; this phase can be described as a period of transition for the local media (Sharavdorj, 2006). In 2021, there are 126 local media outlets in Mongolia providing information to half of the nation’s population.
3. FEATURES AND DEFINITIONS OF THE LOCAL MEDIA

As there is no common understanding of the classification of the theory of journalism, its constituent subjects are often ambiguous (Skinner et al., 2001; Berglez, 2003). For example, Siebert (1956) categorized the constituent subjects of journalism into four categories based on issues of press freedom and press responsibilities. There have also been comparisons between normative ethics and norms as “watchdog” and “good neighbor” journalism (Franklin, 2005). In recent years, not only has a media-based journalism model been seen (Poindexter et al., 2006) but a public journalism model between sender and recipient has also been witnessed (Nip, 2006). Nip’s five models have been widely cited since the mid-2000s, when the internet and SNS’s were classified based on the current prevalence (Rausch, 2012).

The question arises as to which topics should be given more attention when discussing journalism tailored to the specifics of the local media. Ogawa asserted that the ideas, theories, and practices of “watchdog” journalism are not appropriate in small regions, such as rural areas (Ogawa, 2005). The “watchdog” journalism that has developed in Great Britain and in United States since the mid-18th century has been called the “Fourth Estate.” It has traditionally been compared to a “watchdog” for loudly exclaiming to others to control the government and the rule of law. Some researchers have noted that journalism focuses on minorities and lacks tools to make known the interests of the majority in the community. The local media must contribute to the well-being of the people and emphasize whether they influence the region (Richards, 2014). Heider suggested that the local media should help people find solutions to real-life problems, thus promoting “good neighbor” journalism instead of only providing information about one segment (minority) (Heider et al., 2005). Poindexter outlines the reason for high hopes regarding the “good neighbor” local media (Poindexter et al., 2006). A similar conclusion was drawn from a study on the local media in Japan (Etsushi, 2005).

This section focuses on the specifics of the media and the relevance of local people as recipients of media information, as shown in Figure 1. This section attempts to identify appropriate media theories for local media. In Figure 1, the vertical axis represents the level of information dissemination to the public, while the horizontal axis represents the level of citizen participation. The lower areas can be classified as local or citizen media. The upper left corner of the Figure contains the most accessible media. The upper right section contains the main or traditional media.

Figure 1. Features of the media and classification of citizen participation

However, Figure 1 is a classification that depends only on specific characteristics of the media, the level of citizen participation, and the means of receiving information. In recent years, with the advent of the internet, the local media have been able to cross not national borders and create global networks. Cooperation with social networks such as Facebook and Twitter is difficult to describe in Figure 1. Furthermore, the local media cannot be directly interpreted as being separate from the traditional media. Figure 1 is merely an attempt to classify according to the levels of citizen participation and dissemination of information.
Comparing Nipp’s five categories of journalism, citizen journalism, and participatory journalism are shown at the bottom of Figure 1. Emphasizing citizen participation in the media is not only a factor in citizen development but also an engine of social progress (Habermas, 1984). The media is required to cooperate with the private sector and government authorities concerning news sources and the economy. Thus, by encouraging citizen participation, it is possible to strengthen independence from external influences and further improve the quality of news (Brown, 2021).

4. VALUE OF LOCAL NEWS

This section discusses the value of local news and its theoretical research approaches, which are the main contents of the local media. Local news often contains values of public goods (Nichols and Robert, 2010; Radu, 2019), necessary goods (Ali, 2016), or public services (Mersereau, 2021).

If local news is a public service, such as electricity, water systems, and postal services, public policy is essential to ensure the stability and development of the local media organizations that distribute it. If local news is considered public goods or necessary goods, it is possible to obtain assistance and support for the variable costs of disseminating and transmitting the news, not only from the government but also from foreign and domestic public organizations. In recent years, a nationwide online platform has been supporting the local media to highlight the value of local news, which will be expanded upon in the following section.

4.1 Local News as Public Goods

The concept of public goods has two basic principles: it is non-excludable and non-rivalrous. Public goods can be used by all consumers, regardless of whether they pay a price, such as a free rider (Holcombe, 1997; Suber, 2009). Examples of this type of goods are the defense sector, police, and public streets. Regarding news, a group of commercial-based channels provides services that can be used at no cost. Most media platforms, such as newspapers and magazines, are unable to distribute public property without unrestricted competition.

However, recently, with the proliferation of false news on SNS, it has become clear that the media should be made public. The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University conducted a systematic study on the value of news and produced a sub-report, entitled “News as Public Goods” (Nieman Lab, 2016). The World Bank’s report, “The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development,” states that the media should be responsible for the creation of public goods (Islam, 2002). Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz has said that the value of news in many areas is reflected in the fact that it becomes a public good (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 7).

Table 1 classifies the media based on the principle of public goods, those that are non-excludable and non-rivalrous. Researchers have often noted that commercial channels, which generate revenue from advertising, have difficulty delivering accurate information to audiences (Lamarre, 2015). With the support of online platforms, the local media can disseminate local news that is socially owned.

Table 1. The classification of media platforms based on public goods principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXCLUDABLE</th>
<th>NONEXCLUDABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RIVALROUS</td>
<td>Newspapers and magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONRIVALROUS</td>
<td>Commercial channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local media + Online platforms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed by author

5. COMMUNITY-BASED MEDIA

Since 1999, the Press Institute in Mongolia has published reports on the quantitative changes in local media types. Local news websites have been included in this report since 2019. Local news websites are among the most powerful local media platforms, as shown in Table 2 (Press Institute, 2021, pp. 99 -100).
Table 2 presents measures of the degree to which local media platforms support citizen participation online. It summarizes the number of local media platforms and the number of local people who participate in media activities, such as news processing, editing, and publication. Some websites have news entry section, where citizens can participate. Such websites attempt to create and develop their own space in the media market by promoting citizen participation, and their numbers are expected to increase. In contrast, however, none of the traditional local media platforms have websites or use Facebook pages to interact with citizens and encourage their participation. Eighty-two local media outlets use Facebook pages, but only 22 are active and support citizen participation. Most media platforms in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city, have developed their own websites and Facebook pages that are open and interdependent (Press Institute, 2021). However, the citizen-participation activities of the local media platforms are insufficient (<50), which reveal both the inequality of digital technology and the huge differences in the development of the online media market nationwide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL MEDIA TYPES</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>SUPPORT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>NOT-SUPPORT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year of 2020</td>
<td>Through Websites</td>
<td>Through Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which: FM Radio</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed by author

6. CONCLUSION

The political, social, and cultural contexts created by the local media are complex and multilayered. The local media act simultaneously in local and global information fields. This study clarified 1) the possibility of local media that simultaneously plays the roles of regionality and cooperativity, and 2) the method for establishing and developing in the future through individual online participation in local media in Mongolia.

This study highlights the lack of research, theories, and methodologies for local media development in Mongolia. Today, Mongolia has 126 local media platforms. However, only 30 local media platforms—that is, 25% of all local media platforms—are active through their websites and Facebook pages to ensure citizen participation. Defining the development of local media in line with the specifics of information delivery and the development of internet technology by promoting citizen participation may be the best option for sustaining the local media.

However, this study illustrates only current citizen participation on local media websites and Facebook. Further analysis is needed to improve the effectiveness and quality of local media activities and understand other impacts on the local media. For example, we need basic research, including local media affiliation and program relevance and content analysis, and information about local media staff ideologies, such as journalists’ perceptions, differences of opinion, and conflicts. Continued study of the image, future direction, and normative concept of phrasings, such as “local media theory” and “local journalism,” is needed.

REFERENCES


