

# EMPOWERING CITIZEN MEDIA THROUGH INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN MALAYSIA

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## **Abstract**

Investigative journalism nowadays plays a crucial role in the democratization of a nation. This paper discusses a study conducted to examine the challenges of investigative journalism in Malaysia, the significance of journalism ethics and rules in Malaysia in the investigative journalism practices, and to suggest and recommend the ways and method to handle any future challenges in the investigative journalism world. The study employed a qualitative method in which an in-depth interview was carried out with three investigative journalism experts in Malaysia. The subjects were carefully selected through purposive sampling. In addition, the interview questions were constructed based on data collected from document analysis. It is important to gain an initial data on investigative journalism in Malaysia. Three main themes selected for the studies are communication, empowerment and governance. The incorporation and collaboration between these three themes influenced and moulded the practices of investigative journalism in the country. Results revealed that there are similar and different traits of investigative journalism practices in Malaysia. For the alternative media, passion is a must in coming down as a journalist and try to take a more courageous act in telling and serving truth to the public. Investigative journalism can continue to exist in the world of ubiquitous media and information overloaded.

**Keywords:** *Empowering, citizen media, investigative journalism, democratisation, Malaysia.*

## MEMPERKASAKAN MEDIA RAKYAT MELALUI KEWARTAWANAN PENYIASATAN DI MALAYSIA

### **Abstrak**

Kewartawanan penyiasatan pada masa kini memainkan peranan penting dalam pendemokrasian sesebuah negara. Makalah ini membincangkan satu kajian yang telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji cabaran kewartawanan penyiasatan di Malaysia, kepentingan etika kewartawanan dan peraturan di Malaysia dalam amalan kewartawanan penyiasatan, dan untuk mencadangkan dan mencadangkan cara-cara dan kaedah untuk menangani sebarang cabaran masa depan dalam dunia kewartawanan penyiasatan. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif melalui temu bual mendalam yang dijalankan dengan tiga orang pakar kewartawanan penyiasatan di Malaysia. Subjek dipilih secara berhati-hati melalui persampelan bertujuan. Selain itu, soalan-soalan temu bual telah dibina berdasarkan data yang diperolehi daripada analisis dokumen. Adalah penting untuk mendapatkan data awal mengenai kewartawanan penyiasatan di Malaysia. Tiga tema utama yang dipilih untuk kajian ini ialah komunikasi, kuasa dan tadbir urus. Penggabungan dan kerjasama antara ketiga-tiga tema telah mempengaruhi dan membentuk amalan kewartawanan penyiasatan di negara ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan terdapat persamaan dan perbezaan ciri amalan kewartawanan penyiasatan di Malaysia. Bagi media alternatif, keghairahan adalah satu kemestian sebagai wartawan dan cuba untuk mengambil tindakan yang lebih berani dalam memberitahu dan menyampaikan kebenaran kepada orang ramai. Kewartawanan penyiasatan boleh terus wujud dalam dunia media yang sentiasa wujud dan lambakan maklumat.

***Kata kunci:** Pemerksaan, media rakyat, kewartawanan penyiasatan, demokratisasi, Malaysia.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Investigative journalism is a part of a broader field of journalism. However, its agenda might not be the same as the news journalism (de Burgh, 2008) because it involves a subject that the journalist sees as crucial in regards to moral. One

common aspect found among investigative journalism news is happenings that the journalists believed required attention because they amount to a dereliction of standards (de Burgh, 2008). Investigative journalism activities ranged from investigating documented or witnessed evidence (Waisbord, 2006). In fact, investigative journalism is discovering the truth and identifying gaps from it in any available media (de Burgh, 2008). It is distinct from work naturally conducted by other professions such as police, lawyers, auditors and regulatory bodies.

Citizen media on the other hand, is a broad term, refers to forms of content produced by private citizens who are otherwise not professional journalists (Wikipedia, 2015) or freelance individuals whom are very much interested to share their perspective and experience. Citizen media covers everything from blogs, vlogs, wikis, podcasts, community radio, and participatory video, thus it may be distributed via various media, such as television, radio, Internet, email, movie theatre, DVD and many other forms of media (Wikipedia, 2015). Wilkinson and Jetpyspayeva (2012) found that citizen media can maximize the impact of online project such as what has happened in Central Asia that it could give a better voice in the global blogosphere.

Investigative journalism practices in Malaysia are facing several challenges in delivering the content to the public. But obviously this does not only happen in Malaysia, but throughout the globe. Today, everywhere in the world, investigative journalism plays a vital role in delivering the hidden information to the public for the sake of awareness and information. Investigative journalists nowadays get their information from the Internet, to the Internet and through the Internet. Significantly, it is essential to understand and explore certain challenges faced by the local governance in having the citizen media as one of the channels for communicating news reporting among the members of the society. Information by the people has affected the investigative journalism development in terms of validity and rightful channel of news reporting. The following is an excerpt from the Ethics of Journalism in Malaysia, among all eight of the Canons.

*Journalists should be civil and courteous in carrying out the duties and avoid plagiarism and sedition, baseless accusations and bribery in one form or another in their tasks.*

From these ethics, it is clearly stated that *baseless accusations* are not to be performed in carrying out reports. In a country where journalists must work under restrictions from laws and regulations like Malaysia, where the investigative journalist and reporters are bounded under Internal Security Act (diminished on 2012), it is likely to be more difficult. The Internal Security Act (ISA) has been terminated in 2012, however it is replaced with two more new media-related laws.

Internal Security Acts 1967 plays a vital role in the practices of investigative journalism. It defines any reporting of military activities without permission as a breach theoretically punishable by imprisonment; and the “principle of national

responsibility” says that anything the government considers undesirable cannot be covered (Stapenhurst, 2000). When Internal Security Act was terminated, new media laws was introduced and assumed to have better toleration of freedom of investigative journalism practices.

On May 26<sup>th</sup> 2013, New Straits Times has published an article on the introduction of Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA). SOSMA was gazetted to replace the repealed Internal Security Act 1960. However, this sparks up some tension between the media practitioners. This is for the very reason that whether the new law provides the appropriate balance between the safeguarding of national security and the rights of the accused. Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Malaysia’s Home Minister said that SOSMA will still provide detention without trial, only the effect and detention period are shorter and appeal of court are easier to ask for.

In short, the government still has controls and regulate the circulation of the news stories which favors their options. The interference of government in Malaysia’s media might be connected with the element of national security. National security is defined as of the circumstances that permit governments censorship via prior restraints; an example is the right to restrain speeches about military activities during the wars (Turow, 2014). This study will further analyze the significance of ethics and rules from the media practitioners’ perspective; as an in depth interview will further detail their experience in reporting any news stories that might put their credibility and profession as an investigative journalists in stake.

Only free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government (Turow, 2014). In Malaysia, investigative journalists are bind by ethics, rules, laws and regulations which protects the national security and nations’ peace state. In other words, any news or articles that might brought chaos and disturb the national security are considered officially as national threats, which in turn bring negative effects to the limitations of news by the investigative journalism’s practitioners. Media is seen to report many news on the situation and the crisis due to the proximity, which is one of the news values (Azahar Kasim, Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, Awan Ismail & Az Zamakhsyari Masri, 2015). However, if only some of the important aspects highlighted by the press, readers may have a biased perspective that leads them to have some interpretations and conclusions which is not exhaustive (Muhammad Raqib Mohd Sofian & Adnan Hussein, 2014).

For the investigative journalists in Malaysia, they have seen the effect of carrying the rightful ethics and canons of journalism into their credibility. Ethics are made for the journalists to do it in the right way. However, the effects of ethics and rules into the investigative journalism have been many, with a large scale of negative impact on their credibility as a truthful media practitioners’. October 27, 1987 was one of the blackest histories of fear for all of the media practitioners’ all around Malaysia. Malaysia witnessed as many as 106 persons

was arrested under the Internal Security Act. According to the Malaysian police, this second largest swoops after May 13 riots' was carried out to prevent the re-occurrence of racial riots due to the provocation by the ruling government towards DAP.

On the very same day, two major daily newspapers face the consequences of Internal Security Act effects. The STAR and Sin Chew Jit Poh publishing licenses was revoked. Two weeklies- Watan (no longer published) and The Sunday Star was also revoked. These newspapers were detained because some of the news content are said to bring disturbance in national security and nation's peace. Some of the detainees includes political figure such as Lim Kit Siang, Karpal Singh and the detention of the journalists and social activists as well.

In today's investigative journalism practices, the culture of fear towards the effects of laws and regulations have transpires on the content of investigative news stories towards the public. The news agencies that are owned and regulated by government have their own favorable investigative news stories, and most of them prevent any disclosure of government-related news stories. Concentrated ownership leaders to lower chances for journalists to get their investigative articles publish. This is because usually the company's shares are mostly own by people with power and authority. de Burgh (2000) supported this idea with his statement saying that the concentration of media ownership has had a profound impact on the content of the print and broadcast media and on every nature of investigative journalism.

By seeking the truth and reporting it without biased and personal opinions influence, minimizing harms, act independently and be accountable by resources, news agency or any individual involved. These 4 main elements are agreed by Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (SPJ, revised 1984- 1987). These are presumed as the foundation of journalism, especially for investigative journalism. This study will further explains the effects of ethics and rules in investigative journalism towards the contents and alteration of news stories to the public.

Thus, it is interesting to examine and explore whether the citizen media has affected and in a way benefited the investigative journalism nowadays in Malaysia. This paper also intends to find out the rationale behind citizen media's presence in the news reporting of Malaysia. Consequently, this study is significant due to the exploration and understands of how citizen media in the practices of Malaysia's investigative journalism empower the interaction of media generally among the society, particularly to construct and achieve better communication in achieving good governance.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

There has not been a lot of research and study for the birth of citizen media in investigative journalism practices in Malaysia. So far, there has been lack of research in the topic that discusses the suggestion and recommendation of

the senior investigative journalist in Malaysia. Harcup (2009) who is a senior journalist in the National Union of Journalist (NUJ) has given several advices and suggestions to manage incoming challenges in investigative journalism. These suggestions are obtained through his experience in being involved with the alternative and mainstream media for three decades. Clearly, one has to refer to the seniority and experience from the older generation to compare, advice and enhance the method and presentation of investigative news stories to the public.

Hence, this study discusses and collects the opinions and suggestions of the senior investigative journalists who have been involved in this line of journalism for some period of time. This collections of recommendations are crucial in the sense of today's challenges might differ from the future practices of investigative journalism, but the method reporting and data collection will still have some similar traits because the main focus, is human. All human life is there, motto of News of the World, a renowned news broadcasting channel. The respondents, and data, as well as presentation are human. Hence, this study will be the main channel of information and archive as the references for the future investigative journalists.

When the public people took it as a practices rather than a definite profession, they tend to divert, channel and source the news stories of any random news piece they found daily, in their own way. Part of the reasons the individual are doing this is because the sensation and excitement they obtained after posting links of news in their social media account, for being the one knowing first hand of the information.

Social media nowadays has been bombarded by thousands of alternative news and source of information which in returns might benefit or jeopardize the quality of Malaysia's investigative journalism practices. The problem arises when these flocks of links came into sight and as readers, the tendency to read the first hand news is present. This is where the information might differ from the actual news reporting, actual investigative news stories and thus, creating a whole new opinion and criticism even though the information validity is in doubt mode.

This article also outlines the need to find out whether the acts and laws of journalism practices which controls and dictates the investigative journalism in Malaysia might results in the citizen media practices in Malaysia. This article focuses on finding out the factors that causes the emergence of citizen media in Malaysia, and the effects of citizen media towards the investigative journalism in Malaysia.

In particular, this study questions on a few issues namely: (i) What are the challenges in investigative journalism in Malaysia? (ii) What are the differences between the challenges faced today and years before? (iii) What is the significance of the ethics and rules of journalism of Malaysia towards the development of the investigative journalism? (iv) Does the ethics and rules of journalism in Malaysia affect the content and presentation of an investigative news stories to

the public? (v) What are the suggestions to handle the challenges of investigative journalism?

Protest et al. (1992) noticed the change in the roles of investigative journalism in today's media. They said that today's investigative journalism reflect a different tradition- the social responsibility of the press. The differences of challenges faced by the investigative journalists on different period of time will affect the method of data collection, data verification as well as the channel of distribution of news stories. The impact of journalism ethics and rules towards the practices of investigative journalism is the main concern for this study. The ethics and rules control the media ownership and concentration. Concentrated ownership are restricted by the ethics of a country and owned mostly by the pro-government individual. In turn, this leads to low chances for journalists to get their article publish.

The content of an investigative news stories might be distorted as outlined in the journalism ethics and rules. de Burgh (2000) supported this idea with his statement saying that the concentration of media ownership has had a profound impact on the content of print and broadcast media and on every nature on investigative journalism. Therefore, a truthful and transparent investigative news stories might not be presented fully as media organizations will avoid any risky publication that triggers the negative effects of ethics and rules; consequently tarnish the owner's reputation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The role of the citizen media arises when there are newly emerged audience in the world today, craving for fast and sensational news in a one-click social media links, be it on blogs or simple articles in the news website; rather than a paperback news which only will be published the next day. Blogs and wikis encourage intercreativity in that an article is never 'finished' – one can always come back and add extra comments to further explain and explore the concepts expressed (Saunders, 2003). Meikle's notion of intercreativity then correlates with citizen media, as a part with the dimension of multi-perspective media. As long as people take the opportunity to take part, each article that is published is a multiple-perspective treatment of an issue. Hence, citizen media offers these to the public, as compared to the conventional news reporting.

The scenario in Malaysia might have a different setbacks and challenges for the investigative reporters. Haxton (2002), one of the researchers for investigative journalism also mentioned several barriers such as media ownership and concentration, commercial pressure, increasing emphasis on infotainment, risks and costs of investigative journalism and public relations and press releases. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), journalism first obligation is to the truth, followed by its loyalty to the citizens; hence the essence of journalism is the discipline of verifications. With the challenges emerged today such as the channels of news distribution, mainly in social media such as Facebook, Twitter



and YouTube, the verification of news might be compromised. These citizen media channels can distort the investigative journalists' credibility because the news stories presented by them might contrast with the one published in these social media network. Besides that, the citizen media in Malaysia also emerge and develop because of the laws and ethics controlled by the government itself, and the concentrated ownership happening here in Malaysia.

Basically, good governance can be depicted as a system which allows intercommunication between the government and the society as a progress of a developing country. In Malaysia, investigative journalists are bind by ethics, rules, laws and regulations which protects the national security and nations' peace state.

In other words, any news or articles that might brought chaos and disturb the national security are considered officially as national threats, which in turn bring negative effects to the limitations of news by the investigative journalism's practitioners. Below are the excerpt taken from the Society of (US) Professional Journalists books entitled 'Doing Ethics in (pg. 13, 2012).

*'On the other hand, the Code of Ethics of Journalism in Malaysia can limit the potential of the individual journalist to take actions and makes decisions freely.*

For the investigative journalists in Malaysia, they have seen the effect of carrying the rightful ethics and canons of journalism into their credibility. Ethics are made for the journalists to do it in the right way. However, the effects of ethics and rules into the investigative journalism have been many, with a large scale of negative impact on their credibility as a truthful media practitioners'.

The developments of technology first and foremost are for the ease of humankind but in investigative journalism, it somehow alters the content and distribution to the public. Glenn (2007) wrote an upbeat profile for *Columbia Journalism Review* that discussed a blogger's contributions to investigative journalism. These blog sites attracts 400,000 views on most weekdays, responsible for raising the stories of the fired U.S attorney to a whole national level, which ultimately led to the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, among other top government officials. For Malaysia, the writing of Raja Petra Kamaruddin in his blog of Malaysia Today has attracted comments, locally and globally, sparks up questions towards the ethical royal family practices, motivates more Internet blogger to write up their opinion about the Malaysian's political system, as well as the rising of doubt of authority rules in the Parliament. Most of all, the leaking of money-swindling among the politicians for personal use have put rages and worries among the citizen about their tax money all these while.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section explains the methodology used in the research for obtaining the data. The researchers employed a qualitative method in which an in-depth interview



was carried out. In this way, the researchers can focus on sincere, spontaneous engineered answers and the meaning individuals assign to experience. Qualitative method is more suitable for this kind of research because researchers may get more in-depth answers from the subjects.

The interviews were divided into two parts. First, the subjects were asked about their demographic information which includes job designation, education background, and years of experience in investigative journalism practices. Since the objectives of this research are to identify the challenges of investigative journalism among the multi-ethnic and multi-racial Malaysian journalists, demographic factors were deemed as an important paradigm (Spradley, 1979). The second part of the interview involved open-ended questions method which focuses on gathering information required to answer the research questions. According to Marshall and Roman (1999), the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction. In-depth interviews are a vital way to probe phenomena such as their own journalistic attitudes and perceptions.

The subjects were carefully selected through purposive sampling, as stated by Sekaran (2003), that specific target group could provide the researchers with some desired information, for they are the only one with the desired criteria, for research purposes. The respondents or the person of interest were selected based on their direct involvement in the media industry and based on their background. Two categories are made for the respondents which are academics and practitioners. They are chosen based on their relevant media background and experience in the media world.

A variety of perspectives has been fulfilled in the academics and media practitioners' section. From the position of Associate Professors down to top managerial positions and editors as well as journalists who has worked for more than 20 years in the journalism practices. All respondents' comments are reported with the permission from the respondents. Interview protocols are used for the smooth process of interviewing. All the three respondents have more than 25 years of experience as media practitioners. Their position varies but the important point here is, there are people who are doing investigative journalism work in the organizations either as editors, senior reporters or even as academicians. Nevertheless, none of them uses the term 'investigative', be it editor, reporter or journalists. This literally clarify that the term is not vastly used in the media practice in Malaysia as compared to the Western media practices which even have a desk specifically for investigative journalists.

The interviews were administered both in Bahasa Melayu and English language to make it more practical and comprehensible, not to mention flexible. It was carried out face-to-face. The interview questions covered their background such as journalistic profession and experiences as well as their thoughts about the challenges of investigative journalism in Malaysia. The interviews are an essential way to examine phenomena such as journalistic attitudes, perceptions

and views. Letter of intent were sent out to ten media practitioners in Malaysia, but only three replied stating their agreement to take part in the interview. Although the number is not big in quantity, the rich data is the most important factor. The saturation of answers depends on the specificity of the responses, and the most important is the selection of the informants (Araceli, 2013).

The first informant works as a media practitioner for more than 30 years. He is also a creative director, a journalist and an avid columnist. He is an experienced journalist and has been working in the media for many years, published books on journalism and still an active advocate in writing news column and opinion for the public. The second person has a strong credibility in academics field, for more than 30 years as well. A journalist-turned-journalism professor, he is currently worked in a private university in Malaysia. It is very significant because this is the individual who taught, educate and nurture the journalism passion among the students to become an investigative journalist in the future. The third informant has an experience as senior reporter for the crime desk in one of the local newspapers for more than 30 years. He is the perfect example of true and avid practitioner of investigative journalism. During the interview session, some of the respondents are trying to hold their thoughts back and tried to restrict some of the opinions. This is when open-ended questions went on strike and after that their views emerged and data proved to be fulfilling the objectives and content-rich.

On the other hand, the interview questions were constructed based on data collected from document analysis. It is important to gain an initial data on investigative journalism in Malaysia. By analyzing the document and article written by the journalists or media practitioners, researcher can assume and prepare objective questions about their perceptions and thoughts pertaining to the challenges of investigative journalism in Malaysia. These publications were selected because they are known for publishing reports and some even have a special investigative column in their publications. Written documents are one of the most valuable and time-saving forms of data collections (Fetterman, 1998). All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and data were analysed based on a thematic analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

One area where citizen media participation has been particularly noteworthy is in the area of communicating and channelling the information to the public via multiple channels. They have asked the government to re-evaluate the stands on media concentrated ownership as well as the practices of laws and ethics in the news reporting. One of the informants mentioned that the ethics and journalism laws implemented after the Independence Day has been making the investigative news stories delivery restricted and limited. Hence, now and back then, there are similar and different traits of investigative journalism practices. Besides that, the informants collectively agree that ethics play an important role in the journalism

practices yet somehow it should not limit the reporters' first principle of telling the truth to the public. Two of the informants agree that the leaders and head should carry out the ethics with principle and not power abusing towards the media. This finding is similar to that of Lent (1984) who stated that laws and regulations such as ethics forced reporters to exercise self-censorship and to protect them from being dubbed as the 'anti-government'.

For Informant A, in the sense of presentation wise, the media in Malaysia, especially in the mainstream media has always been bad in choosing a topic for the headlines. The priority and logical sense are not visible in the news stories, and the newsworthy are not up to the standard. Here's what he said about the presentation of news stories, as to compare now and back then.

*In my experience in Malaysia - I first came here 1985, so that is now 28 years. And it was very bad then in mainstream journalism, and it is just as bad now. Always bad. Let me give you an example. In 1985, when I first came to Malaysia, I was reading the NST and here is a story - NO AIDS in Malaysia. Because Dr. Mahathir said, there are no homosexual or drug addicts here in Malaysia. That's what I read. That was my first experience of journalism here in Malaysia.*

From what he said, it is very clear that as a media practitioner he is very disappointed with the headlines of that day. As to reveal that there are no better headlines and the headlines according to him does not make any sense at all. Every country ought to have homosexuality, either they are being public or private. Either way, for Informant A, the level of downgraded news stories presentation in the mainstream media remains until today.

All of the informants agreed that for the alternative media, passion is a must in coming down as a journalist and try to take a more courageous act in telling and serving truth to the public. On the other hand, Informant B said:

*Back then, when there was not so much control, people were free in expressing lots of views. But now, mainstream papers are controlled by restrictive laws and legislation. Unlike the Internet, news blogs and Internet shall not be censored. Today we have the Internet, those days we don't have the Internet, I mean before the 60s. Those days are liberal and they were quite free. We look at the times when Tunku Abdul Rahman, it was quite liberal. Even T.A.Rahman will speak his heart and mind out, he doesn't really hold back. After the laws were established, everything was changed.*

According to Informant A, the press and the investigative journalism practices in Malaysia were not as much controlled like today. Today, the laws and legislation has made it impossible to express the views to the public. A true believer of passion in journalism and serving the people, Informant A expressed his disappointed that the laws emerged after the 60s eventually prohibits the

exercise of free investigative journalism practices. This relates to the censorship of the media in Malaysia as has been criticized by Das (1990) that Malaysia is one of the worse countries that suffer from censorship. In addition, Informant C said:

*I think the most important difference is the availability of the Internet. First, it enables access to a vast amount of information, free from censorship and control. Sure, censorship and control are still there, but access to information has been very much enhanced and facilitated with the advent of the internet. Apart from access, there's now greater capability to exchange information instantaneously over distances and across geographical boundaries.*

The evolution of the Internet has made it possible for everyone to get news in a real time, if not fast and effective basis. In fact every mainstream media now has its very own online version of news- called online journalism, to keep up with this emerging trend. The first awareness of the power of Internet started back when Steven Gan, the Editor-in-Chief of MalaysiaKini, an online alternative media news and columns portal, has started the site and hit millions of viewers. They have risen from 500 to 1,000 viewers within weeks, and then went up as high as 300,000 visitors (Gan, 2011). The advent of the Internet, said by Informant B, has provided a non-barrier and global-scaled news reaching to all kinds of people, anytime, anywhere. He also mentioned that with a greater capability to exchange information across geographical boundaries, information can be changed instantaneously.

Consequently, this opinion goes exactly in line with the rise of people in recent General Election. The impact of the alternative media towards the rise of protest by tens of thousands of people during the 'Bersih' protest in Kuala Lumpur calling for a free and fair election are contributed somehow by alternative news media such as Malaysian Insider, MalaysiaKini and Free Malaysia Today. On that day alone, MalaysiaKini have five millions hits (York, 2011).

Society nowadays takes interest in fast, easy and updated news. Reliability of the news was not considered as the main priority as the researcher tried to dig in the social media activities that happens among all level of ages. Currently, the emergence of smartphone allows superfast connection, borderless connection and interactivity as well as real time news stories presentation. The researcher then probe questions to further clarify and relate the differences in investigative news stories delivery and presentation to the public. The respondents are supporting the notion that Internet has made it possible for the news censored by the media to get through to the public, because there are no restrictions and prohibitions in the Internet news circulation, especially the alternative media.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Different country offers different mediascape which revealed complex stories

that can be a lesson for other countries (Lee Kuok Tiung & Mohd Safar Hasim, 2015). Same goes to the case of investigative journalism in Malaysia.

For the common traits of challenges between the practices of investigative journalism, respondents agree that some of the investigative reporters faced greater challenge back then as compared to today's modern and digital journalism practices. Two of the respondents agree that the investigative journalist nowadays only needs to follow the authority figure command in reporting the news (Waisbord, 2000). Meanwhile, one of the respondents mentioned that the ethics and journalism laws implemented after the Independence Day has been making the investigative news stories delivery restricted and limited. Hence, it can be concluded that now and back then, there is similar and different traits of investigative journalism practices.

Besides that, the respondents collectively agree that ethics play an important role in the journalism practices yet somehow it should not limit the reporters' first principle of telling the truth to the public. Two of them agree that the leaders and head should carry out the ethics with principle and not power abusing towards the media. This finding is similar to that of Lent (1984) who stated that laws and regulations such as ethics forced reporters to exercise self-censorship, to protect them from being dubbed as the 'anti-government'. All of them agree that ethics and rules implementation has somehow distort the content of investigative news stories because of the fearsome culture and fear that any action against the editors will jeopardize their career and their financial security.

The recommendation to enhance and improve the future of investigative news presentation from the respondents is to stand united in facing any controls towards the media, watch lesser mainstream media. For the new and soon to be investigative news journalists, passion is a must in coming down as a journalist and try to take a more courageous act in telling and serving truth to the public. In summary, this research found out that there is only a small difference between the practices of investigative news reporting today and back then. Malaysian media practitioners actually understand the meaning of investigative journalism practices and try to implement a rightful, hardworking, persistent investigative news reporting. The practices of investigative journalism are limited through ownership, laws and regulations; and these are the biggest challenge. Researcher found out that the investigative journalism in Malaysia is still in its infancy; and collective changes have to be made to further improvise the future of investigative news reporting.

Public are the main source and audience of news gathering and reporting, and so as to allow them to have self-government practices. The governance are to be informed of important events; and they are to become the watchdog in terms of power abuses in media, both public and privates. As so, they tend to observe the changes and any unusual development of investigative journalism in Malaysia, as so to adhere of becoming the 21<sup>st</sup> century citizen media practitioner.

The traditional model of journalism also reflects on the behavior of the public

in Malaysia. The model encourages an open forum for the expression and critical discussion of issues, viewpoints and values presented by the news reporting in Malaysia. Therefore, there are two findings out of the citizen media practices in Malaysia based on the traditional model of ethics; the people are always actively seeking out the investigative truths in their own independent manner.

According to Greenwald and Bernt (2000), the conventional investigative journalist have to face the risk of ‘turned-off’ readers because these kind of stories were so in-depth and detailed it tends to be longer than the usual news. Besides that, the changes in news media audiences also contribute to the citizen media practices. The audience nowadays possesses stronger demand for fresh, one-click news, live hits, and credible, instant news. The demand to access into multiple photos and information which are readily available on the Internet before traditional verification in completed also present. Audiences nowadays, also demand interactivity, the chance to research their own stories and question the news they read be it online or paperback based.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have seen the factors of citizen media emergence in investigative journalism in Malaysia. We have seen the media practitioner’s perspective towards these developments. The factors of the citizen media emergence arise when the conventional investigative journalism might not will to tolerate to the changing news audience, news channel and trends of today. Hence, this article found out and concluded the benefits, pro and cons of citizen media towards the development of investigative journalism in Malaysia, hence towards the rise and down of an governance’s channel of information to the public. For a better way to look at the emergence, and to empower the citizen media, the current media has to look in a better and positive ways.

Investigative journalism can continue to exist in the world of ubiquitous media and information overloaded. It will require investigative journalists and citizen journalists to recognise that they are all contributing towards the ‘sense-making project of modernity’ and that they should work together rather than competing. There will always be a need for investigative journalism and investigative journalists – but there is a growing need for citizen media. Investigative journalism will benefit by incorporating their ways, to guide them better and by collaborating with practitioners of them. Investigative journalism forms and methods may change, but the practice of investigative journalism will remain an important part of journalism and democracy.

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