

# Choosing to Become a Citizen Journalist: The Experiences of Malaysian Youth

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## Abstract

Online citizen journalism is turning from a reader to a writer to share their opinion on some topics that occur in the media. Some even dedicate their time to writing and addressing issues as citizen journalist even though most of this group of citizen journalists are not receiving any payments for their contributions. This study thus aims to investigate the motivation that leads to Malaysia's young citizen journalists' decision in becoming a citizen journalist. Qualitative enquiry using a phenomenology approach was selected. An in-depth interview with 14 informants participated in in-depth interviews. Atlas.ti 8 was used to analyze data of emerging themes. Three themes associated with past experiences emerged, which are action, people and event. Findings emerged young citizen journalism in Malaysia decide to get involved in citizen journalist due to the self-esteem they develop in performing specific actions or activities, encouragements, support and nurturing from their parents and surrounding coupled with circumstances of events they encounter. This implies development of a deeper understanding of the trend of local citizen journalism by taking into account the motivation that nurtures the citizen journalist's decision to venture in journalism practices. Thus, future actions should also be given on the aspect of teaching and educating the younger generation on journalism ethics at an early age.

## Keywords

Youth Citizen Journalist, Career, Experience, Citizen Journalism

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## 1. Introduction

As citizen journalists, these people are more than just involved in response to comments; they publish news coverage that addresses issues important to them or their societies, and they carry on specific media duties as they see fit. The re-

port can document a single moment, be sporadic or be generated regularly (Roberts, 2019; Wall, 2015). Emerging journalism mechanisms and resources embraced by citizens via the Internet happening worldwide, particularly young people, indicate efforts to absorb the inadequacy of traditional media and to increase the chance for citizen journalists to respond more and take action based on their life experiences to resolve current gaps (Balaraman & Ibrahim, 2013; Lim, 2013). Personal communication technology and its related networks allow an increasing number of people to serve as citizen journalists (Kaufhold, Valenzuela, & De Zúñiga, 2010; Allan & Peters, 2020). People are moving dramatically from being just recipients of journalism to being contributors (Boczkowski & Peer, 2011; Bruns, Highfield, & Lind, 2012). However, given a robust and growing scholarship on citizen journalism, little attention has been paid to what motivates the citizen journalism to get involved in news reporting.

In particular, as far as citizen journalism is concerned, several studies refer to the reception of citizen journalism (Holton, Coddington, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013; Kaye & Johnson, 2004; Shao, 2009), but no study directly examines the motivations and the subsequent actions of citizen journalists. Much of the study focus on the motivation and behaviour in writing (Guynes, 2017) and lack of attention has been given concerning the motivations that lead to their choices in becoming citizen journalist, especially among youth. As a career choice, according to Robertson (2014) and Bubić and Ivanišević (2016), is a critical challenge in youth life, as it is implied to be associated with future results in psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities that continue well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life, the concern should be given on how this particular group of youth decided to become a citizen journalist.

Besides, despite the overall optimistic outlook for the role of youth as citizen journalists, the effectiveness of their efforts remains uncertain (Mahamed et al., 2018). Although Dugan (2008) argued that citizen journalism could supplement what professional journalists have achieved, still Dugan (2008) believed that it would not replace professional reporting. Thus, the profession as a citizen journalist may not have a promising future for this group of youth. Besides, as known that this particular profession is sometimes accompanied with "the lack of dependence on the central presence of third-party organizations" (Baker & Blaagaard, 2016: p. 8), the real factor that makes many youth citizens are eager to be part of this growing communities are indeed questionable.

Moreover, news practitioners have also been critical of citizen journalists, seeing them as individuals who lack media experience, knowledge and organizational affiliation. Some view the citizen journalists as creating and disseminating on the existing journalism profession (Chung, Nah, & Yamamoto, 2018; Holt & Karlsson, 2015). Nevertheless, citizen journalism has grown in the last decade of the twentieth century, along with the advancements of technologies (Miller, 2019). Thus, urged details studies on the real motivations that lead to their decision in becoming a citizen journalist.

Furthermore, despite the growing literature on citizen journalism, very little

was learned about how and why citizen journalist groups embarked into this journey. As the impact of career choice has a lasting impact on the individual and serves as a predictor and determinant of their prospective level of income, the nature of work, and thus leaves a mark on the individual's personality, demeanor and outlook (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017) a wrong decision that can change the fate of a person. Given its scope, it is then a matter of understanding this youth citizen journalist deciding on becoming a citizen journalist is indeed crucial. Thus this article attempt to describe the experiences influencing youth's choice to become citizen journalists in Malaysia. This is to display the essence of significance of their involvement as citizen journalists based on their personal understanding and experience. Hence the research question is examined using phenomenological approach to help the researcher understand the phenomenon through the eyes of the informants as youth citizen journalists themselves. Previous researchers only discuss the output (articles written by citizen journalists) but did not understand the essence of them choosing to practice as citizen journalists.

#### **Describing Citizen Journalists**

Journalism has been reserved for a small few with adequate professional training (e.g. a degree in journalism or equivalent training) and appropriate tools for delivering news stories to readers and viewers for the century (Jalli, 2020). It is an elite practice that many people still believe to be the most trusted way to get around that described by scholars as a practice of producing and disseminating accurate and reliable news on contemporary affairs (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999; Jalli, 2020) and before the Internet, only individuals who had earned formal journalism training were considered journalists (Gillmor, 2006; Jalli, 2020). The Internet has made it possible for people around the world to have access to a wide range of online information which includes information on "classified" data as well as material deemed "sensitive" by the government (Jalli, 2020), thus create a new group of journalist form by the citizen itself. The idea of citizen reporting has been discussed in length with prominent scholars such as Antonopoulos, Konidaris, Polykalas, and Lamprou (2020) and Nah and Yamamoto (2019) have explained the phenomenon in essence projected a more active civic consciousness and involvement as citizen journalists as nation building and community development. Citizen journalists determine their contribution as civic development.

The construction of telecommunications infrastructures has positively influenced the growth of citizen journalism around the world. Citizen journalism, however, is a broadly defined concept with a range of names—participatory journalism, guerrilla journalism, and open-source journalism, among others (Jurrat, 2012), Bowman and Willis (2003) viewed citizen journalism as good journalism practised by people where they "play an active part" in the process of gathering, publishing, analyzing and disseminating news and knowledge (p. 9). Later, Albarado (2012) defined citizen journalism as a type of journalistic activi-

ty carried out by individuals with no professional background.

The existence of the citizen journalist has been associated as a medium in expressing citizen opinion that opposed traditional media coverage. However, their effort has been criticized. Critics have argued that there are problems concerning credibility, accountability, objectivity and authenticity of the news reported by this citizen journalist (Gillmor, 2006; Allan & Thorsen, 2009). Professional journalists, who are skeptical about the capacity of untrained individuals to produce credible news, have questioned how viewers will know if the news produced by such “reporters” is trustworthy and based on accurate facts still, the numbers of news and article produced by citizen journalist increase along with receive visitors’ hit.

The interest of citizen journalism practices and alternative media platforms are more evident amongst the younger generation as they found traditional media capacity has become less appealing with the trustworthiness of these traditional platforms being questioned hence creating news—avoidance habits among this segment of the population. This trend also is evident in Europe and Asia. Young people also prefer compact news that catered to their interests, specific motivations and more flexible gatekeeping practices that allows more interaction on the platform itself. Therefore, younger members of the society are keener to instructiveness and personalization of news based on topics that appeal to the generation (Klopfenstein Frei, Wyss, Gnach, & Weber, 2022; Aharoni, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2021).

The issue of trust was also the determining factor the younger generation have been avoiding news particularly produced by traditional media platforms. They are searching for alternative avenues including by your fellow citizen journalist on personal or community platforms. And the news consumption behavior diverts from traditional form of news (Robinson, Jensen, & Dávalos 2021).

Many news reports produced by citizen journalists can be found on social media sites especially by the much more tech savvy younger generations such as in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp. According to Jalli (2020), often the content generated by these citizen journalists has been picked up by major media outlets as part of their news coverage for a specific day. In Malaysia, citizen journalism content can be found primarily on personal blogs or websites and on social media. In the early 2000s, before the advent of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, personal websites or blogs became popular with Internet users (Jalli, 2020; Wu, 2020).

Later, citizens’ journalism has been seen as one of the factors that influence political change in Malaysia. Scholars claimed that the two most recent general elections (GE13 and GE14) were social media elections (Sani & Azizuddin, 2014). Political content was posted on social media platforms to instigate political discussions on politics, although there were many claims that citizen reporters often circulated fake news during the election period. However, other scholars have argued that both sides of the political spectrum (Barisan Nasional and

Pakatan Harapan) used social media strategically via cyber troops with more significant influence during GE13 and GE14 (Sani & Azizuddin, 2014). Thus, the objective of this study is to investigate the motivation that leads to Malaysia's youth citizen journalists' decision in becoming a citizen journalist. Are they really driven by political changes happening in the country or there are more aspects of life beyond political ground that set their root for information sharing thus motivate them to identify themselves as citizen journalists in response to just using journalistic processes to convey information or they have a bigger direction and nuances that made them keen to practice as youth citizen journalists'.

The practice of journalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is at its most critical point to necessarily re look at functions of journalistic practice and social responsibility rather than just making money. In a study with Thailand as the background, the study highlights the need for journalism practitioners, academician and policy-makers to embrace more significant citizen participation in journalism and communication processes and deliveries as the development of digital citizenship aligned with the current demands for news and information which sometimes cause interruption and questions even confusions over the quality and functions of journalists and communicators compared to the ones that is produced by ordinary citizens in the competitive age of modern digital technology (Intaratat, 2021).

Picone (2011) drew on the scope of news use for news groups, blogs, and citizen journalism participants to emulate Bruns (2009) in an attempt to expand the produsage theory. However, for the current study, the focus is more on informants who are themselves youth citizen journalists. Bruns's (2009) produsage theory was later extended using Picone's (2011) model of the motivational, situational, and social factors shaping productive news use. Hence the study attempts to expand this theory though the essences derived from youth citizen journalists' experiences.

With this premise, the researcher explored whether youth citizen journalism in Malaysia matched more closely the original approach of Bruns (2009) or that of Picone (2011), or indeed whether their own combination of experience determined their role as youth citizen journalists. The interest to be involved as citizen journalist is seen to go beyond user generated content and blossom into strong sense of citizen empowerment. more emphasis on the Produsage theory can be seen as citizens become more active in participatory in citizen tree engagement for the betterment of local communities and their immediate surroundings with them taking charge of communicative journalistic practices as an evolution of user generated content (Picone, 2017). In recent times Produsage has been recognized as one of the ways explaining digital newsgathering as the newsrooms are getting more reliant on audience content with the news from below as prescribed in the phenomenological model for digital news, which explains the relevance pin-point time, space and socio-cultural relevance as fun-

damental categories of interest when re looking at meaning—making of news, perhaps connecting them to what is close to them in terms of perception in practices on a daily basis. Description of such concept translates the meaning of news consumption and interaction into a meaningful methodological approach to understand journalistic practices and news consumption from the audience—non journalists' perspective (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021) Thus, an exploratory study would complement the quest to explore the phenomenon through the essence of experiences emerge from the analysis presented in this article.

## 2. Methodology

This phenomenological study attempt to explore Creswell (2013) promotes the use of phenomenology to help actively evaluate informants' experiences in a framework that allows for a consistent evaluation of these experiences in a variety of fields, including nursing, health sciences, psychology, and education. Therefore, for this analysis, the researcher followed transcendental phenomenology in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the phenomena investigated. The informants in the study were young citizen journalists from a range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, with the main emphasis on presenting a useful and practical analysis of their knowledge of citizen journalists. As a tool for ensuring the reliability of the report, the researcher chose to use the audit trail to determine the quality of the results. In this context, the researcher has shown in detail how each phase of the research process has been carried out, from the initial stages through the selection, review, presentation and discussion of the data associated with the audit trail according to Flood (2010).

The phenomenological aspects of the study were further demonstrated by the narratives shared by the informants in which generated three themes associated with the object being and purpose of this study. To highlight ways and instances that make them wanted to contribute as citizen journalists

The key data collection process included 14 informants, ranging from the management of citizen journalist sites such as CJ.MY, The Vocket and The Patriots, as well as their communication based on the characteristics of the sample (Snowball Sampling) and was held from March 2017 to the end of May 2017. The interviews later were conducted at various locations in Malaysia, depending on the comfort and choice of the informants. The researcher reached data saturation after the 14th informant had no new codes which were consistent with Bowen (2008), which Merriam (2009) suggestion of saturation. According to Bowen (2008) and Merriam (2009), the number of informants participating in the analysis depends on the method of comparing codes and categories in the refinement of each case (informant) and, where the code repeats itself, the procedure must be assumed to have reached data saturation.

The initial immersion in data and coding was performed manually; a further read-through and transfer of codes to ATLAS.ti were then carried out, and the study proceeded using the same program. Member tests were also carried out to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the transcripts.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### Colorful Background of Youth Citizen Journalists Careers

A total of 14 informants, each of whom played a role as a citizen journalist to some degree, were between the ages of 25 and 40, with different educational backgrounds (Table 1). Below are the descriptions, affiliations and perceptions of the informants.

#### The Youth Citizen Journalist decision to become citizen journalist

Based on the study results, the researcher found that experience in action, people and event contributed to informants' choice to become citizen journalists. The study revealed that their experience had driven them in this direction. Topics arising from the acts, people, and event they have taken, encounter or experience have given rise to their involvement in becoming young citizen journalists. The theme of the study thus demonstrates as below Figure 1.

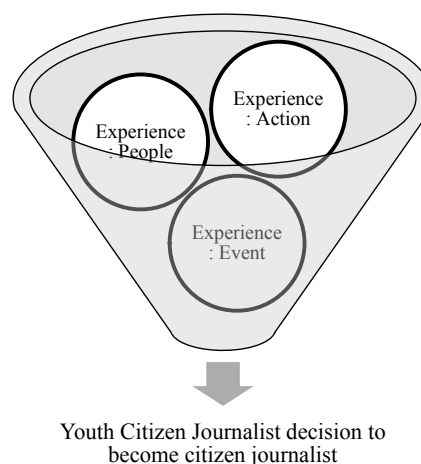
**Table 1.** Demographic profile of informants.

No	Name	Age	Education	Career	Affiliation as Citizen Journalist	Experience as Citizen Journalist	Topics	Remarks
1	Darsh	26	Bachelor in Marketing Communication	Marketing Communication Executive	Personal <i>CJ.MY</i>	2 years (2013-2014)	Trends, Urban festivals	<i>CJ.MY</i> website, Facebook
2	Hud	34	Bachelor in Human Development	Social Research Officer	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	14 years (2003-)	Malay culture and philosophy	Blog to Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
3	Nur	26	Master in Halal Products	Student Tuition Tutor	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	2 Years (2016-)	Student experiences in leaning math, Microbiology	Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
4	Dan	33	Master in Finance and Risk Management	Banker	Personal <i>The Patriots</i>	14 years (2003-)	Defense and military	Blog, <i>The Patriots</i> , Facebook
5	Jay	33	Bachelor in Quantity Surveying	Businessman	Founder of <i>The Patriots</i>	5 years (2012-)	Malay culture, Nation-building	<i>The Patriots</i> , Facebook
6	Mus	25	Medical degree (M.D.) (Egypt)	Houseman	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	10 years (2007-)	Travel, Gadgets, Business and finance	Blog to Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
7	Faiz	31	Medical degree (M.D.) (Russia)	Financial Planner ( <i>takaful</i> )	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	10 years (2007-)	Travel, Financial planning	Blog to Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
8	Kamchan	40	Diploma in Civil Engineering (Japan)	Civil Engineer	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	2 years (2006-2008) (OF) 2 years (2016-)	Hobbies, Japanese culture and practices	Online forum to Facebook blog, <i>The Vocket</i>



## Continued

9	A. D.	33	Bachelor (field not disclosed)	Freelance Writer	Co-founder of <i>The Vocket</i> /Citizen journalist	2 years (2014-)	Business, Parenting, Health, General info	<i>The Vocket</i> , Personal Facebook
10	Cikgu	39	Bachelor in Human Development	Teacher	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	2 years (2016-)	Education, Student experiences, Syllabus development	Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
11	Ira	31	Master in Education Policy and Globalization (Finland)	Government Officer	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	3 years (2015-)	Education, Travel, Finland	Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
12	Naem	31	Medical degree (M.D.)	Doctoral Candidate	Personal <i>The Vocket</i>	4 years (2014-)	Travel health	Facebook, <i>The Vocket</i>
13	Ash	35	Master in TVET	Government Officer	Personal <i>The Patriots</i>	Can't remember exact year; always loved writing since young	<i>Adatperpatih</i> , TVET	Facebook, <i>The Patriots</i>
14	Gana	33	Degree in Mechanical Engineering	Video Documentary Production	Project Manager <i>CJ.MY</i>	5 years (2013-)	Community stories, Positivity	<i>CJ.MY</i> website, Facebook



**Figure 1.** Key themes.

### Experience: Actions

Many of the informants have linked their decision to become a citizen journalist to their past actions or experiences in certain activities and events. The informants recognized action as an activity that accumulates over time and develops their interest in becoming young journalists. Based on the finding, informants of the study believed that their long develop activities in certain areas had developed personal self-esteem that makes them confident to opt for the profession as a citizen journalist. They believed past extensive repeated action in per-



forming specific activities act like their experience in performing their duties as a citizen journalist. Extract from the interview as follows:

*For me, it's reading. Reading and writing. Purely that. I don't know. That interest kind of just there. I think it was part of me and my thought process. The next thing to do is share. Never an influence from anyone else. And I read from multiple sources or read just one level. I read also the strategic initiative level kind of things, like go deeper into things, how diplomacy works in given situations, something like that. Never just one source. (Dan)*

Dan referred to reading and writing as components that shaped his interest, as youth citizen journalism has been in his life for so long that it comes almost naturally to him. He credited this exposure and part of his thinking process with his choice to become a citizen journalist. While, Ash, a citizen journalist that holds Master Degree in TVET, has implied that his vast experience and interest in writing, coupled with the technology that allows him to discover the small niche which shares his interests, enables him to address topics that excite the reader that values knowledge and issues. His experience and exposure influence his choice to become a citizen journalist. With technology advancement, he can reach a wider audience than he used to. They could even talk about issues or even agree to disagree as long as the issues are justified. Extract from Ash interview are as follows:

*Haa...like I mentioned, I can't remember when I really started writing. Reading and writing have always been something I enjoyed more than just a hobby. But with today's technological change excites me even more, as not only I share what I love, but now I found a focus group, a group of people that will appreciate and value the things I share, my opinion, a group of audience that consider what I write and value my opinion about an issue. We even agree to disagree on some critical points of some of the issues presented with reasoning and justification. That helps my interest to share with others grow, because I know people read and give their response to what I write. So that itself boosts my spirit to do more as a citizen journalist, become more passionate to do this more often and to be a better citizen journalist and writer. (Ash)*

Meanwhile, another participant, Darsh, sees her work as a citizen journalist as catalyzed by her experience of reading and writing, which ultimately takes her to CJ.MY and Citizen Journalism. According to Darsh:

*Yeah, I think my overall life experience. I have always been someone with words, that kind of person, since I was young. I used to read a lot as a little girl. I used to write a lot in university for various reasons. I think these two things build up my interest to join CJ.MY for internship and embark in citizen journalism. (Darsh)*

The act of reading was cited several times by the informants in the present study as part of their education, which sparked their interest and led them to venture into citizen journalism. The researcher noted that the form and amount of material read while growing up may have affected their subjects of choice and their approach as citizen journalists.

Dan, for example, has read newspapers and military-related articles from a young age, so his articles have been related to military and current affairs. While Ash has been reading about *adat pepatih* since he was young, he is now writing about it as a citizen journalist. The variety of materials and the kind of education they have received since the young have affected their choice to become youth citizen journalists.

Others equate their experience as young citizen journalists with their experience of accepting technological change and the growth and development of the social media age. Hud, a youth citizen journalist, believed that, although he is not from a journalism background, the experience he felt as a student representative has created his interest in writing and led to his decision to get involved in journalism as a citizen journalist. Extract from the interview as follows:

*Though I was not from journalism background, at the time I was known for my interest in campus politics and student activism. Plus, during the time, BlogSpot was just established and introduced, and what I found that BlogSpot is a perfect space for me to write, share my idea and thoughts and interact with others. The fact that I can produce and edit my own story with blogging initially, that makes me excited to write. The early days of blogging, I shared a lot of student politics and campus news. Yes, at first, I use blogging to put the ideas and news forward. That's the story. Profoundly due to personal interest. Until 2008, my interest was into campus and national politics, and all my thoughts and ideas were shared on my blog akalmuda.com. I wrote on that blog for a few years until 2009. After that, then came Facebook. That was and still is my main medium till now. (Hud)*

Besides Hud, Mus, another young citizen informant, echoed that his involvement in technology, interactivity and technological change in his actions and in the topic, he chose as a citizen journalist. Mus stated that:

*In 2007, in my form 2, I think started with blogging about gadgets and computer-fix DIY. After a few years, I switched to Facebook, and I found it convenient to share things. In the future, I have plans to go for video. Now I started with video, particularly in sharing my in-flight experience. (Mus)*

Ira recounted similar initial stumbles with citizen journalism. Ira stated that:

*I was in Finland, because I was studying at that time and, emm, being a student, I have plenty of time sort of [giggle], so I mean like I did it, because it was my emm final year of my Masters studies and I have plenty of time, because it was just like writing thesis and I have...aaa...I have no classes at all, so you know I had time, and I was writing, and then I also wrote about my experience in Finland, and I thought it was like something different, because a lot of people they were wondering about Finland, like you know, like they've never heard of anyone going to Finland. So, when I wrote about Finland, and you know so many people respond positively to it. (Ira)*

These quotations indicate that the informants initially drive by their experience in certain areas as a topic that leads them to be involved in journalism as a

citizen journalist. Although, some of the informants utilized their free time to write, yet the benefit of their writing from their point of view is beneficial to others and sparked their interest to continue writing as a citizen journalist in respective topics or areas. These significant actions as described by the informants as examples from the interviews provided insights to actions that motivate them to become citizen journalist. Some informants discover this specific action gradually and casually. While others such as *Mus* have a very specific action and thoughts that he thought would benefit others when he this time to share his articles.

Besides that these informants also shared the significance of the platforms they use and they technological transition from the early days of their practice as citizen journalists up to social media era where there are using specific online platforms as well as their personal Facebook to share their citizen journalism articles has also influence their actions and decisions to remain as active youth citizen journalists.

Based on the finding the experience felt by the informants has become the internal and external influence that influence their choice to become youth citizen journalists. The actions that influence their choices depended on their exposure and informed the decision they took as a response to their actions. Most of these informants initially stumbled upon citizen journalism, without knowing that their experience and activities would lead them to this niche group of journalism.

### **Experience of People**

Next, the informants discussed the experiences of people who have partly inspired them to become young citizen journalists. Majority of the informant suggests that their family members have helped to cultivate their option to become youth citizen journalists. In this context, the family members included the parents and the spouse. At least four informants talked about how their father specifically shaped their interest and developed their curiosity about becoming a young citizen journalist. Among the extract are as follows:

*I think, for me, my dad, as he had bought me encyclopedia sets of interesting topics, and I become this avid reader, like the space and what not. That nurtured my interest and appreciation for information and exploration. And when we have too much information to digest, a lot of toughs form in the process, and to me the best way to materialize these ideas is by producing and output in writing. My talent in writing blooms when I was influenced by my friend from the put me out, from the mischievous period of my life. He was the one that introduced me to student activism and more active in writing and sharing information. (Hud)*

*Reading is something cultivated from home. My dad is a scholar himself. He reads predominantly, though both of my parents enjoy reading. I found that I follow my dad's choice of topics and reading materials. Aaa...in our house back then (now my parents' house), my father initiated a library. We do have a library*

*in my parent's house, etc. (Ash)*

*Watching news on TV was like a routine since young. My dad trained us 8 p.m. every day, everybody watches the news. He also familiarized me with newspapers. The only article...long articles 2 or 3 pages that I can read, articles written by Tun Mahathir. I love his writing. My ideologies and stand and patriotism were actually hugely influenced by Mahathir and because of that was the reason why I cannot accept his current stand right now. (Jay)*

*Yeah, yeah. My dad always asked me to question everything. So, and he will always like, is it? Oh really? And like that you know like, so I was like "Oh, ok," like I have to rethink about this. So, from young I was, you know, quite familiar with like questioning everything. Keep asking, be curious. So, I have no problem with emm like when something happens, and I would like to rethink about it and also like to share with other people, because I, I'm, I'm always very curious to see what people think about stuff, because sometimes I would aaa have a different opinion. (Ira)*

From these quotations, it is fair to say that the fathers of the informants provided the atmosphere and facilitation that led them to be the people they are today. Their fathers set out rules and routines, such as reading a newspaper and having a mini-library, to foster such interest and curiosity in things, and to instill a hunger for knowledge and truth.

Meanwhile, other informants replied in more general terms, citing their parents without referring either to their mother or their father as a particular influence on their involvement in becoming a citizen journalist.

Besides, a few informants were reordered to say that outsiders, such as friends and mentors, encouraged and encouraged them to improve their journalistic skills and writing style. Naem said confidently that his friends had encouraged him to become a citizen journalist. He stated that:

*It's actually my recent hobby. I think a lot of my friends also encouraged me to do this because they know I have knowledge about many topics and capability to do so. I was surprised at the suggestion at first but I continue to do it with their encouragement. It's quite new for me. It's because I want to do something different, because previously my hobby is study. Betul. Now, I think I need to open my mind. (Naem)*

Mus also recalled that the support of his friends made him interested in writing and citizen journalism, as he had been away from boarding school from a very young age. The encouragement of his friends has carried out his interest until now. In many ways, his friends have had a great impact on his life as he's been away from the family from a young age. Extract from the interviews as follows:

*I can say maybe from my friends, maybe. I have a friend, a friend I know via online, and I didn't meet him for a very long time. I only first met him during my wedding day. I can say I am one of his core followers. He used to write a lot during that time about computers, especially the software, the how to on Win-*

*dows. So, I love what he writes, and I tried on his how-to steps on computer-related stuff, and I tried to be like him, because he is, I can say, pioneer in blogging and sharing of useful information to others. So, I bring the same spirit with me. Until now, I still value his passion about technology, coz you know during the blogging days, 2007 I think, these so-called technologies were expensive. I like his approach on writing, as he always features how to tweak, tips and tricks, so I just follow his pattern and flow in writing now, and I used to follow step-by-step on the tips and tricks he shared, and it can be done. So, ya. For example, you want to format computer, you follow his steps, you can do it by yourself. At the time, formatting a laptop cost more than RM 60. I tried to do it myself so I save money, so that's how he kinda inspired me to share info with others, and his writing style also influence me quite a bit as a blogger and now citizen journalist via Facebook. (Mus)*

Based on the finding, it indicates that the people have influenced the majority of the informants that they are close to in life neither by instilling habits, developing hobbies and receiving encouragement had influenced their decision in becoming citizen journalists. The informants highlighted the significance of immediate family members that nurtured the starting point and interest to become citizen journalists besides supporting the journey from blogging days for example to contributing to specific platforms such *The Vocket* or *The Patriots* to channeling the same content to their personal social media accounts particularly Facebook.

#### **Experience of Events**

Several of the informants noted that their citizen journalistic efforts deepened when a specific event occurred in their lives, which made them value their experience and more committed to getting involves in citizen journalism.

For Dan, for example, the Lahad Datu incident was a factor in bringing his citizen journalist's efforts to a different level. It encouraged him to write more and share his knowledge of Malaysian protection in order to educate the public and make them more appreciative of the reality of the accident, as someone close to him had lost a family member in the tragedy. The event made him realize that Malaysians need to learn more about national security and some basic appreciation and understanding of the lives of these unsung heroes. Dan recorded saying that:

*I know that been writing for a long I time, I think the most significant thing that really keep me going like a trailblazer after the Lahad Datu incident. It made me a better citizen journalist. That incident was really significant in letting people know, urging people to understand about national defense before start blaming others. The public need to be aware of national safety and to have basic understanding of the unsung heroes protecting the country. But ya, it is some sort of quite personal for me also, because one of the deceased is actually the husband of my former colleague. He was supposed to come back to K[uala] L[umpur]. His duty in Samporna was over. He was supposed to fly back, because*

*that Sunday was supposed to be his wedding anniversary, but when he got the information that terrorist suspected to be in a village, he followed them in and he was killed. His death led to the writing of the article, which I would share with you later, and from that article a few of us decided to continue writing, because it is helping the people, hmm the public, to understand better what Malaysian defense actually needs. It's not just having the right information, moves, which has bigger balls [is brave enough] to say the truth. Some of us writers have moved away from we need to buy this equipment, that equipment. Many of us in this field begin to study why and how this fit into the defense doctrine? How does it help our country? Rather than okay, this looks nice in the flying pass. It changes my perspective and why I should do this. Yes. (Dan)*

While Nur noted her experience of attending a television (TV) interview as an event that made her aware that her strength is working behind the screen instead of at the front of the camera, this led to her decision to engage in youth citizen journalism. Nur saying that:

*Then, during the TV host interview, they asked me about current affairs. At the time, I was reading something about [Language is the heart of a nation—Malay idiom] from Gen Q magazine, then I was asked what is your real hobby? I guess you must have a blog, right? I said no [giggles, changes tone of voice]. I was quite embarrassed about it, actually [more giggles]. After that, I thought, maybe more suitable doing something behind the scenes and write instead. So here I think this event really deeply influenced my interest in writing and citizen journalism on many different levels. (Nur)*

The significant events described by Dan and Nur for example, highlights the importance of how such events influence definition making for them to become contributors in the citizen journalism scene. They have used the observation and experience of these events to reexamine their contributions as citizens and saw citizen journalism as one outlet for them to achieve the goals to build a better society and give back to the nation.

Observations by the researcher indicated that the activities and responses of important people in their lives have improved informants' willingness to participate more as citizen journalists. The researcher noted that, following the events mentioned in the quotations, the informants had a new meaning in terms of the importance they attached to writing and becoming a citizen journalist.

The findings of the study has indicated that a mixture of behavior, individuals, and essential events in youth citizen journalist lives nurtured their curiosity and lead to their motivation and decision in becoming a citizen journalist. The three emerging themes show what shaped their interest as citizen journalists: actions, people, and events were the essence of their experience as young citizen journalists. This is also strengthened by social cognitive experiences or role models working in specific career may influences people in choosing types of career or undertakings even the decision was not to pursue it professionally and embraces its

practices and processes (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). As the informants have considered their tenure as citizen journalists a positive task that had a positive experience with them and focus on the areas that were proven success and achieved positive self-esteem and contribution to greater society.

This also promotes transfer of knowledge and skills via journalistic practices though the informants didn't go to journalism school nor received formal exposure to journalism education. Yet it seems from the findings presented there are finding ways to explore experiences related to their journalistic endeavors. Also, according to Kazi and Akhlaq (2017), a stem from life experiences are also linked to different career options and the longevity of a specific profession. Thus, supported the finding outcomes that suggest experience influenced on this young citizen journalist choice. Besides, these experiences helped them to become better people and citizens, and thus fueled a drive to contribute as young citizen journalists. This notion also supported by Picone (2011) concepts of extended produsage. This shaped their essences of the phenomenon with similarities of the (Picone, 2011) model of self-production with life experiences as emerging theme extended to the model. However contrary to popular belief, majority of informants participated in this study are less politically driven than topic driven. Their work is based on their knowledge and interests and may not be directly derived from the mass media. Typically, it has soft news value or develops from stories that are close to their interest and knowledge, allowing them to offer another angle based on what they know and to check the facts and crediting the sources they used to complete their articles. These encounters have helped to construct the characters of the informants and these instances, stemming from the personal determinants discussed in this study have influenced the course of these citizen journalists and the material they create. The acknowledgement of their experience and exposure neither directly nor indirectly with journalism, coupled with the specific event and people encouragements has dramatically influenced their decision in becoming a citizen journalist. The finding also revealed the role of experience in youth citizen journalist is more than just creating and influences their interest in citizen journalist but also shaping their interest on the topics that they chose to share with others.

The findings of this study demonstrate the premise in which youth citizen journalism it's not going away as small youth and more platforms are expected to flourish with further indication of social mobilization under digital citizenship and the application of produsage theory that helped to explain this research. Three themes generated to describe the narratives evolve among youth citizen journalists that make them interested in contributing to the movement of citizen journalism to support social mobilization and betterment of the society at large. Influence of people, events and specific actions have inspired the informants do seriously consider their involvement as citizen journalists. All of them so we are function more than just information distributors more towards mobilizes and agents of change in the society. With the three themes generated as the findings



of this study, it is significant that citizen journalism does more than just information distribution. There are multiple factors contributing to the interest and events that contribute to citizen journalism activities among different informants. Each informant has specific turning points in their lives that eventually make them decide to become youth citizen journalists. The arrangement we get from people upon reading your article and acting and reacting upon it often motivates them to keep going and pursue their passion as youth citizen journalists.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The objective of the study is to establish the motivation that leads to Malaysia's young citizen journalists' decision in becoming a citizen journalist. The study also provides affirmation about personal experience in many ways and contributes to youth contributes to journalistic process. Key contributions in the findings describe different ways of journalistic processes experienced by youth citizen journalists interviewed was triggered differently and how they earn the skills based on their experience and timeline. Thus this enriched the outcome produced by citizen journalists. The contribution to journalistic knowledge and upstanding by this study is determined by interest, events and people. Thus the notion that citizen journalists operate by reacting on current happenings was beyond expectations.

As the findings and discussion indicate habits nurtured experiences, including contact with family members, long-time interests such as hobbies, and significant events that happened in this group of youth citizen journalist had a meaningful impact in their decision. This paper implies that youth citizen journalists explore journalistic processes through personal experiences in life while developing their traits and meaning as citizen journalists. It's collection of experiences that build up and nurture the interest and choice to become citizen journalists. Thus, future actions should also be given on the aspect of teaching and educating the younger generation on journalism ethics at an early age. As the technology advance, many more citizen journalist will be born, without proper attention; this future group of potential writers and journalist might end up useless. The role of experience in shaping future generation perspectives on journalist thus need to be studied in details as the impact of the experiences will help how they will perceive journalism practices.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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