New Media and Democracy: A Review of the Public Sphere Perspective

Aliyu Awwal

PhD Candidate, Eastern Mediterranean University.

Istinye University Faculty of Communication

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*Abstract*

*In the postmodern society, Public Sphere permits members of the society to partake in, and contribute to socio-political discourse and activities through new media where opinions - informed and uninformed - may be moulded over a period of time. The public sphere’s democratic characteristics allow diversity in participation by the active audience who provide information and feedbacks to the community and its establishments through the available new media. Media Democracy increasingly indicates that the new media content is influenced and/or controlled by certain corporate and commercial interests, and it is the responsibility of media-enabled individuals in such networked societies to internalise, reflect and promote democratic standards through information dissemination, while the new media platform itself becomes and remains democratic in structure. The new media - with their accompanying issues and privileges - may invigorate the public sphere by providing platforms for individuals in the new networked society to freely discuss issues, share alternate views, make certain issues unattractive and/or elevate other issues, and to broadcast information, as well as to exchange goods and services. This study aims to review widely held definitions of the basic concepts and democratic characteristics of the new media and the public sphere, highlight the relationships between new media and democracy, and relationships between the public sphere and democracy, and to discuss Habermas’ and The Bourgeois’ conceptualizations of the public sphere. Furthermore, the roles of public sphere in a democratic new media is reviewed, and an assessment is provided in conclusion.*

*Keywords:*

*New media, democracy, public sphere, counter-public sphere, network society.*