

THE ROLE OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN THE SOUTH KOREAN ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY:  
A CASE STUDY OF TABLO FROM EPIK HIGH

Miss Nuanwan Srisaranyapong



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บทบาทของ Citizen Journalism ต่อวงการบันเทิงเกาหลีใต้: กรณีศึกษา Tablo วง Epik High



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
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ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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STUDY OF TABLO FROM EPIK HIGH  
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Thesis Advisor Emeritus Professor Chaiwat Khamchoo, Ph.D.

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Accepted by the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

..... Dean of the Graduate School  
(Associate Professor Sunait Chutintaranond, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman  
(Associate Professor Buddhagarn Rutchatorn, Ph.D.)

..... Thesis Advisor  
(Emeritus Professor Chaiwat Khamchoo, Ph.D.)

..... Examiner  
(Associate Professor Ki Soo Eun, Ph.D.)

..... External Examiner  
(Assistant Professor Wichian Intasi, Ph.D.)

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วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทของ Citizen Journalism ในอุตสาหกรรมบันเทิงประเทศเกาหลีใต้ โดยศึกษาจากกรณีข้อพิพาทความสำเร็จการศึกษามหาวิทยาลัย แสตตันพอร์ต ของศิลปินเกาหลีสัญชาติแคนาดา ทาโบล วงเอพิค ไฮ หรือ แดเนี่ยล ซอนอุง-ลี เพื่อวิเคราะห์อิทธิพลของ Citizen Journalism โดยเปรียบเทียบบทบาทของ Citizen Journalism กับสื่อกระแสหลักในกรณีดังกล่าว ทั้งนี้วิทยานิพนธ์ใช้ทฤษฎีการควบคุมทางสังคม และ เทคโนโลยีเว็บ 2.0 เป็นกรอบในการวิเคราะห์ โดยผลการศึกษาพบว่า Citizen Journalism มีบทบาทในการสืบสวนหาข้อเท็จจริง แต่เนื่องจากการขาดความรู้และการฝึกฝนในวิชาชีพสื่อสารมวลชนทำให้ในบางครั้งเกิดความผิดพลาดในการนำเสนอข่าว ซึ่งนำไปสู่การชักนำทางความคิดและความเข้าใจผิดที่ก่อให้เกิดความเสียหายต่อบุคคลในกรณีศึกษาหลายประการ ในขณะเดียวกันสื่อกระแสหลักก็มีทำหน้าที่คัดกรองและรายงานข่าวความเคลื่อนไหวของเหตุการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้น พร้อมกับแสดงหลักฐานที่ช่วยไขข้อสงสัยเพื่อเป็นระบอบกเสียงในการพิสูจน์ความบริสุทธิ์ของกรณีศึกษาด้วย

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NUANWAN SRISARANYAPONG: THE ROLE OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN THE  
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The roles of citizen journalism and mainstream media in the South Korean entertainment industry were examined, focusing on the Stanford University Diploma Controversy surrounding Daniel Seon Woong Lee known professionally as Tablo from the Epik High group, the Korean singer with Canadian nationality. Social Control Theory and Technology Web 2.0 were discussed. Results revealed that citizen journalism is crucial in the investigation process; in several cases citizen journalism without proper investigation led to a distortion of the truth and tarnished reputations. In contrast, mainstream media conveyed news truthfully, reporting the latest updates on the case with evidence proving Tablo's innocence.



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Student's Signature .....

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Advisor's Signature .....

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background and Rationale

Korean journalism and communication began in 1392 during the Choson Dynasty. Since 'the path of the speech' was emphasised in Korea, a system of 'direct communication' was introduced to impart the real purposes of the people and judgments of officials directly to the king (Maengki 2011). Later, in 1443, King Sejong (the fourth King of the Choson Dynasty) created his own Korean writing system called 'Hangeul' for his subjects, replacing the Chinese characters 'Hanja' which had been used for over 500 years. He invented 28 letters as 17 consonants and 11 vowels (24 letters in today's alphabet) (Miller 2012). In the late Choson Dynasty, the first private daily newspaper 'Tongnip Shinmun', the independent newspaper, was launched on April 4, 1896 (Kim 1996). This newspaper purported to educate and enlighten the people by focusing on nationalistic, democratic and self-reliant modernisation of thoughts. During the Choson period, Korea was frequently invaded by superior kingdoms. The press was forced to play the role of a social leader in terms of educating and recognising people with the purpose of stabilising and modernising the state.

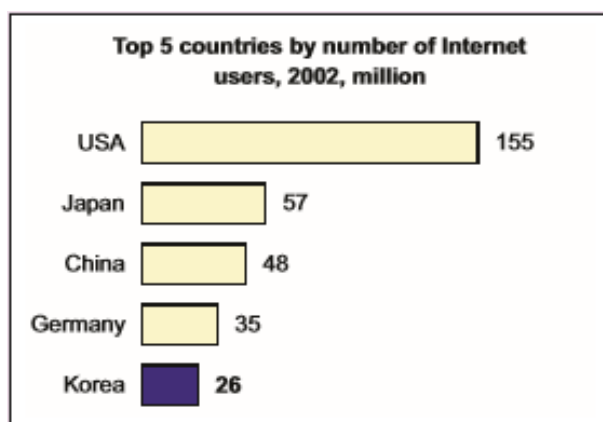
During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), freedom of the press was more often regulated than protected by laws and policies. Several Korean newspapers were launched but they were severely controlled by Japanese censors. The daily newspaper began to play the role of educators and independence fighters. The Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was signed in 1910 and the nationwide March 1st Movement

followed, demanding Choson's independence in 1919. Japanese rule tried to appease rather than suppress Korean people. In 1920, the policy of the Japanese colonial rulers changed and several Korean newspapers were permitted to publish (Chang 2004). For survival, the press during the colonial period learned to compromise with the colonial ruling powers up until 1945. Nevertheless, the Korean Peninsula had to overcome 'controlled media' continuously during the U.S. military rule (1945-1948) and military regimes in the 1960s through to the 1980s. Koreans had suffered severe government oppression for almost two decades but in 1987 presidential candidate Roh Tae Woo's capitulatory 'June 29<sup>th</sup> Declaration' was the turning point for South Korea's democratisation path. This heralded a loosening of press control and spawned a new generation of journalists eager to investigate previously sensitive issues such as the May 1980 Gwangju Democratisation Movement. During the 1990s, most of the Korean media enjoyed freedom of the press under civilian governments. Korean newspapers faced a new political environment with democratized media (Im 2002). "Freedom of the press slowly but steadily became institutionalised as democratisation continued in Korea. There was a strong indication that it was being accepted by the government as an important element of Korean democracy" (Youm 1996). The Korean media were free and they openly investigated the government.

## The first appearance of Citizen Journalism in South Korea

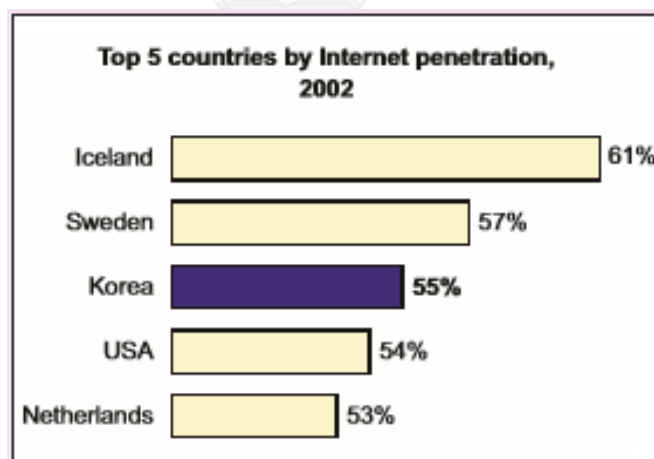
The June 29<sup>th</sup> Declaration in 1987 put the Republic of Korea on an irreversible path towards democracy, allowing the media to gain more freedom in the 1990s. The journalists became independent reporters of any preference topics. However, the unethical behaviour of some Korean journalists raised public concern, with some making informal agreements with political parties for preferential news coverage (Joyce 2007). These unethical journalists generated media bias all over the country. To overcome this issue, Oh Yeon Ho (a progressive journalist and political activist) realised that the Korean media could be reformed by increasing citizen participation. He adopted the internet as an online extension of the press in South Korea. The use of the internet in Korea passed the mark of majority with 58% of the population or 27.8 million users as of March 2002. The Nielsen Organisation ranked South Korea as one of the top five global countries by internet penetration in 2002 (Figures 1 and 2). During the 2002 World Cup fervour, several alternative sites posted live video segments and fast-breaking news quicker than the mainstream media.

Figure 1 Top five countries by number of Internet users, 2002



Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators database.

Figure 2 Top five countries by Internet penetration, 2002



Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators database.

Oh Yeon Ho decided to launch a news website called 'OhmyNews' ([www.ohmynews.co.kr](http://www.ohmynews.co.kr)) on February 22, 2000 at 2.22 pm. By 2002, the number of followers was around 350,000 users and page views reached 700,000 daily. Oh Yeon Ho claimed that the OhmyNews website was willing to allow citizens to create their own content and represent their own interests, rather than having their ideas filtered through a professional journalist. The slogan of OhmyNews is "every citizen is a reporter" (Joyce 2007).

The process on OhmyNews is different from traditional journalism. Oh Yeon Ho required non-traditional journalists for alternative news reports and assigned professional editors to increase both credibility and readability. The reporters can be in any age group but surprisingly a third of users are students with 2.9% in middle school, 4.3 % in high school, 22.4% in college and 3.8% in graduate school (Cheol 2004). Thus, means OhmyNews was revolutionary in terms of attracting the young generation to participate in political issues. If a reporter's article was published in OhmyNews they could earn up \$20, depending on where the article appeared on the site. Moreover, OhmyNews also participated in political activism especially during the election of Roh Moo Hyun. OhmyNews became the centre for online deliberation of Roh supporters. Supporters' opinions and reactions were actively posted on the website and coverage of the event was updated every 30 minutes throughout the night. To boost Roh's campaign, OhmyNews citizen reporters attacked Roh's rival candidates and promoted him as anti-Americanism which eventually led to his presidential election victory. OhmyNews created an alternative to the conservative South Korean newspapers. However, citizen journalism is not only a powerful tool in political activities but also influential in other fields.

## Citizen Journalism in South Korean Entertainment Industry

Since 2002, Korea has been ranked first in the ITU's Digital Opportunity Index. Internet usage has increased rapidly, especially among the young generation. New media productions like social network sites (SNS), online communities and blogs gained popularity with the user-generated content (USG) feature. Audiences witnessing incidents could post eyewitness accounts on the internet immediately or upload reports and photos to the website. This new media became a dominant primary source and offered a variety of contents in addition to mainstream media. However, through unrestrained journalism, the instantaneous nature of the internet and its potential global reach allows anyone with a hidden agenda to invisibly post false stories or opinions as fact which go viral in minutes. These disadvantages of citizen journalism can be harmful to innocent people in society with numerous recent incidents of false defamation through inaccurate reporting.

In the South Korean entertainment industry, Netizens as internet citizens are one of the most important factors that determine the popularity of celebrities. Netizens use the potential of the internet to make the extension of democracy a reality (Hauben). South Korean Netizens participate in online community forums which host portal websites like Naver, Daum and Nate to share common interests. Netizens tend to spread rumours on websites through a single topic and encourage discourse through comments and up/down voting. Most of the time, topics distributed by Netizens gain popularity overnight and will appear on mainstream media the next day. Rumours regarding celebrities are revealed by Netizens continually. When scandals or rumour purporting to celebrities are proved to be true, then Netizen power piles strong



pressure on the celebrities to show responsibility. However, in some cases, famous people were innocent but failed to clear their name and sometimes these events ended with tragedy. For instance, the Korean cinematic sweetheart actress Choi Jin Sil decided to commit suicide after online gossip falsely linked her to another male actor in early September 2008. Choi's death came a year after Yoo Na a Korean singer committed suicide because of cyber-bullying from Netizens about her plastic surgery. Finally, in 2010, controversy over the Stanford University's degree of Tablo the Epik High group singer with Canadian nationality, also known as Daniel Seon Woong Lee gained enormous public attention and very quickly became an extremely controversial issue. Tablo's case is slightly different from the examples mentioned above since threats from false news spread by Netizens greatly harassed both him and his family. For this reason, this incident involving Tablo is used here as a case study.

### 1.2 Research Questions

1. How different are the roles of citizen journalism and mainstream journalism?
2. How influential is citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry?

### 1.3 Research Objectives

Citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry was studied regarding the controversial case of Tablo, the Epik High group lead singer. The aims of the research were as follows:

1. To analyse the influence of citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry
2. To compare the roles of mainstream journalism and citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry
3. To evaluate both the positive and negative effects of citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry, especially for the case under study

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

1. Citizen journalism played a more influential role than mainstream journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry in a case study of Tablo the Epik High group rapper.
2. Citizen journalism had more negative than positive effects regarding the case of Tablo from Epik High group.

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#### **1.5 Scope of study**

Between 2000 and 2002, development of Web 2.0 technology migrated worldwide and the concept of citizen journalism as a new model of non-traditional journalism was introduced in South Korea. Citizen journalism as a democratic participatory media now plays a crucial role in political activities, influencing people's attitudes no less than mainstream journalism, while also arousing emotions in other fields including the South Korean entertainment industry. This thesis focused on the controversial incident during 2010-2011 involving Tablo, the lead singer in the hip-hop

band Epik High and draws comparisons between mainstream journalism and citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry. Both positive and negative aspects of citizen journalism are assessed.

### **1.6 Research Significance**

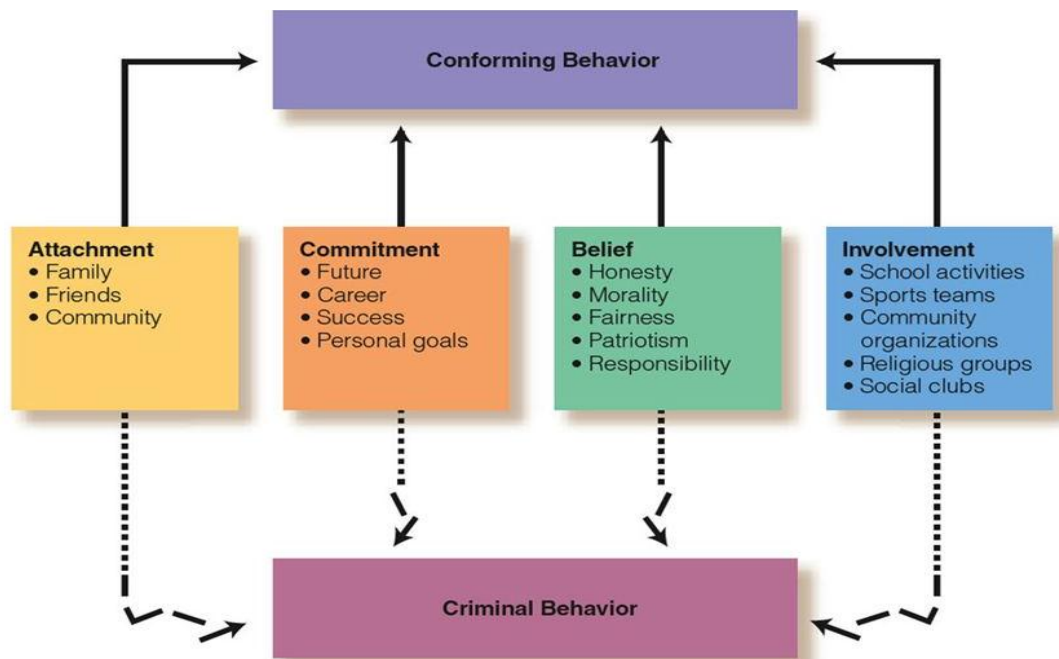
1. To develop a better understanding of the salient characteristics of citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry
2. To better appreciate the contrasting roles of mainstream journalism and citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry
3. To become more aware of the impacts of citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry

### **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

Social control theory was developed by the American sociologist Travis Hirschi in 1969 and adopted as the framework to explain the basic elements of the societal bond.

The social control theory postulates that individuals break the law due to a breakdown with their societal bond. Hirschi identified four elements which constituted the social bond as attachment, commitment, belief and involvement. His model of the four elements is presented below as Figure 3.

Figure 3 Hirschi's social bond theory



Source: Steven E. Barken, Pearson Education

1. Attachment describes an individual's consideration for, and interest in, other people.
2. Commitment refers to the time and effort invested in normal activities.
3. Belief describes acceptance to the morals and values of a society, which tend to be shared by people who reside within the same social framework.
4. Involvement in normal activity often precludes participation in illegal activity since time is insufficient to do both.

The theory of social control holds that if the bonds within a society are neither strong nor long established, crime is more likely to occur (Lilly 1995). People in society

tend to think and behave in the same manner and feel safe when they follow the majority. If someone has a different opinion, he/she does not express it openly because they are afraid of being generalised as a misfit. Social control is closely associated with the influence of citizen journalism on people's thoughts and beliefs. Citizen journalism content provided on the internet seems to mirror the opinion of the majority of online users.

### **1.8 Organization of the study**

This research consists of five chapters organised as follows:

The first presents the background, research questions, research hypotheses, research objectives, scope of the study, research significance, conceptual framework and study organisation.

The second outlines research methodology including design, procedure, data collection and analysis.

The third presents previous theories of the functions and processes of citizen journalism and mainstream journalism.

The fourth outlines the case study of Tablo, the rapper in the band Epik High. The positive and negative impacts of citizen and mainstream journalism are compared and evaluated.

The fifth makes recommendations, suggests avenues for further research and discusses other aspects of citizen journalism in different contexts.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used and describes the research design, research procedure, data collection and analysis.

#### 2.1 Research Design

The study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive explanatory research method to compare the concepts of citizen journalism and mainstream journalism. The case study concerned the education of Tablo the South Korean-Canadian rapper from the pop group Epik High. In 2010, Tablo was harassed by a group of internet users who formed an online forum called “TaJinYo”; we demand the truth from Tablo. This group of internet citizens (Netizens) raised doubts about Tablo’s academic background and started a witch-hunt which caused Tablo and his family huge problems. This case was selected as suitable to describe the citizen journalism process in the South Korean entertainment industry.

#### 2.2 Research Procedure

This demonstrated the process of citizen journalism and mainstream journalism in Tablo’s case based on the timeline of the incident from 2010 to 2011. News releases by mainstream journalism are simultaneously reported.

### 2.3 Data collection

Data were collected from various secondary sources including books and journals related to the subject matter.

The case study relied on internet social media sources and several social network platforms including South Korean community websites Naver, Soompi and Daum, online community forums as TaJinYo online, OhmyNews, Koreantimes, JoongAng Daily and Tablo's interview from the YouTube website.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

After collection, all data were analysed and discussed to test the hypotheses.



## CHAPTER III

### THEORIES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

This chapter is divided into two parts as a review of related theories and a review of related research.

#### 3.1 Related Theories

##### Social Control Theory

In the field of sociology, the idea of social control describes the manner in which people's ideas, actions, and even appearance can be influenced or directed by the rules, norms, or structural expectations of society. Without this social control, social order might not exist, and as a consequence societies would fall into chaos and disorder (Crossman 2017). When discussing social media as a means of establishing social control, Noam Chomsky explains that distraction can be a useful strategy to ensure that the public will not focus upon important decisions made by ruling elites, but will instead be drawn to attractive but insignificant alternative stories (Kung 2013).

The principal defining elements of social control can be described as follows:

- Social control is defined as the control exerted over individuals by the wider society.



- Social control exerts its influence via coercion, public opinion, religion, political pressure, and so forth.

- It is the community which is the source of the power exerted via social control.

- Social control has been a facet of human existence since the beginning of human societies and is thus an essential characteristic of any group.

- All societies exert pressure on individuals which can be classed as social control.

- One goal of social control is to regulate activity for the greater benefit of the whole group and every individual within the group.

In addition, there are different agency types which can exert social control through various mechanisms. These agencies can be categorized in two main types:

The first type is informal social control, whereby individuals become socialized to follow the norms of their society and to adhere to the prevailing systems of belief. This social framework is created and used to exert control by family members, schoolteachers, caregivers, friends and colleagues, and other people in positions of authority.

The second type is formal social control, whereby individuals are forced to comply with certain rules and regulations by the state, through its various institutions,

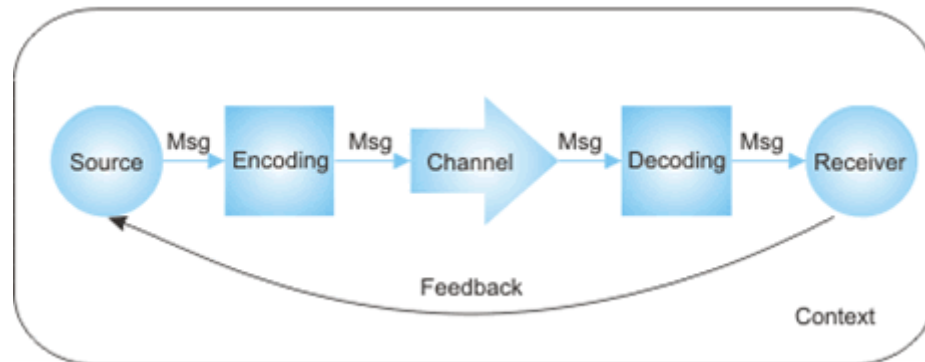
such as the police, the military, and other government agencies which serve to uphold standards of law and order.

### **Web 2.0 Technologies**

The introduction of Web 2.0 came around 2003 courtesy of Tim O'Reilly, who defined the technology as an extended network platform which would work across multiple interconnected devices. The principal benefits of Web 2.0 applications are accrued by the users. The software is constantly receiving updates as it develops and improves through further use. It allows data from many sources to be remixed through a format that allows users to submit and remix their own data thus creating network effects via what O'Reilly (2007) called the "architecture of participation".

Furthermore, much of the communication which arises under Web 2.0 technology takes a two-way form, thereby allowing photos, videos, and other informational content to be created and shared (Lefebvre 2007).

Figure 4 Two – way communication model



Source: [www.communitydoor.org](http://www.communitydoor.org)

Two-way communication allows the exchange of information between two parties, who both send and receive data. The participants cooperate to ensure the smooth flow of information, and their interactions can be readily observed through social media platforms such as twitter or facebook. In such cases the information is rarely posted in order to have it stand alone; instead, it is expected that replies, comments, and other reactions such as further sharing will be stimulated by the original post. This technology Web 2.0 is not only creates new type of communication, but it also creates new type of journalist which is citizen journalist.

### Definition of Citizen Journalism

There are many definitions of citizen journalism which have been published since the phenomenon first appeared. No particular one of these, however, has yet

been wholly accepted to cover every eventuality. Different authors have suggested slightly differing ideas in accordance with the original purpose of the writer (Lewis 2010). One brief summary of the consensus, however, would be that citizen journalism involves ordinary, non-professional citizens in gathering and publishing news through sharing their knowledge and information with others (Carr 2014).

Following the successful launch of the World Wide Web during the 1990s, rapid growth of blogs enabled passive receivers to switch roles as active participants (Riaz 2011). Ordinary people found their voices and shared content with the integrated media (Lasica 2003). This permits anyone to become a reporter, or so-called “non-traditional journalist”. It is then possible to report news stories, and use the latest technology to upload text, pictures, and video via a range of portable devices and social media platforms.



### **Features and Functions of Citizen Journalism**

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has significantly benefitted citizen journalism and helped it to prosper. The development of social media has allowed citizens to become journalists with no need for training and accreditation. In particular, citizen journalism has been strongly supported by chat rooms, message boards, blogs and the growth in mobile communications (Salawu 2011). There are six types of media now available for citizen journalists to distribute their content (Lasica 2003):

1. Audience Participation: people can add their own comments to blogs or news items and can add photo or video footage produced from their own mobile devices.

2. Independent Websites: people can provide news or information to such websites, including consumer reviews or complaints.

3. Fully Developed Participatory News Website: One example of this type of site would be the OhmyNews website.

4. Collaborative Media Sites: People can make their contribution to sites such as Slashdot or Kuro5hin.

5. “Thin Media”: “this category includes email or newsletters, where the target recipients are more limited in number.

6. Personal Broadcasting Sites: these sites include broadcasting platforms such as Kenradio.

In addition, four further characteristics have been observed which pertain to the community websites which major news organizations have created, according to Williams, Gillmor and Mackay:

1. User-Generated Content (UGC): this is a widespread model, whereby users can post their own news, pictures, stories, videos, etc. upon the website of a major

news organization. While the users gain no individual recognition, they can contribute content which benefits the public and the news organization's brand.

2. Blog Hub: this is similar to the UGC approach but has one major difference. Once the content has been submitted, the blog hub model allows the contributor their own place on the website with its own URL to present all of that contributor's content, thus allowing the participant to gain greater recognition.

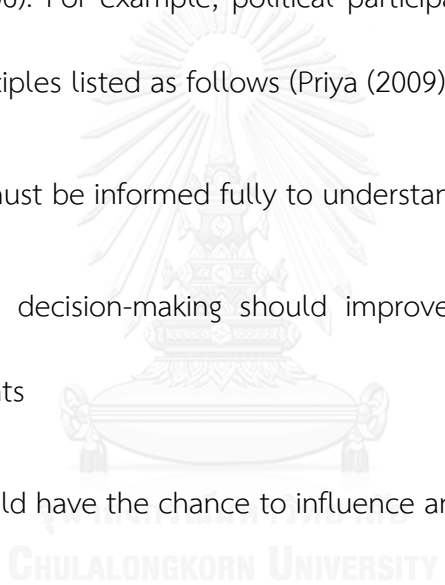
3. Community Hub: in this approach, networking via social media is the focus. While there are similarities to UGC and blogs, the goal of content sharing is simply to connect people.

4. Newsroom Transparency: in this scenario, a major newsroom will allow the public to participate in editorial meetings and scrutinize the procedures, usually through online transmission. This allows citizens to participate in decision making for the news organization.

### **Citizen Journalism as a Democratic Participant Media**

This theory is based on the notion that horizontal communication has greater value than top-down communication (McQuail 1987). Fundamentally, citizen journalism is both democratic and participatory (Baase 2008), and the advances in modern technology and its accessibility have created a situation where citizens cease

to be mere consumers of news, and instead become participants who can produce news. McQuail explained that the two most important elements of the theory are interaction and participation. Similarly, Kolodzy thought that citizen journalism allows participation to bring about greater convergence of consumers and producers of news, ensuring that the audience becomes a part of the story. Furthermore, as audiences begin to share stories among themselves, the mainstream media are increasingly isolated (Kolodzy 2006). For example, political participation for citizen journalists is based on the six principles listed as follows (Priya (2009):

- 
- The public must be informed fully to understand major policy issues
  - Government decision-making should improve as information flows from citizens to governments
  - Citizens should have the chance to influence and sometimes decide matters of public policy
  - Proving legitimacy for government decisions through providing channels for those affected by government decisions to make their opinions known prior to the decision being taken
  - Allowing citizens a role in monitoring and assessing the outcomes of government policy

- Upgrading the quality of public life through fostering greater trust in society from citizens

McQuail also adds that in systems which rely upon democratic participation, the needs and interests of the receiver are brought to the forefront. Citizens have the right to receive relevant information, the right to use technology for communication and interaction within smaller groups, and the right to question authority. Most importantly, under this theory it is vital that professional media sources are not given sole control of the communication of information (McQuail 1987).

### **The impact of Citizen Journalism on Mainstream media**

One question to consider is whether citizen journalism can threaten professional journalism. It has been argued that the mainstream media face a significant challenge from the trend towards greater citizen involvement. It has also been suggested that in the future, the variety of viewpoints and perceived lack of bias in citizen journalism will see it become more powerful than traditional news sources (Riaz 2011). Citizen journalism offers a number of inherent strengths which could see it match the importance of the mainstream media, based upon Deuze's ideology of professional journalism.



Table 1 Journalism as a Professional Ideology

Key aspects of the self-definition of journalists	Main concepts and practical applications	Influence of new technology on the media
Public service	Work to monitor society and authorities and warn the public of general concerns.	New media platforms are now widely used by the public to share their own stories.
Objectivity	It is important to maintain standards of fair, impartial, neutral and professional reporting with suitable distance from sources.	The public can interact with journalists to create multiple and various viewpoints.
Autonomy	Censorship originating from governments, organizations, or peers is not accepted.	It is becoming commonplace to produce work on a collaborative basis.
Immediacy	To be valuable, information must be gathered and distributed rapidly.	It is possible to edit and update complex news items in real time through the efforts of users.

Ethics	A formal code of ethics, with consensus among organizational peers or a related professional association is necessary .	Since it is difficult for online moderation to implement an organizational ethics policy, new media outlets tend to develop their ethics as they publish.
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Source: Salonee, 2009

Members of the current generation are familiar with digital media and need little training to employ the latest technology to produce news stories to share online. This approach offers the advantage of speed over mainstream media. A second advantage is that the proliferation of social media networks accessible via smart phones and other portable devices allows people to report and upload breaking news wherever they are, much more quickly than mainstream outlets. A third factor is that the mainstream media tend to be controlled by legal regulations and their elite ownership, while citizen journalists can, in contrast, remove the gatekeeper effect, and directly publish the stories which might otherwise be ignored, offering new personal perspectives (Looney 2013). For this reason, citizen journalism is able to shine a light on the areas of politics and governance that the mainstream media have been able to ignore, thereby bringing to light all kinds of new social issues.

### 3.2 Related Studies

This section outlines the limitations of previous research related to the concept of citizen journalism and discusses how to integrate them into the study.

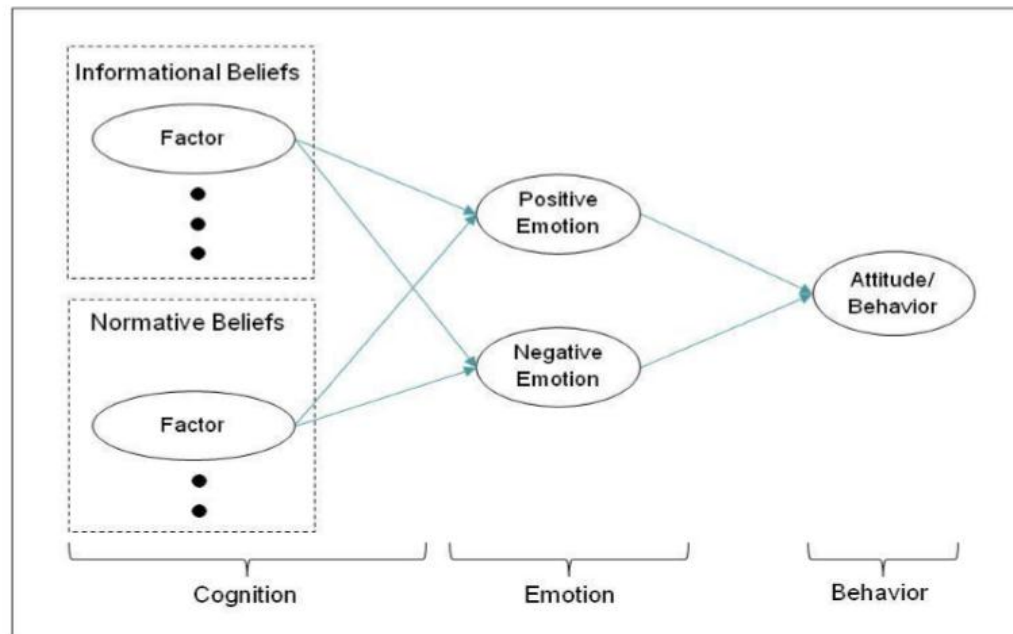
Research by Mary Joyce in 2007 entitled “The Citizen Journalism Web site ‘OhmyNews’ and the 2002 South Korean Presidential Election” discussed the impact of the internet and technology on democracy using the case of participatory media as the OhmyNews website. The first part outlined the basic elements of citizen journalism including definition, characteristics and functions. Citizen journalism was defined as the use of everyday citizens as reporters, usually unpaid, in the place of professional journalists. The launch of Web 2.0 technologies allowed reporters to take full advantages of interactive timelines. OhmyNews, the first online news website in South Korea came up with the slogan ‘every citizen is a reporter’.

The idea of origin and the significant role of the OhmyNews website was presented in the next part. The website’s creator, Oh Yeon Ho identified OhmyNews as ‘open progressivism’, a distinct leftward shift from the media establishment. Ohmynews provided an influential public platform, not only to a new set of users as reporters but also highlighted a different set of political priorities than those normally represented in the South Korean press. After the official launch in 2000, Ohmynews rapidly became known as a political democratic media which was utilised during Roh Moo Hyun’s presidential election campaign in 2002. However, the conclusion was made that OhmyNews was just one of many factors that led to Roh’s victory.

A second paper was written by Jong-Hyun Kim and Gee-Woo Bock in 2011 on the topic “A Study on the Factors Affecting the Behaviour of Spreading Online Rumours: Focusing on the Rumour Recipient's Emotions”. This concentrated on the factors that affect the transmission of rumours through new digital media. In the past, when online media commanded a small share of social communication, people usually transmitted rumours by word of mouth. Nowadays, most citizens exchange gossip as written or depicted messages through Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Rumour-mongering is now a severe problem in society, since online communication is real-time based and controlling its spread is a difficult task. Moreover, since there are no official gatekeepers who verify the truth of floated information, unverified or falsified data has flooded the World Wide Web.

The authors suggested cognitive emotion theory as the concept of beliefs for online rumour-spreading and identified that belief in a rumour was the most important factor in this theory, since both informational and normative aspects of belief factors affect emotions. They presented how positive and negative emotions mediate attitudes or behaviour towards the spread of online rumour as Figure 5.

Figure 5 Cognitive emotion theory



Source: Kim J. H. and Bock G.W., 2011

The authors also developed a research model to provide a more comprehensive understanding of online rumour-spreading and determined that the major factors affecting online rumour-spreading behaviour were based on social psychological theories. Belief constructs affect positive or negative emotion and then emotion affects the attitude and behaviour of online rumour-spreading.

The third research, undertaken by Ronda Hauben was entitled “The Rise of Netizen Democracy: A Case Study of Netizen’s Impact on Democracy in South Korea” This explored the impact of Netizens on extending democratic processes, focusing particularly on Korean Netizens. Along with the pioneering of computer networking in South Korea (1980s) and internet technology (1990s), the emergence of the Netizen and democracy was shown in events of the red devils and world cup cheering, candle-

light anti U.S. demonstrations, Korean Netizens and the election of President Roh, high school students protest hair length restrictions and government online forums. In addition, South Korean Netizens utilise internet forums to relay details of problems or events and explore how to find solutions. This form of activity is a critical part of a democratic process. This case study of Korean Netizens provided an initial investigation into the impact that widespread broadband access can bring to society. Also, the practices of South Korean Netizens showcased the rise of Netizen democracy as a qualitative advance over the former concept of the citizen and democracy.

These three studies provided related and useful data content. As citizen journalism has the same basic characteristics as democracy, previous studies concerning citizen journalism were mostly written in the field of political science. Likewise, research into online rumour spreading was classified in the psychology field, mainly focusing on human behaviour. However, few authors have studied citizen journalism in the communications field and in the South Korean entertainment industry. This thesis, therefore, aimed to analyse the influence of citizen journalism by comparing citizen and mainstream journalism. The case study of the controversy surrounding whether Tablo legally graduated from Stanford University was selected as an appropriate research topic.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INFLUENCES OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND MAINSTREAM

#### JOURNALISM ON TABLO EPIK HIGH'S CASE STUDY

Tablo or Daniel Seon Woong Lee was born on July 22, 1980 in Jakarta, Indonesia. During his childhood, he and his family relocated several times to Switzerland and Hong Kong because of his father's career. When he was eight years old, his family moved again to Canada. He attended St. George's School in Vancouver and later transferred to Seoul International School in the ninth grade. He learnt various kinds of musical instruments, beginning with the piano and then switched to play the violin for 10 years. As a teenager, he was interested in composing music and always desired a music path. However, his father disapproved of his career choice and forced him to study at Stanford University. He was a co-terminal student, studying a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and a Master's Degree in Creative Writing. At university, Tablo tried to figure out the fastest way to get out of this situation; he piled up credits and took an overload of courses which enabled him to graduate within three and a half years (Asia 2010).

After graduation in 2002, he returned to Seoul and met his present group members Mithra Jin and DJ Tukutz in the underground hiphop scene. They formed a group called Epik High and signed a contract with Woolim Entertainment in 2001. Their first album, Map of the Human Soul was released in 2003. However, at that time hiphop was not a popular genre in South Korea. The music industry was all about pop music dominated by groups of attractive teenagers and record labels (Davis 2011). Map of

the Human Soul was a commercial failure like their second album, High Society. Tablo considered studying law following his father's desire. However, he tried his best to ingratiate the public, appearing on TV entertainment programmes, played sitcoms, working as a DJ in a radio station and also hosting a KBS music show (allkpop.com 2008). These promotional activities helped his third album Swan Song (2005) to become a huge commercial success with the title track reaching number one on numerous charts. The release of their fourth album, Remapping the Human Soul gained huge popularity; almost 90,000 copies were sold in the first month and it became South Korea's third best-selling album of 2007 (Ilbo 2008).

Tablo also published a book entitled 'Piece of You' in late 2008, originally written in English. When translated into Korean, the book sold 50,000 copies and became the top-bestselling book in Korea (ezgiT 2014). As a first time author, he was widely praised and became recognized by the public as a talented composer and writer. When their contract with Woolim Entertainment expired in 2008, Tablo and his group members founded their own independent label. He married Korean actress Hye Jeong Kang in 2009. During this period, Tablo and Mithra Jin focused on their solo careers and DJ Tukutz enlisted for mandatory military service. Tablo continued to appear on various television programmes to maintain the group's popularity.

#### **4.1 Tablo's Stanford University Diploma Controversy**

Diploma forgery became a sensitive issue in South Korea since the assistant art professor at Dongguk University, Jeong Ah Shin forged her Yale doctorate degree to get employment (Koreatimes 2007). There was no confirmation about her grades from Yale



University and she was jailed for 18 months on forgery charges in 2007 (Davis 2011). In 2010, Tablo and his parents were often interviewed by mainstream media about his academic achievement. Some Netizens raised doubt about his academic background. They claimed that it was unbelievable for a person to finish both a bachelor and a master degree in only three and a half years at a university with a high reputation like Stanford. This initiated the citizen journalism process.

On May 11, 2010, someone formed an online forum titled "타블로에게진실을요구합니다" also known as TaJinYo, an English translation for the phrase "We demand the truth from Tablo". The leader of the forum identified himself as Whatbecomes, indicating that he lived in America and explained that he was contacting news organisations in Korea and the United States to inform them that Tablo had lied about his graduation from Stanford University (Davis 2012). Whatbecomes also revealed all kinds of untrue data on Tablo including immigration records, SAT scores, academic transcripts and yearbook photographs to prove his claim. A few days after launch, 40,000 internet users subscribed to TaJinYo. The forum subscribers also launched their own investigations. Tablo's documents were sent to police and a flood of emails arrived on the desk of Stanford University administrative staffer Tomas Black urging him to reveal the truth. Many articles appeared on the internet. The story became front page news in Korea during June 2010. After this unbelievable situation happened, Tablo searched for evidence to clear his name.

On July 2010, he provided his graduation certificate, records and teacher's acknowledgements through the newspaper JoongAng Daily and also stated that this was not evidence but facts (pingbook.com 2016). However, two days after the news

release TaJinYo subscribers increased to 100,000 people. They refused to believe Tablo's evidence and went back to their accusations saying his papers were all fake. Moreover, they began to dig further into his past and came up with another topic. Whatbecomes accused Tablo of assuming the identity of a man named Daniel Lee. TaJinYo members set off on an international manhunt for the 'real' Daniel Lee. Daniel Lee's across the US were contacted and interrogated. However, the answers from all the other Daniel Lee's did not follow their expectation; they answered back that his name was pretty common and they had no idea what these Korean people were talking about.

Whatbecomes began to intensify his forum followers, claiming his aim was to make Tablo and his family go crazy. Tablo's family members began to receive threatening calls. Tablo realised that something had to be done to protect his family's reputation. On August 19, 2010 Tablo visited Stanford University to gather his official documents and met with his past acquaintances. The TV crews from MBC broadcast, one of the major TV broadcast stations in South Korea were there with him to film a documentary. The documentary was shown in two parts: "Tablo Goes to Stanford" and "Tablo and South Korea Online" and aired on MBC channel on October 1 and 8 (Makawsky 2010). Tablo hoped the documentary airing would bring an end to the whole issue. Conversely, some Netizens still refused to believe Tablo or the documentary. They accused Tablo of setting up the scenario and claimed that his friends and professors were all actors. Moreover, subscribers at Tajinyo continuously increased and reached 190,000 a few days after the documentary airing. Tablo realised that the situation was out of control; he decided to contact a prosecutor following his friend's recommendation.

Eventually, in April 2011, Tablo decided to pursue legal action against these Netizens. A few months later, police confirmed that Tablo had indeed graduated from Stanford. On August 2011, prosecutors at the Seoul Central District Court issued an arrest warrant for a 57-year-old Korean-American businessman named Kim Mo living in Chicago, better known as Whatbecomes (Kay 2010). After he was arrested by South Korean police, Kim Mo revealed the reason behind trying to bring down Tablo. He declared that “Tablo wasn’t my original target. I wanted to figure out who was behind the scenes. I used Tablo as bait to reel in the bigger fish. My hobbies are fishing and hunting and I wanted to grab the largest beast and show it to Koreans. After putting Tablo through a fishing needle and starting to shake it around I found out that 460 graduates of Stanford University are all con artists” (Bark 2012).

In addition, twenty-two Netizens received summons indicating they had been sued by Tablo for criminal defamation. On September 12, 2011 at Seoul's Central District Court, Tajinyo members faced a hearing for libel and defamation of character. They apologised to Tablo and his family for making him suffer mentally. They regretted their actions and admitted their guilt (allkpop.com 2012). The fansite was shut down by its host site Naver following the results of the investigation which also revealed that Whatbecomes had fraudulently used a friend’s ID number to create the website, thereby violating Naver’s terms of service.

After the end of the controversy in 2011, Tablo’s wife set up a meeting with her management company YG Entertainment, one of the biggest music labels in South Korea. The company decided to take a chance and paid for studio time. On October 21, 2011, the first half of a 10-track double album was released with Tablo’s self-composed songs. The title track was named Fever’s End. Jin Mo Im, a music reviewer,

stated that the album was proof that Tablo's merit could not be attributed to the halo effect of his academic credentials. The song Fever's End climbed to the top of the charts in South Korea and overseas (Davis 2012).

On the 27th of November 2015, Tablo attended the Stanford Club Year End Party in Korea. Photos of the year end party uploaded by the Stanford Club Korea group on Facebook garnered attention from Netizens due to the certification shots of Tablo taken with various alumni that spread to several community sites. Notable individuals present at the event included US Ambassador to Korea Mark Lippert, former Ambassador Kathleen Stephens and Mark Hunt a UFC heavyweight fighter. Some of these photos had captions by the alumni showing their support for Tablo such as 'you know Tablo went to Stanford'. Reactions of Netizens following the circulation of these pictures included comments such as "this is cool authentication", "this certainly killed any suspicions" and "Tajinyo must dislike these pictures" (Icaruswalknet 2015). An analysis of the roles of the citizen and mainstream journalism in the South Korean Entertainment Industry follows.

## 4.2 The Role of Citizen Journalism

- **Active Watchdog**

Dan Rather, an American journalist, identified that "The press is a watchdog. Not an attack dog. Not a lapdog. A watchdog. Now, a watchdog can't be right all the time. He doesn't bark only when he sees or smells something that's dangerous. A good watchdog barks at things that are suspicious" (Terdiman 2007). Nowadays, watchdogs

in the press and mainstream journalism have shifted to the influential action of citizen journalism through social media. In the South Korean entertainment industry, Netizens who are active members of the online community also play critical roles as citizen journalists. Since the phenomenon of the Korean wave spread worldwide, Netizens now perform crucial roles as critics of up-rising celebrities.

Regarding Tablo's academic background controversy, citizen journalists were watchdogs from the beginning. After Tablo was interviewed about his Stanford University graduation in newspapers and TV programmes; he was praised by other celebrities as a genius and a talented artist. He had achieved success both in education and in a music career path. However, Netizens still suspected how he graduated with a bachelor and master degree within three years and six months with excellent records. They claimed that this was impossible. This is why they started to investigate the truth.

Other Korean celebrity cases were suspected by Netizens and eventually resulted into controversial scandals. In September 2009, K-Pop idol and leader of the group 2PM had careless comments that he had made in English on MySpace four years earlier about being a trainee mistranslated into Korean and published. Overnight, public favour turned against the 22-year-old; some Netizens went as far as creating an online petition for him to commit suicide. Park, genuinely contrite, flew home to Seattle and was later abruptly forced to leave the JYP label (Glasby 2015).

- **Investigation Unit**

When celebrity scandals spread through the internet, citizen journalists begin to act as investigators to prove the truth. They quickly unearth media content and evidence on their own; sometimes they send this evidence to the police. They could probably investigate any scandal better than mainstream outlets or even the authorities. This role of citizen journalism could be a great benefit to others but not in Tablo's case. Firstly, citizen journalists demanded truth from Tablo; however, when he presented his evidence they refused to believe him. The more Tablo tried to prove himself, the more the Netizens accused him. This was the reason why Tablo stated, *"It's not that they don't believe me. They just don't want to believe me."* on MBC Tablo goes to Stanford. When the process of investigation goes wrong like this we call it cyber-bullying.

Another case affected B.I. or Han Bin Kim from the hip-hop idol group called IKON. He was embroiled in controversy because of his father. In October 2014, B.I.'s father, Jung Joo Kim, former president of Seunghwa Pretech, was arrested and charged with embezzlement. He raised capital of 18.1 billion won (\$17 million) and embezzled 2.39 billion won (\$2.2 million) of company funds (Jung 2014). Even though the Netizens knew it was B.I.'s father that was guilty, they still asked B.I. to take responsibility. They protested against B.I.'s upcoming debut and suggested he drop out of the group (Kuang 2014). However, YG entertainment (B.I.'s label) revealed that B.I. would debut with the group following their plan.

- **Power of Silence**

- **Anonymity** is the outstanding characteristic of new media mostly utilised for various democratic movements since the first internet penetration in South Korea. Massive numbers of anonymous online people can change results following their desire. OhmyNews websites adopted this to South Korea first. The founder, Oh Yeon Ho claimed that online news sources allow open exchange of information and engage the public in journalism. This type of reporting played an important part of the 2002 presidential elections in South Korea. It is undeniable how such reporting has now become ingrained in the online culture of Korea with the site's motto "Every citizen is a reporter." This very mentality was found in the actions of TaJinYo members who felt as if they were obligated to investigate the truth, much like an online journalist (Seoulbeats.com 2012). In fact, what TaJinYo did to Tablo was called unethical behaviour. They pretended to urge Tablo for the truth, but they never reported the truth to the public. Due to anonymity, citizen journalists in the TaJinYo group thought that they could write anything about Tablo because he would not take this seriously.

- **Word of Mouth** is the outstanding feature of new media which connects unknown users together. They share interesting topics with each other easily. Scandals revealed on the internet seem to be more interesting than on mainstream media. Also, people would like to know inside news first and then share with acquaintances. This could explain the reason why the number of TaJinYo members increased so rapidly. At the beginning, Tablo's issue was only a normal gossip topic for online space people. No one took it seriously. Then, the online user named Whatbecomes appeared and

the rumours about Tablo seemed to be proving true. Whatbecomes played the role as a leading citizen journalist providing up to date content and evidence to support his stories. This feature enabled him to dominate people's belief. The more he launched articles about Tablo, the more he gained attention and belief from other Netizens. The Netizens suspected more about Tablo and they believed Whatbecomes more than Tablo. So when Whatbecomes incited his group followers they trusted and followed his direction as if they were acquaintances. Tablo's internet witch-hunting, a campaign targeting a person or group who holds an unorthodox or unpopular view (Blake Watzke) began after the TajinYo forum launch in May 2010. Only one week later, subscribers were already 40,000. A few days after publishing in Entertainment gossip this increased to 100,000 followers and when MBC Tablo goes to Stanford University was aired the number of members reached 190,000.

#### 4.3 The role of mainstream journalism

- **Gatekeeper**

According to Kurt Lewin the founder of gatekeeping theory, the gatekeeper decides what information should move to groups or individuals and what information should not (communicationtheory.org). For mainstream media, the gatekeeper is a journalist or editor who is tasked with the responsibility of filtering information before it is published or broadcast.

Tablo attempted to prove his innocence by himself through his personal social media several times; however, the Netizens refused to believe him. They claimed that



evidence posted by celebrities on their own social media tends to be fake. Due to the informal nature of social media, proving evidence seems to be difficult. It has to be more official. This prompted Tablo to ask for help from mainstream journalists who assisted him to publish his statement and evidence professionally. However, sometimes professional journalists refused to help Tablo because they also had doubts. If Tablo told them a lie they were afraid of receiving backlash from the public. Therefore, these journalists filtered their content precisely before launching. After proving that Tablo was innocent and his evidence authentic, the mainstream journalists helped Tablo as much as possible. Both domestic and foreign journalists took part in revealing the truth.

- **Tablo's Mouthpieces**

- **JoongAng Daily Newspaper:** is a major South Korean newspaper publishing news both online and offline. When controversy started to spread across South Korea this was not a normal case but became a national agenda. Tablo realised that he should do something to prove his innocence.

In June 2010, Tablo contacted JoongAng Daily Newspaper to reveal all his evidence. JoongAng Daily published Tablo's original college transcript showing he earned a Bachelor of Arts with Distinction in English on May 4, 2001 and a Master of Arts in English on April 4, 2002. He studied through a co-terminal programme where students study for their master's degree before finishing their B.A. The transcript also

showed he earned 16 credits of advanced placement from high school and another 12 credits from summer classes at New York University which enabled him to finish the programme in three and a half years.

Moreover, JoongAng Daily contacted Stanford University and obtained three letters confirming Tablo's degrees from Tobias Wolff, Stanford's Ward W., Priscilla B. Woods Professor of English and Tomas C. Black, associate vice provost of student affairs and university registrar at the college. Tobias Wolff's letter explained *"This is to certify that the records of both Stanford University and the English Department clearly demonstrate that Daniel Seon Woong Lee (pen name Daniel Armand Lee), now known as the musician Tablo, received from us both a Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, and a Master of Arts."* (Young 2010).

- **Television Media:** The documentary 'Tablo goes to Stanford' was aired on MBC the major television broadcast network in South Korea on October 1 and 8. It was divided into two episodes: Tablo goes to Stanford and Tablo and South Korea online. The producer, Seong Ho Jeong, stated that they made the programme from a neutral position to discover whether Tablo had graduated from Stanford and to consider why the current online anti-Tablo movement was problematic (Jae-Jin 2010).

In late August 2010, Tablo along with MBC crews visited Stanford University, California campus to disprove the allegations by having the University registrar reprint his documents on camera. His friends and professors proved that he had finished both undergraduate and graduate courses in English literature at one of America's most prestigious universities (Sook 2010).

After airing, this film was the talk-of-the-town since Tablo, who had stayed under the media radar, stepped up to talk about himself. However, many Netizens questioned whether this programme focused too closely on the negative aspects of internet culture and net activism. One Netizen wrote, “MBC, from a biased subjective perspective, portrayed the majority of Netizens as stupid blind maniacs.” Another Netizen said, “The programme shows no intention to deliver TaJinYo’s point of view and even from the beginning it started from their pre-established conclusion which is that this bunch of Netizens are religious fanatics”. Son Gyeong-Jae, a professor at Kyung Hee University, stated, “It is not the internet, but the people who misuse it that are problematic...Thus we need structural and contextual approaches and interpretations to understand such a social phenomenon” (Su-Jeong 2010).

- **Tomas Black’s Letter and Interview:** Tomas C. Black, a vice provost of student affairs and university registrar of Stanford University launched an official letter in the same week as JoongAng Daily newspaper published. His letter stated “Daniel Seon Woong Lee entered Stanford University in the Autumn Quarter of 1998-99 and graduated with a BA in English and an MA in English in 2002. Any suggestions, speculations or innuendos to the contrary are patently false. Daniel Seon Woong Lee is an alumnus in good standing of Stanford University.”

Black released this letter after a flood of emails (133 in total) were sent to him by South Korean Netizens. However, an official letter was not enough for them. Later, Black gave an interview about Tablo or the man he knew as Daniel Lee. He confirmed that Tablo matriculated at Stanford University in 1998 and 1999 and graduated with two degrees, a Bachelor and Master of Arts in English in 2001 and 2002. Moreover, he

mentioned that Tablo was a very good student. He had accelerated pace; he took the maximum number of credits possible in any given quarter so that he could finish quickly (youtube.com 2010).

- **Stanford Magazine** is published by the Stanford Alumni Association. Its slogan is to provide news and views through a Stanford alumni lens. The July/August issue of Stanford Magazine was devoted to Tablo's struggle against South Korean Netizens from 2010 to 2011. Joshua David, a Stanford Magazine writer, stated that he first heard about Tablo from the editors of Stanford Magazine. The university's administration and the Alumni Association had tried their best to defend him, seemingly with little success. The editors asked if he would write an article about the controversy and he agreed (Davis 2012). Joshua started by tracking down Tablo's classmates in various locations in the States for interviews. Then he flew to Korea to interview Tablo in person. Tablo initially refused to speak with him. However, the reaction to his Stanford Magazine article turned out well, Tablo readily revealed all his information. Let us proceed to evaluate the positive and negative effects.

#### 4.4 Positive effect

The three years of controversy was a difficult period for Tablo and his family. It was hard to find any positive aspects. Tablo's wife, Hye Joeong Kang revealed on Healing Camp, a TV programme on SBS broadcast station, that whenever the phone rang it was never good news. Their marriage faced a gloomy time. However, she could feel that these situations have to happen at some point. She was glad it happened

earlier. Furthermore, as they experienced all these obstacles and hardships together they realised their marriage was strengthened to another level. Without his wife and daughter, Tablo could not have overcome this situation by himself. Left on his own, he could have committed suicide like other celebrities in previous cases.

#### 4.5 Negative effects

- **Invasion of Privacy:** TaJinYo's accusations went against Tablo and his family. They started with Tablo and then moved on to family members. They were not only suspicious of Tablo's name but also dug up Tablo's childhood pictures. Some citizen journalists gathered his information and produced pages on Facebook. Many old pictures were made public without permission. Moreover, TaJinYo even bothered Tablo's colleagues to prove themselves as well.

For Tablo's family members, TaJinYo started with his mother. An anonymous researcher uncovered a newspaper clipping from 1995 which stated that Tablo's mother had won a gold medal at an international hairstyling competition in 1968. The researcher posted it online and pointed out that Tablo's mother did not actually win the medal. Sometimes, TaJinYo lied and said they were the police to increase publicity. Customer slowly decreased. Moreover, Tablo's mother received threatening phone calls telling her to leave the country.

The attacks spread to Tablo's brother, David Lee, who had begun a master degree at Columbia University but never finished. A researcher found a webpage that indicated that David had completed the master degree and calls flooded into the public

broadcasting channel in Seoul where he worked. Finally he was fired. David's home address and phone numbers were published and he also started to receive threatening calls.

- **Reputation Destroying:** When Tablo initially appeared on TV programmes he was recognised by the public as a genius with an IQ at 170. He graduated from a prestigious school like Stanford with excellent grades, debuted as a successful hip hop artist and with his arrogant image these qualifications inspired jealousy. He seemed to be accomplishing everything in his life. Perhaps these kinds of factors sparked citizen journalists to bring down Tablo's reputation. His talented artist image was changed to a liar. His reputation was destroyed in a short period. Eventually, the truth was proved but Tablo's image was hard to bring back.

- **Financial trouble** Tablo expressed his feelings on experiencing financial trouble by having no job for three years. In November 2012, Tablo appeared on the Healing Camp programme aired on SBS and stated that he was hurt the most when his daughter wanted a toy. He felt sorry. He should buy it for her without any hesitation but he had to calculate the cost in his head first. Especially towards his wife, the controversy came out as soon as they married, Tablo felt sorry for his wife when he couldn't take care of her like other husbands.

He continued to explain that his profit only came from copyrights but audiences did not hear his songs over the radio during that time. He didn't make that much money from copyrights. His standards have changed. In the past, he thought 500,000 KRW (approximately \$460 USD) wasn't much money at all, but now it's a large amount (allkpop.com 2012).

- **Mental Suffering:** Tablo revealed on Healing Camp that he was not angry when people refused to believe him. He was always sad and depressed for his family and acquaintances.

One day his fans brought Epik High CDs, then they smashed them and sent Tablo the pictures. They also stated that they were disappointed in Tablo. It was sad for him to be unable to show his true self. He began to hate himself. Also in the middle of the incident, Tablo and his wife were at the hospital for the birth of their first child. It was a moment of joy. As Tablo walked the corridors of the hospital he saw people looking at him coldly and he panicked. Due to anonymous attackers, he did not know if the doctor who was putting needles in his baby was one of those people. He was also scared of food poisoning and barely ate food outside the house. He couldn't go outside because strangers would gossip and shout at him. "It was like I had stepped into the middle of a modern-day witch hunt" Tablo revealed on Stanford Magazine.

However, the hardest time for Tablo was when his father passed away. In 2012, a representative of YG Entertainment revealed that Tablo's father, Lee Gwang Boo, passed away after suffering from a chronic disease on the morning of March 26th." (allkpop.com 2012). Tablo's father was diagnosed with liver cancer in 2001 but he almost completely healed at that time. However, he suddenly collapsed in 2011 the same day the TaJinYo trials started. He stayed in hospital for a while to heal his head injury. In March 2012, he went into shock before passing away. Tablo stated that the things he lost to music he can gain back by working hard but he cannot reverse his father's death.

In Tablo's case, there were many negative effects throughout the three years of the controversy, whereas positive effects are not common in this kind of situation.

#### 4.6 Internet Censorship in South Korea

The South Korean Government has realised the huge impact of the internet for some time, launching several organisations to take care of order in the online space. Moreover, a cyber law was launched to protect victims from online defamation.

- **Korean Internet Safety Commission (KISCOM)**

The Korean Internet Safety Commission (KISCOM), formerly the Information and Communications Ethics Committee (ICEC) is an independent body established in 1995 under the Telecommunications Business Act to formulate a code of communications ethics (i-policy.org 2010).

The commission aims to present moral standards for Korea's emergent information society by providing the means to promote a healthy information-based culture and to counteract the negative effects of an information society. The committee has the ability to control inappropriate communications over electronic communication devices such as the telephone and the internet and to request an inspection and correction of certain information determined by a Presidential decree. They focus on campaigns for and education of information and communication ethics, support of related events and publication of publicity materials. In addition, they have also been operating the Report Centre on illegal and harmful information for adolescents and the internet contents rating service.



- **South Korean Cyber defamation law**

During the summer of 2008, massive anti-government candle light demonstrations broke out across South Korea. The citizens were disappointed by the government's overlook of public health and its lack of political power to protect Korean people from suspect US imports. An online community called 'Agora' was launched to discuss both issues. The demonstrations were initially formed online from about 170,000 users in May and about 630,000 users later. Finally, some 700,000 participants took part in the Seoul demonstrations (Song 2008). The South Korean Government started to become aware of the internet impact. On July 22, the Korea Communications Commission (KCC) took part in publishing the Internet Information Security Comprehensive Countermeasures and the Ministry of Justice announced a plan to institute cyber defamation law. This law allowed police to investigate cyber defamation cases without any complaints from victims. The cyber defamation law was categorised into several types as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Types of criminal defamation

Types of Criminal Defamation under Korean Law	Max Criminal Fine	Max Prison Sentence
<b>Cyber Defamation</b> (via a <i>false</i> statement)	<b>50</b> mil won	<b>7</b> years
<b>Defamation thru Printed Materials</b> (via a <i>false</i> statement)	<b>15</b> mil won	<b>7</b> years
<b>Defamation</b> (via a <i>false</i> statement)	<b>10</b> mil won	<b>5</b> years
<b>Cyber Defamation</b> (via a <i>true</i> statement)	<b>30</b> mil won	<b>3</b> years
<b>Defamation thru Printed Materials</b> (via a <i>true</i> statement)	<b>7</b> mil won	<b>3</b> years
<b>Defamation</b> (via a <i>true</i> statement)	<b>5</b> mil won	<b>2</b> years
<b>Defamation of Dead Person</b> (via a <i>false</i> statement)	<b>5</b> mil won	<b>2</b> years

Source: klawguru.com

Article 70 defines cyber defamation in two ways. The first is the use of an information and communication network to distribute false statements purporting to be facts, which are intended to damage the reputation of another party. Article 70 holds that such acts are punishable by imprisonment for a period of up to seven years, by a fine of up to 50 million won, or by suspension of qualifications for up to ten years. The second type of cyber defamation involves using an information and communication network to distribute true statements with the intention to damage the reputation of a third party. In this case the punishment can be imprisonment for up to three years or a fine of up to 30 million won (no.9119 2008). Certain conditions must be fulfilled for an act to be considered as cyber defamation (Juwon 2013):

1. Another person's reputation must be damaged

2. A true or false statement of fact must be published
3. An information and communications network is used
4. The act is intended to damage a person's reputation
5. The intention is to commit cyber defamation

According to the above, cyber defamation is committed via the publication of a statement of fact, whether true or otherwise. However, cyber defamation differs from defamation in general cases since in this situation it is necessary that the perpetrator intends to defame, deliberately planning to damage the reputation of a third party.

In the past, when Korean celebrities were harassed their agencies ignored the threats and the controversy went away. However, with the increase in severe actions by anonymous users, agencies now pay more attention to protect their celebrities. For instance, JYP Entertainment announced that they would take legal action against the uploader for sexually harassing Suzy Bae in 2012 (hotshotlover30 2012) and also in 2014 when a Netizen attacked Suzy with malicious comments (alim17 2014).

In 2017, The Korea Communications Commission (KCC), South Korea's telecommunications and broadcasting regulator revised the current Telecommunications Law with more regulations and deeper scrutiny on major internet portals (Hyung 2008). KCC aimed to limit anonymity on the internet by mandating users to reveal their real names or nicknames.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

Citizen journalism has become a main actor in cyber space since Web 2.0 technology spread worldwide. Participation in media characteristics available on new social platforms allows internet users to share their stories and opinions freely. When users post messages, photos, videos, or expressions on their personal social media, sometimes it turns out to be news content and gains public attention. That user becomes a citizen journalist. However, a citizen journalist is not a professional like mainstream journalists and bias and sentimental are often added to content. In the South Korean entertainment industry, rumours about celebrities revealed on the internet always gain massive attention online which appears on mainstream media the next day.

According to Tablo's Stanford controversy, citizen journalists played the role of active watchdogs and investigators. They suspected every single movement of Tablo. When someone in the TaJinYo group distributed news about Tablo, followers actively joined in and responded by writing comments. Then they acted as investigators to prove evidence by themselves. Moreover, due to the impact of new media, anonymity and word of mouth became crucial information flows affecting people's beliefs. On the other hand, mainstream journalists played a different role from citizen journalists. They acted as gatekeepers to filter all information before publishing or broadcasting. They filtered all Tablo's evidence first and when this was

proved to be true they decided to help him. Both South Korea and the U.S. mainstream journalists attempted to publish the truth about Tablo in various types of channels. South Korean mainstream media, JoongAng Daily newspaper provided all the official diplomas and Tablo's interview and MBC broadcast station launched their special documentary "Tablo goes to Stanford" to introduce Tablo's professors and colleges at Stanford University. The Stanford registrar, Tomas Black, also wrote an official letter and gave an interview aimed to prove that Tablo or Daniel Lee attended Stanford. The Stanford Magazine published by the Stanford Alumni Association readily published Tablo's controversy in the July/August issue.

After analysing the roles of citizen and mainstream journalism towards Tablo, both journalists obviously stood on opposing sides to each other. Citizen journalism acted as an active watchdog, investigator unit and power of silence making huge attacks towards Tablo while mainstream journalism played the part of gatekeeper and mouthpiece to help him prove his innocence. To identify the most influential role for Tablo's case would be based on how citizen journalism affected Tablo and his family. Therefore, citizen journalism had more impact than mainstream journalism because the effects were mostly negative whereas the positive side was hardly mentioned. Many negative effects occurred such as invasion of privacy, financial trouble, reputation destroyed and mental suffering. Both invasion of privacy and mental suffering seemed to affect Tablo the most. The sentimentalism of the user Whatbecomes and the TaJinYo group made Tablo and people surrounding him struggle to live their daily lives. Tablo had his past and childhood pictures made public, his mother was threatened with phone calls and his brother was fired from work. Moreover, Tablo lost his father before the end of the controversy. This was the hardest time in his life.

However, Tablo's Stanford University controversy was an exceptional case which could not generalise citizen journalism as a hazard impact in South Korean society. Its great benefit and investigation potential which could probably investigate any scandal were apparent in many incidents. This positive aspect of citizen journalism penalised the malefactors and brought righteousness to society. Furthermore, it was not only useful for the entertainment industry but in the political field took part in investigating the transparency of political parties to promote democracy while also becoming active in other areas.

## 5.2 Suggestions

This thesis specifically studied the influence of citizen journalism through the Tablo controversy which was an exceptional case. It does not jump to the conclusion that citizen journalism will be harmful to South Korean society in the future. Further research on this topic should delve into the pros and cons of citizen journalism compared with mainstream journalism. Questionnaire and focus group interview methods should be utilized to generate deeper details about people's opinion towards the influence of citizen journalism in the South Korean entertainment industry compared to mainstream journalism.

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APPENDIX

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

**VITA**

Name: Miss Nuanwan Srisaranyapong

Date of Birth: August 12, 1991

Birth Place: Phuket, Thailand

Education: Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand (2011-2014)

