Journalism without Borders: Mexico

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Professional journalists worldwide face many a conflict when reporting the news, much due to cultural differences. That being said, safety is paramount in international journalism and when a journalist of a different culture enters the scene, safety is now compromised, regardless of the nation. Despite safety concerns, the information itself is cause for concern due to local biases, as such within Mexico. More importantly, the process of providing the information in other countries should be what defines the news industry in that culture.

Conversely, provided are my interpretations of the organizational structure of news industries in Mexico; how “free speech” in Mexico is viewed and the impact these views have on journalistic reporting; and, how various technologies have impacted newsgathering and reporting in Mexico; strictly for the purpose of highlighting the barriers, differences and challenges that confront professional journalists worldwide.

Being an ever-evolving industry, mass media organization is fundamental to its planning for the future. As for organization in Mexico in this instance, apparent is a government control or regulation of media output. David G. LaFrance (1993) explains my observation in his article, *Politics, violence, and the press in Mexico*. He writes “since 1810, government-media relations generally have been characterized by official control through a contradictory, yet mostly effective combination of cooptation and repression,” (1993, para. 1). LaFrance notes that, “one does not have to peer too deeply into the nature of government-press relations in contemporary Mexico to discover that the "stick" has not been sheathed; indeed, it plays a disturbingly large and even increasing role in keeping journalists in line (para. 3),” thus, strategically keeping in check the public’s desire for information.
Due to the nature of evolution, Mexico’s violence towards journalists shows a decline in respect and power which prove detriment to the overall organization. A recent report found that “reporting by the media, especially at the local level, seems to have become more aggressive,” (LaFrance, 1993). Violence, corruption, and government regulation each have, ultimately, hindered the Mexican journalist’s duty to the public strictly by involvement and control.

Free speech is another topic of discussion because of its importance to both local and foreign democracies as well as mass media organization. Articulating this concept in regards to Mexico as well as Latin America, Piero Stanig (2015) of the American Journal Of Political Science says, “Mexico provides a unique opportunity because freedom of speech is regulated by the criminal code (C’odigo Penal) of each state. The intervention by the Supreme Court in freedom of speech cases is not pervasive, and therefore it does not create uniformity of the law across states,” (p. 175-176). In my opinion, inconsistency rather than uniformity is what impacts journalistic reporting so negatively.

Important, Stanig’s (2015) article draws conclusion from the findings of his research in order to highlight corruption and analyze areas where “authority” precedes any legal media decision making, a common challenge for most professional journalists and news agencies. First, Stanig notes that his “estimates provided… could be considered a lower bound to the “chilling effect” of punitive regulation of speech in Mexico,” which raises the idea that freedom of speech is all but lost in Mexico (p. 191). Additionally, Stanig reports that “regulation of speech reduces the amount of accountability-oriented information spread by the media. Conditional on several potential confounders, there is a systematic negative association between how punitive defamation law is and the number of articles that mention events of political and bureaucratic corruption and police misconduct in Mexican newspapers,” (p. 191, para. 1). Information
regulation such as with Mexico removes the voice from the public and raises concern for the future.

To show a level of adaptability, broadcast television has fallen into a manageably adaptive, yet fair system in Mexico. According to a recent *Mexican Law Review* by Betancourt Higareda Felipe Carlos, the progress Mexican media has made recently allows for international news affiliates being available on broadcast television; radio broadcasting has “experienced noticeable progress in freedom of speech;” Mexico newspapers “enjoy more diversity, plurality, quality, independence… thanks to the quality of information…;” and finally, the Internet’s availability, although its “disadvantage is that not every person, especially in poorer countries, has access to it,” (2013). However, at the time of the Mexico news industry’s rise, “the International Federation of Journalists considered Mexico the most dangerous country in Latin America for those journalists [local] who deal professionally with issues related to crime and corruption,” (as cited by Felipe Carlos, 2013). Ultimately, the steady technological developments Mexico has produced have proven effective in news gathering and reporting.

Further, David Schlesinger, of *International news reporting: Frontlines and deadlines*, explains that despite the technological impact, the answer lies in the work “agencies have to do to prove that their ideals are real and relevant to today’s readers,” (edited by John Owen and Heather Purdy, 2015, p. 24). In my opinion, it is easier to adapt to a change than start over in unfamiliar territory, which is what print agencies would succumb to had they not adjusted to the digital age.

Indeed, exploring conflicts that professional journalists worldwide face, I found that the cultural differences do not define the news industry, rather the information and its governing body do. Unfortunately, as paramount as safety is in international journalism, safety is never a
guarantee, whether in Mexico or other developing countries, deterring many journalists. Thus, the local bias develops often enough to establish a thought or ideal in the country— one, being the distaste for journalists in general, especially foreign. More importantly, I found that the process of providing the information in other countries should be, but is not, what defines the news industry in that culture. Keeping the public interested seems to be the only uniform ideal amongst all professional journalists and news agencies, although the latter is a challenge in itself.

Conclusively, in the conversation I have provided my interpretations of the organizational structure of news industries in Mexico; how “free speech” in Mexico is viewed and the impact these views have on journalistic reporting; and, how various technologies have impacted newsgathering and reporting in Mexico; strictly for the purpose of highlighting the barriers, differences and challenges that confront professional journalists worldwide.
References


