

RETRENCHED JOURNALISTS FIND IT TOUGH TO SURVIVE DOING GIG WORK

Free Malaysia Today article cites retrenched journalists who reveal that gig work such as driving e-hailing taxis and work as independent contractors selling stuff to each other on the streets is no fun, unlike what the proponents, including conference and seminar speakers as well as business and management CON-sultants of the "new world of work in the information and services economy" touted, including with the help of journo-prostitutes in the information technology and business media.

I started this blog - IT Scheiss <http://itsheiss.blogspot.com/> in March 2011 to provide the other side of the story about the ongoing trend whereby whilst media readership has been increasingly moving from print media to online and digital media, however online and digital media can command very much lower advertising rates that print media could and the experience of newspapers in the U.S. show, that for every US\$ 8 to US\$10 drop in print advertising revenue, there is a US\$1 increase in online and digital advertising revenue and moreover a media publication's online and digital platforms earn far less advertising revenue that their print platform, so advertising revenue from their online and digital platforms cannot make up for the decline in advertising revenue from their print platform, which in the long term is unsustainable for media organisations and for the future of journalism as a viable, paying career upon which media workers can rely upon for a living.

Those self-styled New Media CON-sultants back around 2011 and 2012, some of whom were IT journalists, touted the fact that media readership was moving from print to online and digital in their articles - which is one side of the coin, so to speak, but they suppressed the other side about online and digital advertising revenue and the decline in print advertising revenue as this is what I set out to highlight in my blog IT Scheiss, and seven years later, we can see the harsh reality unfolding before our eyes.

This is not just a problem affecting Malaysian media such as Utusan Malaysia or Malaysian media companies such as Media Prima, Berjaya Media, Star Media Group but it's a problem which has affected media in the developed world several years before it hit Malaysia.

I highlighted that in greater detail my blog post yesterday:-

600 MEDIA WORKERS TO LOSE JOBS BY FRIDAY (13 DECEMBER 2019), THOUSANDS MORE BY Q1 2020

<http://itsheiss.blogspot.com/2019/12/600-media-workers-to-lose-jobs-by.html>

In the future, journalism will be a pastime or hobby where people with another source of income, such as a daytime job or a business write, blog post videos of their opinions and analyses in their spare time for free.

Or, media organisations which survive will have to be sponsored by governments, wealthy businessmen or tycoons wanting to promote an agenda, political parties wanting to promote their political message, non-governmental organisations wanting to promote their respective political agendas, foreign governments or foreign government backed non-governmental organisations (actually very much governmental non-governmental organisations and so forth. Like have you ever wondered why many of Malaysia's so-called "alternative media" or "independent media" are coy about revealing who their "investors" are?

The *Free Malaysia Today* article follows below: _



The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on the Free Malaysia Today website. At the top left is the FMT logo with the word 'news' underneath. To the right of the logo, it displays '24.5° Kuala Lumpur Thursday, December 12, 2019' and 'Advertiser #'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for HOME, NEWS, BERITA, OPINION, WORLD, LIFESTYLE, OHSEMI, and GALLERY. The main headline reads 'Bad news for thousands of journalists as they report their own troubles'. Below the headline, the author 'Frederic Nambiar and Jason Thomas' and the date 'December 12, 2019 7:13 AM' are listed. A photograph shows several people working at desks in a newsroom. At the bottom of the image is a social media sharing bar with icons for Facebook, Twitter, and a link to 'fremalaysiatoday.com'. Below the image is a small caption: 'Staff of 1800 in Malaysia were given 24-hour notice to pack up and leave in October this year. Many will struggle to make ends meet.'

GEORGE TOWN/KUALA LUMPUR: Most of us probably have difficulty remembering the last time we paid for and held a physical newspaper.

After all, with boundless free content at our fingertips, who needs to buy actual newspapers anymore? That's one of the great benefits of the digital age.

Yet it's not good news for traditional media who are struggling to adapt their business models to survive in the new electronic world.

Increasing numbers of skilled employees are the collateral damage of this unevenly matched battle between print and digital media. As hard copies disappear from the nation's trains, waiting rooms and office desks, thousands of workers are finding themselves redundant.

Ex-reporters who used to chase stories on the streets of Malaysia's cities now find themselves slogging along those same streets trying to find other jobs to survive.

They are the fallout from the decline of legacy print media in the digital age.

In the recent turmoil of Utusan Malaysia's on-again off-again attempts to survive, hundreds of journalists now find themselves out of a job.

They have to earn a living somehow. It's not unusual for ex-employees to run into each other peddling kitchen utensils or perfume from their car boots on the streets.

Life for Ali (not his real name) has changed for the worse since he was let go from Utusan after 17 years of service in Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

The 38-year-old used to edit stories written by younger reporters, attend major press conferences, and cover PR events for the newspaper, earning a salary that paid for his housing, car instalments and the kind of life a young city-dweller leads. It was a responsible job that he enjoyed.

Today, Ali drives more than 12 hours a day, six days a week for two e-hailing companies just to keep his head above water.

He says his debts are rising as Utusan has not yet paid him his final two months' salary of RM10,000, leaving him with no option but to search for other sources of income.

"I had no choice but to move to KL as I can't make as much money as a Grab driver in Penang. Here, I can make about RM1,000 in a good week," he told FMT.

And yet even in the capital he struggles. "Driving earns me barely enough to pay for my home and car and other expenses."

Another redundant Utusan reporter said many of his ex-colleagues now do odd jobs, such as selling food and Tupperware from their car boots on the street.

The 49-year-old ex-reporter, who wanted to be known only as Mohamad, said he was lucky, because after much searching he has finally managed to land a job as a writer at a marketing and event management company.

"A friend told me about the opening. If not, I would be driving for an e-hailing company right now," he said.

"Some of my ex-colleagues are selling perfume on the streets, kaki lima. Others have become runners and unit trust or insurance agents. It's hard to find a job, and even if you can, the pay is too low."

For the lucky older ones with a good career behind them, the future is not so bleak.

A 55-year-old ex-member of the editorial staff of another English daily, who left through a mutual separation scheme in 2017, said he's happy that he got out of journalism.

For one thing, he is now able to catch up on his travel ambitions.

He plans to continue writing, albeit not for newspapers anymore.

"I'm enjoying my retirement," he told FMT. "Since I left I'm travelling more often as that's my other passion besides writing."

Younger ex-employees are less enthusiastic about being out on the streets job hunting.

And Utusan's cast-outs are not alone in their woes.

On Friday, a major media group which operates several Malaysian television, radio and print businesses is to lay off an estimated 600 newspaper workers as part of its restructuring and downsizing. Over half of those affected are journalists.

As shares tumble ever faster in traditional media companies, what was once a career with lifelong prospects is looking increasingly shaky.

The news industry's traditional printing presses have now mostly ceased their clatter for good.

Ex-reporter Mohamad puts it like this: "For many of us, if we were offered a chance to go back to Utusan, we would have to think about it very carefully. The future of print media is very bleak."

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2019/12/12/bad-news-for-thousands-of-journalists-as-they-report-their-own-troubles/>

Yours truly

IT.Scheiss

<http://itsheiss.blogspot.com/>