



www.ohmynews.com

"Every citizen is a reporter."

Mission

- “OhmyNews is a kind of public square in which the reform-minded generation meet and talk with each other and find confidence. The message they find here: we are not alone. We can change this society,” Oh Yeon Ho, the Founder.



Success

- “OhmyNews has shaken up the journalism and political establishments while attracting an enormous audience by melding 20th century tradition—the journalism-as-lecture model, in which organizations tell the audience what the news is and the audience either buys it or doesn’t—into something bottom-up, interactive, and democratic.” Dan Gillmor, *We the Media*



Start

- Started on Feb 22, 2000 in Seoul by Yeon Ho Oh, the founder, with five staff members and 700 citizen reporters
- Oh, a reporter for a progressive monthly for ten years, just came back to Korea with a master's degree in communication at Regent University, Virginia.
- Oh was the first reporter who wrote about the massacre of Korean refugees during the Korean War, with the follow-up story the AP won Pulitzer for investigative reporting in 2000.



Now

- 700,000 visitors a month and 2 million page views a day
- One of top 10 Internet Newspaper sites
- 60 fulltime staff members and 40000 citizen reporters
- Ohmynews International with 850 citizen reporters from 85 countries and 8 professional editors
- www.rankey.com



Funding

- Launched with \$100,000 from Oh and his friends
- Private company with \$6 million annual revenue (2005), reported its first profit, \$400,000, in 2004.
- \$11 million investment from Japanese Softbank in 2006 in exchange of 12% ownership
- Revenues come from advertising (60-70%), syndicating content (20%), and reader donations (5-10%).



Contents

- Targeted for nationwide audience
- News site, web-casting, web-radio, text-casting, a weekly print version
- News topics are no different from those in traditional media: politics, economy, city, international, sports, community etc.
- Issues and stories traditional media ignore or exclude
- Progressive, advocate journalism
- Most stories are accompanied by message boards
- Citizen edited edition



Editorial Hierarchy

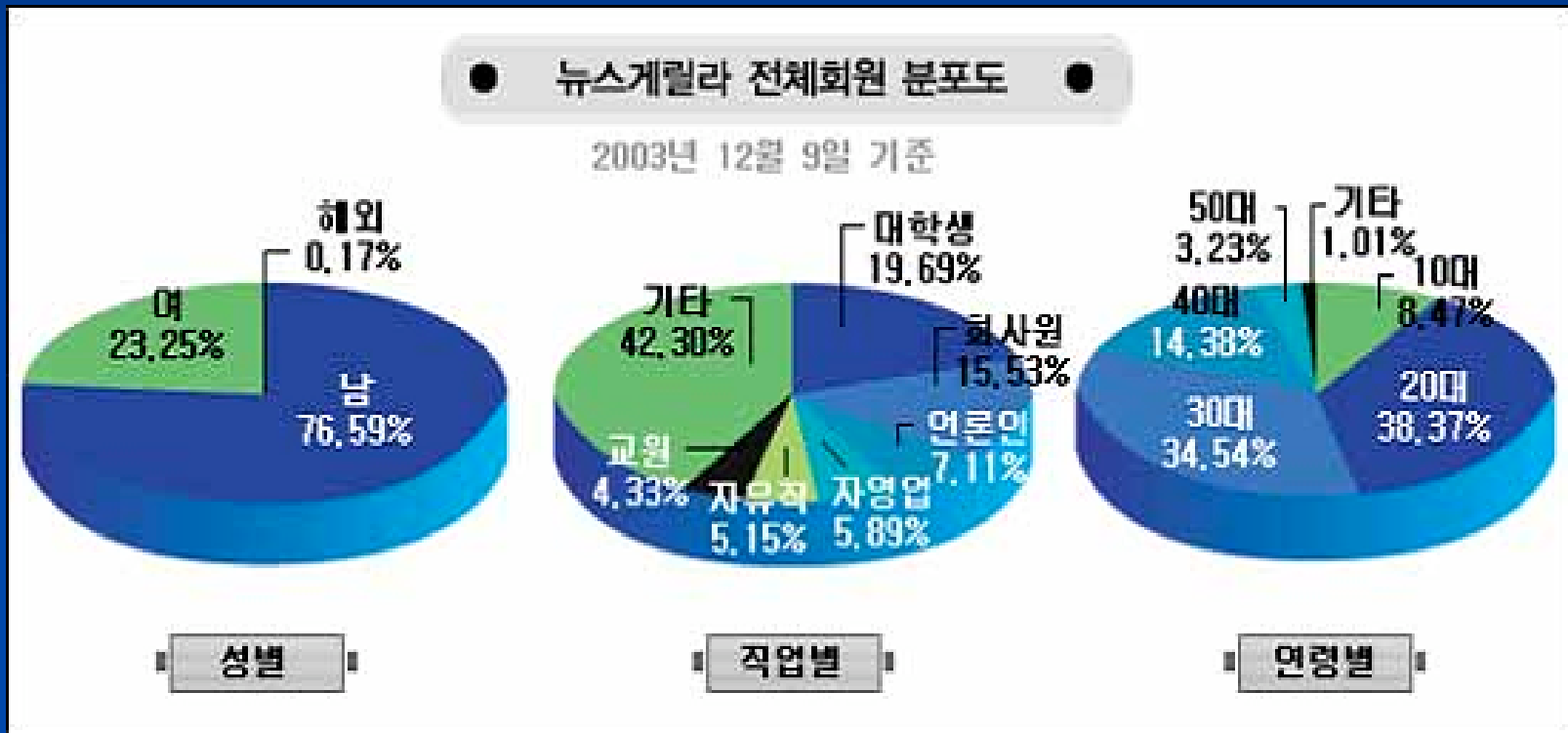
1. Hard news mostly by staff writers
2. Citizen reports edited by staff editors
3. Not yet edited citizen reports

Operation

- 60 professional editors for reporting, editing and fact-checking
- 41,000 citizen reporters, who are to register and sign the reporter's agreement
- About 150 to 200 stories are published on the site each day. "Every citizen is a reporter."
- 70% of its news stories are from citizen reporters
- One third of stories from citizen reporters rejected by editors
- Citizen reporters get paid as much as \$20 for a story.



Who Are the Citizen Reporters?



How Ohmynew Became a Success?

- New Media Technology
- Social Changes in Korea
- Political Demands for Progressive Media
- Traditional Journalism Already Losing Ground



New Media Technology

- 65% of Koreans are regular internet users
- highest broadband penetration in the world, 25% of Koreans using broadband internet
- 34% of Koreans use the internet as their primary source of news (world average 9%, US 14%), while 19% for newspapers

Social Circumstances

- Compact nation: South Korea 38,492 sq mi with 49 million people and \$20,590 GNP (North Carolina 53,865 sq mi with 8 million people)
- Homogeneous culture and strong national senses, obsessed with speed
- Easy to cover the whole nation with one issue after another
- New generation of Koreans with higher education and rich experience in democratic movement eager for social change
- From conformity into diversity: demands for news that are relevant to one's daily living such as personal stories and community news

Political Change

- Political division shaping in the 1990s after successful democratic revolution in the late 1980s
- Increased demand for political participation, but political process still dominated by traditional alliance between politicians and major media
- Growing demand of political information by young voters who were eager to exercise their newly earned political power
- Politically charged events and scandals that drew nationwide attention, such as presidential election, impeachment trial, anti-US military rally
- Instrumental in the election of President Roh, a self-proclaimed political outsider who won by a narrow 2.3% margin. President Roh held his first news conference exclusively with Ohmynews

Journalism in Crisis

- Lack of alternative media, local media, or community media
- National papers fill the 90% of newspaper market, in which three conservative dailies dominate with circulation of about 7 million copies.
- Newspaper subscription rate fell from 64.5% 1998 to 48.3% in 2004.
- Growing demand for media reform
- Korean attitudes toward media reform (1998)
 - absolute necessary 33.7%
 - somewhat necessary 59.7%
 - not so necessary 6.2%
 - absolute not necessary 0.3

Journalism in Crisis

- Public TV networks, political rivalries to conservative dailies, covered Ohmynews extensively, often republishing Ohmynews stories
- Elite status of journalists in Korea, making a lot of wannabe journalists turn into citizen reporters
- Related links: www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=37130



Ohmynews Goes Global

- English Edition launched 2004 and Ohmynews Japan started in August this year).
- International Herald Tribune, the global newspaper owned by the New York Times, made a contract with Ohmynews to carry stories from its site.



Questions to Discuss

- Is Ohmynews a sustainable news media model?
- If it works in Korea, could it work elsewhere?
- Why only one Ohmynews in Korea?
- Is the professional-citizens combination a viable model for citizen journalism?