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Social Component of Journalism and Information Technology in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The relevance of the study is based on the fact that in sociology, the phenomenon of mass media is included in the object-subject field of several industries: sociology of mass media, sociology of the media means, sociology of journalism, sociology of the Internet, and sociology of online media. The novelty of the work is determined by the fact that the analysis of the media was carried out in the framework of various sociological theories, in particular – mass society theory, where the media are considered as one of the main tools for disseminating mass culture; theories of the information society, within which information and the means of its dissemination play a vital role in the development of society. The practical novelty of the study is determined by the fact that the possibility of forming a structure for understanding the social position of the media contributes to the implementation of new social communication protocols.

Keywords: Communication, media, journalism, social environment, information technology, online media, information society

Introduction

In various sociological theories and concepts, the emphasis in the process of considering mass media differs from purely social ones to historical and technological ones. In this case, the technological evolution of the media comes to the fore, which leads to the emergence of new types of information and communication (Lewandowsky, Cook, Fay, & Gignac, 2019). For example, they note the existence of two approaches to the study of mass communication (Zeng & Yuqi, 2018). The first approach is broader and covers the study of the features of mass communication from the primitive society to the present. Researchers focus on issues such as features of communication tools, techniques, and signs for the transmission of cultural, every day and other texts, sign systems of communicative processes, and their simplification with the accumulation of social-cultural experiences and the like (Ramsay, 2010). The second approach considers mass communication theories, mainly in the ideas of Western theorists who describe the phenomenon of building up messages using technical means of communication (Kapoor et al., 2018). In our opinion, the evolution of mass media, in addition to the significance of the dynamics of technical devices for transmitting information to a mass audience, is also determined by the dynamics of information culture of a society, the development of information needs and ways to satisfy them (Domínguez-Navarro & González-Rodríguez, 2019).

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In a mass industrial society, the model of functioning of the media was aimed at the formation of a standardized way of thinking, at the creation of collective consciousness (Ndumbe-Eyoh & Mazzucco, 2016). But in the information society, the reverse process of the demassification of consciousness is taking place thanks to the demassified mass media (Kamboj & Rahman, 2018). Today, it's not the masses of people who receive the same information, but small groups of people exchange the images they created (Turel & Cavagnaro, 2019). In the concept of mass communication, two types of communicative media are distinguished – the means of disseminating communication and the symbolically generalized means of communication. Media distribution includes all means of transmitting the information. However, the function of such tools is reduced only to the process of sending information and delivering it to the audience (Haslam, Tee, & Baker, 2017). Therefore, they attach more importance to those communicative mechanisms that motivate them to participate in the communication. These mechanisms are called symbolically generalized communicative media (Freeman, 2018). Note that the means of disseminating communication are understood as the technical means of transmitting information, and the symbolically generalized means of communication are abstract categories of truth, power, love, art, and others. The process of development of the media combines both technological and related social innovations.

The functioning of the media in the context of globalization and information confrontation required several transformations to survive in the information market. The role of television in the development of information society culture, especially in shaping up the new legislation regulating the information policy in Kazakhstan, is immense. It has fuelled the execution of the educational functions of television (Yessenbekova, 2018). A study has found that communication in general and documentary films, in particular, have addressed the issues in the field of agriculture, health, environment, human rights, and other developmental sectors (Luczon, 2016). A study of the functioning of modern media shows that to effectively represent the market of information services, modern media are expanding the types of production, which makes researchers talk about a “convergence” in the information sphere (Sheremet, 2012). The classification of convergence subjects and objects should be considered:

- (i) The convergence of networks, which provides for the transition to a digital model of broadcasting data. In this context, the type of signal, nature of the message loses its value in the process of transmitting information through the network. An example of this is the broadcast of photos, video, audio, and other types of messages.
- (ii) The convergence of terminals consists of a combination of technical devices for broadcasting information into one universal multimedia and multifunctional device. As an example of such a device, a personal computer and its ability (due to network convergence) to receive both television and radio signals and the like are considered. Such multimedia devices include mobile phones and other modern network gadgets.
- (iii) The convergence of services, which provides various functions in a single network path.
- (iv) Rhetorical convergence – the creation of new genres of content, ways of presenting material through a combination of traditional genres. For example, the use of television material to supplement a news article.
- (v) Market convergence is associated with the convergence of terminals and, accordingly, the entry of new telecommunications companies into the market.
- (vi) The convergence of regulation occurs in response to the confluence of markets, as a result of which new standards and regulatory measures arise in current conditions.

Analyzing the process of convergence, it can be noted that it is implemented in four layers:

- (i) A layer of technical devices – the creation of new multifunctional devices that can be used to create information material. For example, a modern mobile phone combines a voice recorder, camcorder, text editor.
- (ii) A layer of professionalism. In this layer, a combination of various types of professional journalistic competencies occurs, which leads to the emergence of a universal journalist who has the skills and abilities to work in multiple journalistic genres and with different materials. Thus, a modern journalist can perform the functions of a journalist, editor, cameraman.
- (iii) A convergence layer of the components of the media system – a combination of methods for conveying information to the consumer, combining various types of media, and creating network analogs of traditional media.
- (iv) A layer of information and communication practices in which there is a merger of such communication practices as journalism, public relations, marketing, advertising.

Through generalization and systematization, we have identified the following areas of development of media convergence in modern media space:

- (i) The convergence of the media, which involves the merger into a single system of press, radio, television, and Internet media based on Internet technologies.
- (ii) The convergence of telecommunication devices, which consists of a combination of various technologies – the Internet, communications, mobile phones, etc.
- (iii) The convergence of media resources, which involves the emergence of media, combining offline and online resources, the integration of media with social networks.
- (iv) The universalization of the media professions, which is manifested in the expansion of the profession of a journalist by combining professional roles: journalist, typesetter, photographer, editor, video operator.
- (v) The convergence of levels of professionalism, when there is a connection in the same media resource of the work of journalists of different professional levels.
- (vi) The convergence of the service sector – the concentration in one environment (Internet) of different areas of the service sector: online stores, legal advice, information resources, auctions, and the like.

Literature Review

“Social media” appeared about a decade ago and was initially identified exclusively with the blogosphere. Still, today this concept includes, in addition to blogs, social networks, online forums, the Wikipedia project, podcasts, and videos. There are many definitions of social media (Oh, 2018). Some authors identify them with social networks, as in the Oxford Dictionary, where social media is defined as websites and applications that are used for social networking (Ralphs, 2011). There is a definition that we consider to be the most complete and comprehensive: social media is a group of Internet applications that are built on the ideological and technological principles of the Web 2.0 (“the second web”) and allow users to create content and share it (Social Media..., 2012). Social media is also defined as a concept that combines a variety of online technologies on the Internet that allow users to communicate and interact with each other (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Social media is also understood as a form of communication in which the roles of a consumer and a producer of information are combined, and the possibility of creating joint content appears (Süral et al., 2019). Some authors understand the term “social media”

is the most common usage as the use of mobile Internet technologies, which are based on the ideological and technological foundations of the second web, which allows users to create content and share it (Littman et al., 2018). A lot of authors are studying the phenomenon of social media, and their number is constantly growing, due to the development of this sphere in general and citizen journalism in particular (Jiang et al., 2019).

Social media uses information technology to turn communication into an interactive dialogue (Niklewicz, 2017). Web 2.0 created such opportunities for communication and worked on the Internet that led to the formation of collective content and common communicative practices (Nath, Dhar & Basishtha, 2014). Social media embody the basic principle of a new information platform – reorientation towards the user. Thanks to the toolkit of the second Web, everyone has the opportunity to become a creator, not a passive consumer of information on the Internet (Sabik et al., 2019). And this cardinal change in the principles of human-computer relationships has affected many types of activities and types of communications (Stohl et al., 2017).

Methodology

To analyze the changes in the role of the consumer of information and to reorient the media to the user, it is necessary to determine the degree of information activity. In particular, the audience is characterized by various degrees of movement in the media sphere: from the choice of media to participating in the production of content or even owning your information channel. There is an opinion that choosing a particular media channel, the reader/listener/viewer, is already participating in the work of the media. However, such an approach to generalizes the roles of web users, combining completely different roles of audience representatives in relation to the media in one category.

To achieve the goal of the study, both general scientific and unique methods were used. Among the general scientific methods are analysis and synthesis (identifying and characterizing trends in the media space; identifying media industry problems and their relationship with the process of building trust), historical study (analyzing the stages of media evolution; periodizing the development of media in the context of information revolutions), a classification and typologisation method (clarification of the typology of converged media; determination of confidence factors; improvement of the classification of areas of convergence).

The paper presents the results of the authors' study conducted using content analysis methods for the period 2016-2019 (N=10000, respondents aged 12-65 years living in cities 50 thousand plus). Respondents were selected from among the journalists who have been working in journalism for at least five years. The choice of journalists for the survey in this study is also because they can simultaneously play the role of both experts and consumers of information, who belong to the audience with a high level of media literacy because they perfectly know and understand the mechanisms and principles of the work of the media.

Results

Today, the convergence process is one of the main trends in the development of the media space, a new stage in the development of the media, which is changing the structure of the media industry through a combination of all types of media – both traditional and new – in one environment. The formation of each media is the result of the information revolution and marks a new stage in the development of the media space. While the emergence of the Internet is considered the most significant information revolution in modern society, the

emphasis is gradually shifting from network, online media to converged media. Thus, media convergence represents a new milestone in the development of mass media and is the main direction of the development of modern media space.

Traditional media are evolving; their development should be understood as a process of changing stages – from the lowest to the highest, that is, as a movement from obsolete forms to new ones within the framework of the laws of transformation over time. Thus, the media is gradually improving. The Internet is now the most dynamic sector of the media market that is becoming the most actively used type of communication in the life of an increasing number of people. This is facilitated by its use for advertising and selling non-media products and full or partial transition of other types of media to partly Internet functioning in the form of websites of print media and television and radio channels. Therefore, the study of network media today is of particular importance and relevance.

Considering the results of the research, it can be concluded that traditional media are gradually losing their audience. Today, the Internet is becoming the only media platform that is expanding its reach, unlike other media. The print press (newspapers, magazines) and radio are rapidly losing ground. Television, despite a decrease in audience reach, retains (Table 1) more or less stable indicators.

Table 1. Audience coverage per day, depending on the type of media (in %)

Year	Magazines	Newspapers	Radio	Internet	TV
2012	55	78	70	15	95
2019	29	47	48	57	91

It was determined that, on average, people spend up to four hours a day on media contacts and, accordingly, about 28 hours a week. Note that over the seven years (2012-2019), the total amount of time that people spend on contacts with the media has not changed. People spend the least time reading newspapers and magazines and listening to the radio. Note that from 2012 to 2019, the reading time of the printed press was halved. Most of the time people spend watching TV channels. It should be emphasized that the weekly time spent watching television channels is gradually decreasing, but the changes are very slight – over seven years, the amount of time has been reduced by just an hour (Table 2). So, the Internet is becoming one of the most popular mass media, as it not only increases the audience coverage at a fast pace, as can be seen in Table 1, but also gradually takes more of audience time. In particular, from 2012 to 2019, the number of hours that people spend on the Internet has increased almost eight times.

Table 2. Time spent on contacts with the media (in hours)

Year	TV	Internet	Radio	Printing press
2012	16	1	7	4
2019	15	8	4	2

It was established that the intensity of the influence of information and the importance of the media as a whole are affected by modern processes of informatization, convergence, and the like. Several characteristics determine changes in the media market:

- (i) A digital environment replaces the mono media environment of traditional media, a multimedia one, where traditional media and new media (online publications, IPTV, blogs) coexist/compete;
- (ii) The name of the media is changing: mass media, whose essential feature focused on the collection of information, it's processing, and dissemination, are approved as mass communication media, which more accurately reflects the nature of media communication with society;

- (iii) Digital technologies help accelerate the pace of life by stimulating media organizations and the media market to change (the integration of the media services market with the technology and information technology markets);
- (iv) Thanks to new technologies, the process of massification of the society is intensifying, which leads to segmentation of the audience and increased competition in the area of media business;
- (v) The emergence of national/local journalism reduces the professional requirements for journalistic standards, levelling the status of the profession of a journalist as a whole. It is different characteristic since professional and citizen journalism coexists in the media space – and the development of citizen journalism, in our opinion, does not mean a change in professional or ethical standards. For example, the provisions of the Code of Professional Ethics of a Journalist are spelled out;
- (vi) Interactivity as a new form of communication is changing the interaction of the media with the audience: to attract the attention of the media, personalized communications must now be built; and
- (vii) The power (and role) of a consumer of media products is growing: a consumer of information can simultaneously perform the functions of a producer of information too.

In modern society, traditional media are being replaced by new communication tools that allow us to receive information and exchange it anywhere, anytime. The role of computer and telecommunication technologies that transform the structure of the media is growing. The Internet as a platform for new and traditional media is the main element of this transformation and a combination of information and communication elements. As a result, the consumption of information from network media is updated. Based on the communicative-spatial, communicative-temporal and socializing functions, as well as the role of self-realization, the Internet can be defined as a global social and communicative network designed to meet the information and communication needs of individuals and groups through the use of telecommunication technologies.

Discussion

Considering the Internet as a means of mass communication, it is essential to note that the opinions of sociologists about the accession of the Internet to the mass media system are somewhat contradictory. In particular, some authors do not recognize the Internet as a medium of mass communication and include only newspapers, radio, and television as the mass media. The Internet, along with magazines, books, and cinema, is not considered to be the media, arguing that many do not have access to the network. Meanwhile, internet coverage is increasing rapidly.

The typology of network media today is developed mainly only by specialists in the field of journalism. Several typologies of converged media on the Internet are highlighted (Chan et al., 2017). They note the lack of universally recognized modern methods of typological analysis of the online media sector, which complicates both theoretical and practical study of the media space of the Internet network. The most general classification of network media distinguishes only two main groups, among which are electronic versions of offline media and electronic media proper. There are two types of online publications, including electronic versions of print media and electronic publications themselves. Still, this classification does not take into account online versions of electronic media such as radio and television. There are three groups of network media: the actual network media (which have no print counterparts), online versions of print media, and mixed resources that combine both original contents and reprinted from the offline version. Online media

is classified by type of material, a form of ownership and other criteria, highlighting news, commentators, and mixed ones; copyright, editorial, and diverse content; monothematic and polythematic; government, owned by media groups and owned by political and business groups; regional and national. Some call this typology too multilevel, but the authors consider it appropriate for modern media development. Thus, two areas of work of the analogy of offline media on the web are determined. Firstly, the online version can completely duplicate the offline edition and restore information in connection with the release of a new print version. Secondly, the online edition can only store the name of offline media, working in an independent, individual mode. However, network media that do not have a print version, and operate exclusively on the Internet.

The classification of network media is based on such criteria as the degree of professionalism, accessibility for readers, the audience principle, the nature of the published information, the frequency of updates, the method of disseminating information, the method of working with information, functional, formal and style attributes, the nature of reflection and social orientation. The following typological criteria are distinguished, such as the frequency of updating information (daily, monthly), subject-specific areas (news, analytical, socio-political, regional and other publications), type of founder (state, private), availability of state registration, the territory of distribution, degree of accessibility of information.

The authors believe that a multilevel concept can be formulated, which combines criteria – from technological (selection of information distribution channels) to qualitative characteristics of content, offers several pairs of classification criteria: professional/amateur; news/analytical; general/specialized; paid/free media, distributed directly through the site/by messaging through the newsletter. The second variant of the typology is based on a variety of information resources: the actual network media and versions of traditional ones; news, commentary, and mixed; monothematic and polythematic; by ownership—state, media, and political groups, business groups and independent; targeting a specific audience— national and regional.

Network media are also divided into such subspecies as online magazines and newspapers, news agencies, information retrieval systems, portals, mailing lists. Meanwhile, as the analysis of approaches to the definition of online media testifies, the classification of information retrieval systems and mailing services as the mass media is very controversial, they offer the following classification principles: genre content, variety (nature) of information, efficiency, as well as an analogy with traditional offline media. Among the main types are Internet television, Internet radio, as well as the Internet press, divided into two groups: online newspapers and online magazines. News sites, which include a group of websites operating in a more operational mode than online newspapers and magazines, are reviewed separately.

It is proposed to classify information resources on the Internet by similarities with traditional counterparts: online newspapers, magazines, online radio, television and news agencies that supply information from teletype tapes. An alternative to network information resources, in which a whole staff of professional journalists' works, are the author's projects and blogs. An author's project is an accessible resource that is well visited, created and supported by efforts of one person, and in which the products of his/her work are manifested (Pathak & Priyam, 2019). Author's projects are seen as the first experience of online journalism.

These typologies do not take into account such an influential media resource as social media, which, despite the controversy regarding their classification as mass media, is gaining momentum and popularity. Based on the analyzed typologies, the following

types of online media are proposed by us: (i) network versions of traditional media (magazines, newspapers, television, radio); (ii) websites of news agencies; (iii) purely network analogues of conventional media (Internet radio, online magazine, Internet television, etc.); (iv) informational web portals; and (v) social media (social networks, blogosphere).

Today, author blogs are an integral part of journalism. They are included in the structure of network versions/analogues of traditional media, and online publications, thus claiming a specialized platform for the author's presentation of information based on the capabilities of Web 2.0. One of the characteristics of blogs is that they embody the idea of decentralizing the media. A large number of blogs, whose authors present different views, minimizes the influence of media empires – with their monopoly on information and the formation of public opinion (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Several positive aspects of using blogs in journalistic informational activities are noted. Firstly, blogs have a powerful impact on the audience, because readers tend to visit the blogs of those journalists who are sympathetic, and, therefore, the information from them is perceived as more truthful and has a higher confidence coefficient. Blogs have a different presentation. If the traditional media focuses on the fact itself, then the blog text consists of thoughts, its analysis, that is, the blog is positioned as a source of analytical information.

Most bloggers (including video bloggers) are not professional journalists, but Internet users of various specialties who use their right to express personal opinions. In this case, social networks are the main channel of indirect communication, which, in turn, actualizes the problem of attributing social media to the media. It should be noted that, in addition to the information function, social media perform the function of public self-presentation. The motives for the participation of individuals in open communication as content authors are explained through the concept of social narcissism and the individualization of social reality, increasing the fragmentation of social ties in society.

The development of social media determines the emergence of new trends in journalism, its new types (Jiang et al., 2019). The existence of online journalism as a separate industry is also confirmed by the fact that thanks to the platform of the Web 2.0, everyone can become an author of an information product, that is, a journalist. However, it is essential to consider that the very concept of online journalism, although associated with the use of electronic media, information and communication technologies, including the second Web, is not limited to this. There are a large number of varieties of journalism-related mainly to its genre and theme. Still, three types of it should be distinguished, such as social journalism, online journalism, and citizen journalism.

To date, online journalism has gone through several stages of its formation: a period of author projects; period of online media; period of commercialization of online journalism, Web 2.0 period. This scheme is based on a change in the position of online journalism in the media market. Another scheme based on the distinction of technologies looks like this (Nath, Dhar & Basishtha, 2014): amateur journalism at USENET conferences (1990-1996); formation of professional online journalism Web 1.0 (1996-2003); professional and amateur journalism 2.0 – Web 2.0 technologies (2003 – up to now). With the actualization of discussions about Web 3, it is possible to add professional interactive online journalism with active feedback from the audience. Web 2.0 platforms (blogs, social networks, websites for posting their photos and videos) greatly facilitated the exchange of information for users. Own opinion of consumers – in the form of ratings, reviews, ratings, is published on the web almost everywhere. Thus, the social network transfers the information and communication (server) function to the user. The user establishes communications, monitors their stability, manages flows, that is, makes communications.

Social networks can be considered as converging media of a new type, different in that in them the main product and, accordingly, their main task becomes the creation of

communication structures, that is, groups of people united by some common feature. Among the main properties of social media there is the de-institutionalization of social media, which allows everyone to create and distribute their content; a combination of consumer and content producer roles; interactivity of social media, which, on the one hand, makes it possible to create numerous communicative practices, and on the other hand, strengthens the influence of Internet corporations on an individual.

The authors do not consider social networks the full media because of the low-quality information. There is a lack of objectivity and credibility inherent in social networks and blogs. In our opinion, it should be noted that social networks were born as a technology of interpersonal communications for establishing friendships. However, today their role has expanded significantly – they have entered almost all spheres of human life, have become a platform for business relations. Social networks combine both levels of interaction – interpersonal and mass because individual pages on social networks that claim to be media should have more than a thousand audiences. This also applies to blogs that may have thousands of people.

Among other important issues, the role of social media in the formation of civil society should be examined. It is manifested through the penetration of social media into the public sphere, ensuring the possibility of implementation of the right to freedom of speech and mobilizing the public community. The issue of objectivity, because in social networks and blogs, the personality comes to the fore. That is, unlike traditional media, which represent an entire organization or even an institution as a whole, in the blogosphere, there is only one blogger behind the information.

Social media, despite the disputes of scientists regarding their classification as media, is a piece of powerful information and communication channel (Süral, Griffiths, Kircaburun, & Emirtekin, 2019). In the report from the Reuters Institute (N=18859), according to the results of a study of digital news, in 2019, data appeared on the role of social networks in the dissemination of news (Table 3) (Digital News Report, 2019).

Table 3. Use of social networks for any purpose (in %)

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	VK	WhatsApp	LinkedIn	Instagram	Pinecrest	Reddit
To receive news	25	37	10	10	11	6	7	4	2
Other use	35	15	9	7	6	4	2	2	2

The social network Facebook, which is used by 60% of respondents (all countries included in the sample), is used as a source of news by more than half of them (35%). YouTube is a source of news for 15% of 52% of users; Twitter is for 9% of 19%; VK is used for news by 7% of 17% of network visitors. So, social networks are the primary source of socially significant information for a large number of people. The convergence of social media with other mass media makes available to their users all levels of information participation and provides interactive interaction of media with the audience. Thanks to social media, the interaction of the user of information with its producer goes to the interpersonal level.

Conclusion

In the study of social media and, accordingly, citizen or social journalism, there are two directions for their determination. On the one hand, the social component of journalism itself is noted. Therefore, social journalism as an industry is seen in the context of journalism coverage of social problems in society, orientation towards citizens, and their legal, informational, and economic protection. Some theorists emphasize the limitations

of this approach to the definition of “social journalism” – solely as a reflection of reality and informing the audience about social problems. Social journalism is involved in the regulation of relations between people and social groups, affecting both social relations and the social structure. This approach to the interpretation of social journalism contains the concept of the social essence of journalism because the work of the media system is focused on solving social problems, helping people make competent decisions, uniting people and social institutions around social situations.

A converged media journalist should be able to not only write texts, but also make videos, record audio podcasts, edit stories, and work with blogs. For this, it is essential for a “universal” journalist to learn to think in a multimedia way. Also, the profession of a modern journalist involves mobility, efficiency, and accessibility at any time of the day. Correspondents, in addition to direct duties, take on the functions of SMM-specialists. While at the event, a journalist takes photographs and uploads them to various social communities with a description of the place and action, thus announcing the event and motivating social media users to watch the news broadcast of the television company.

At this stage, not all regional mass media are ready for the convergence process. Many district newspapers still do not have electronic formats for presenting information, or do not disseminate information promptly, fearing a reduction in the subscription. Thus, print media refuse to attract new consumers of information. As a recommendation, such editorial offices can be advised to increase the number of sites on which information can be published. Thanks to online publications, not only a resident of a particular area – a newspaper subscriber – will be able to receive information, but also many social media users from different cities of Kazakhstan and other countries. Social journalism is associated with non-professional and amateur journalism, that is, the creation and distribution of content by citizens who do not work in the media space. In this context, concepts such as citizen journalism or folk journalism are more often used.

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