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## **Media Globalisation and Desacralisation of a Journalist’s Image**

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**Abstract.** The media is becoming the main source of information about the surrounding reality in the digital environment. In fact, they shape the reality. They become a powerful instrument of influencing mass consciousness through symbols and values. The media industry, information consumption practices as well as the role of a journalist are changing in the context of new media. The results of the survey (n=750) have shown that the younger generation trusts information posted on social networks and does not distinguish the professional work of a journalist from the activities of bloggers and citizen

journalists. In addition, the boundaries of social and psychological roles between an author and a user are vanishing, the differences between statuses are faded, and professional values of journalism are undergoing changes.

**Keywords:** globalization, desacralization, image, journalist, media

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation increasingly shapes and frames modern society, and the media plays the leading role in this process. According to Toffler, globalisation endows the media with great power that permeates the entire planet [Toffler, 1990].

We are witnessing deep penetration of the media into everyday life [Schultz, 2004, 87–101], which suggests the status of modern society as mediated. According to Krotz, mediatisation is the main principle by which people construct the social and cultural world [Krotz, 2009]. The media are able to expand the natural boundaries of one's communication capacity. They also replace those activities and processes that previously could only be carried out by direct communication [Schultz, 2004, 87–101].

The media is becoming the main source of information about the surrounding reality in the digital environment. In fact, they shape the reality and redefine social and cultural norms. They become a powerful instrument of influencing mass consciousness through symbols and values.

If we consider the media as a driving force of globalisation, then it is worth talking about media globalisation, which could be defined as 'a set of integrative processes in the media aimed at expanding the communication space around the world, at achieving the effects of totality, and unification of information services on an international scale' [Markina, 2014, 99]. Another interpretation of media globalisation sounds like 'unhindered round-the-clock movement of information flows in which media content, regardless of the nationality of its creators, circulates' [Glebova, 2018, 166].

In the process of media globalisation, the media set the agenda and construct a new reality that could be called 'media reality'. In media reality, a person is considered as a 'person of media consciousness' or 'media person' [Vartanova, 2009], whose being is determined and formed by the content of the media. Back in the early 90s of the last century, an English sociologist Thompson suggested that the role of the media as a new institute is to convey not only information but also cultural patterns [Thompson, 1995].

The media and journalists convey values into the society. The younger generation is more influenced by the media. This could be explained by the fact that young people most often choose the internet as a source of news and trust online media more than other channels [FOM, 2020]. In addition, there is a tendency to increase involvement of the younger generation in interaction with the media. Thus, the media act as a tool for re-shaping the social and cultural values and attitudes of young people [Karpova, 2019].

At the same time, journalism itself as a social institution and professional activity undergoes essential transformation that has come with the advent of new media. The technologies of content creation are changing, the image of a journalist is being transformed, and the range of tasks and functions of the profession is expanding.

New media reality actualises the issues of transformation of journalist's professional principles and values. The key characteristics of the new media environment are interactivity, multimedia and hypertextuality. Deuze argues that journalism ceases to be text-centered since news is broadcast through various platforms: internet venues, mobile media, radio, and television [Deuze, 2004, 140]. The presentation of information seeks to maximise visualisation using videos, photos, and infographics. At the same time, the world is faced with an oversupply of information, information noise, and even 'information garbage'. In response to the increased amount of information, the clip thinking occurs which could be described as a perception of the world as a set of fragmentary images.

Journalism is diversifying to meet consumer preferences and demands. Content needs to be presented in a way that captures and retains the audience's attention. At the same time, in connection with the spread of fake news, such information qualities as reliability, accuracy of presentation, and verification are being paid more attention to. Moreover, it is argued that the word 'consumer' no longer sounds entirely appropriate, since, in the digital environment, the user, to some extent, also becomes a co-author and a co-editor of a text.

An important role is also played by such a distinctive feature of network communications as decentralisation, which leads to a redefinition of the relationship between journalists and the audience. Users publicly express their attitude to media texts in comments, assess the author's professionalism, criticise, and ask questions. Editors and journalists, in turn, respond to users in order to keep in touch with their audience. As a result, the distance

between authors and users is shrinking. On the one hand, this strengthens credibility of the media, enables a journalist to constantly improve his skills and be as transparent as possible. On the other hand, the boundaries of social and psychological roles between an author and a user are vanishing, and the differences between statuses are fading. An increasing number of the audience who have basic content creation skills leads to desacralisation of journalism. A journalist is losing his monopoly on spreading information and shaping the agenda.

That is also exacerbated by the growing competition in the new media space between journalists and other content creators. We are talking about struggle for the audience's attention, since advertisers are interested in its size. In addition to citizen journalists, bloggers, whose content is sometimes more entertaining than that of professional journalists, grab the attention of an online audience. Comparing journalists and bloggers are hardly possible to achieve. A blogger has arguably no explicit goal of informing the audience as he interprets the already available information and expresses his own opinion. Therefore, he tends to be subjective and emotional and does not adhere to 'blogging' principles. The challenge is that an average user is not always able to distinguish a professional journalist from a blogger.

As a result of decentralisation of network communications, desacralisation of the profession and influence of the blogosphere, the image of a journalist is blurred. All this leads to a necessity to study the image of a journalist perceived by the young audience. Therefore, the main purpose of the study was to analyse the opinions of young people about the role of professional journalism and a professional journalist in modern society. To achieve this goal, we formulated the three following research tasks: to study the factors of credibility in the internet media, to study the perceptions of journalists' independence, and to study the opinions on the influence of journalists on the daily life of people.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

During the first stage, original data was collected using an online survey of students and working youth from 18 to 30 years old. The survey was conducted in the city of Ekaterinburg in the fall of 2019. The key theme of the survey was the role of professional journalism. The survey gathered responses from 750 people (46.7 % students and 53.3 % employed, 40 % males and 60 % females). An average time to complete the questionnaire

was 15 minutes. The authors created a standardised survey guide consisting of 12 questions. The respondents were given an opportunity to express their own opinion by answering open-ended and semi-closed questions. The data obtained was processed using the SPSS 20.

At the second stage, a series of in-depth interviews was conducted with 10 students (5 males and 5 females), who were among the survey respondents. The key theme of the discussion was the role of a journalist in modern society. The interview consisted of 10 questions. The interviews lasted about 20 minutes each. The interview responses were transcribed and coded. The coding made it possible to identify the commonalities and differences between the respondents' opinions, which facilitated the interpretation of the data.

### **3. Results and discussions**

The growing audience of social networks, as well as the rapid expansion of the mobile internet, give users an opportunity to 'read' news on the internet in a variety of ways. The young audience of internet media actively grabs such an opportunity: easy access to news practically anywhere and anytime becomes one of the main advantages of new media.

Credibility in modern society is a router of attention and a key component of social capital [Putnam, 1993]. According to the survey, the most respondents trust internet portals (71.8 %), social networks (49.3 %), and news aggregators (30.2 %). However, young workers, in contrast to students, tend to trust Telegram channels (30.5 %) rather than news aggregators. YouTube bloggers are trusted by only one fifth of those surveyed. The results corroborated the studies by the Levada Center [Levada Center, 2019] and the Public Opinion Foundation [FOM, 2019]. Young people do trust internet publications and social networks, as they rarely use other channels of information.

An important issue is the question of defining the factors of credibility in modern internet sources. This issue was raised during interviews with young generation — active internet users. Almost all respondents indicated reputation of an internet resource as the basis of credibility. One of the foundations of credibility is predictability [McKnight, Chervany, 1996] which was defined as confidence that expectations will coincide with reality. Reputation acts as a relatively reliable guarantor that expectations will be met. The correlation is constructed as follows: the better reputation, the higher the degree of predictability and, accordingly, credibility:

*I follow only those resources that have a high reputation, for example, RosBiznesConsulting. They are more trusted than some one-day websites.* (a female respondent)

Thus, reputation reflects social expectations and influences the choice of certain users. This is why we can view a positive reputation as a powerful argument for credibility.

Another credibility factor is the extent to which a particular news website is known. Recognition is the first step to gaining credibility:

*Well-known internet portals and networks, for example, Typical Ekaterinburg, are more credible.* (a male respondent)

Recognition of digital resources is important today. At the same time, recognition as a whole is a fairly universal tool that works equally effectively in various fields of life.

Freedom of expression is a factor of credibility for a third of those interviewed, who note the need to provide an opportunity for the audience to express their own opinions. In this case, we are talking about the activity of users who act not only as a consumer of content, but also as its creator, who has an opportunity to make comments, supplement or refute the information:

*Sometimes, I post comments when the topic is really catchy.* (a female respondent)

At the same time, the audience is expected to have an even more careful and critical attitude to content, and the ability to distinguish between journalism of facts and journalism of opinions.

A significant factor of credibility is the absence of precedents of publishing inaccurate information:

*I trust only time-tested websites, those in which I have no doubt.* (a male respondent)

There is an obvious connection between this factor and reputation, since by posting false or biased information the editors of any internet media risk discrediting themselves in the eyes of the audience and not meeting their expectations as a quality informant. We would note that this factor of credibility does not require a high level of criticality or any activity from the audience; we would emphasise that credibility is 'given by default' and is valid as long as the internet resource does not discredit itself.

Other factor of credibility is identity or association: a consumer trusts such sources of information that are within his comfort zone. Preservation

of one's own worldview and confirmation of one's own beliefs and views, but not questions of reliability and objectivity of information, define preferences:

*My grandmother and mother are watching Vesti 24 and reading news on the E1 website. As far as I understand, they feel comfortable as they share the position of the source. But it is clear that those who are in opposition to the existing government will look at other resources. It's clearer and more comfortable to live knowing that there are people who share your opinion.* (a male respondent)

The results of in-depth interviews demonstrated the following phenomenon: none of the participants identified the authors of the materials (in our case, journalists) as a source and factor of credibility in the internet resource. This indicates that authorship is becoming a grey area which is relatively insignificant for the young audience. A journalist as a representative of professional community ceases to be a significant recognisable figure in the internet space:

*I think that the world is accelerating, and authorship no longer plays such a significant role as before. Copywriters and rewriters are everywhere, the primary source cannot be found, and today nobody is looking for it.* (a female respondent)

The study paid particular attention to the attitudes towards bloggers and citizen journalists. During the interview, the respondents expressed a positive assessment of the bloggers' activities:

*I believe we need bloggers. Maybe, they are not journalists in the full sense, but the audience is interested in their views. Many people listen to their opinion. I think the future of the internet belongs to bloggers.* (a male respondent)

At the same time, during the survey, we tried to determine the role of professional journalism in the modern social system. According to the participants, the role of journalism is, first of all, to inform the society (66.4 %), and, secondly, to shape opinions, views and values of the audience (61.4 %). A third of the respondents believe that journalists provide an assessment and explanation of the facts. 22.9 % of the respondents believe that the task of journalism is to raise public awareness, and 12.3 % believe that a journalist's role is to scrutinise the government.

In general, these findings corroborate the results of a recent study conducted by the Mediastandard Foundation. However, the differences are evident in the perception of such roles as the forming opinions (in the Mediastandard Foundation survey it was chosen by a smaller part of the respon-

dents (11 %), and scrutinising the government (which was highly regarded by a third of their study's respondents) [Mediastandard, 2018, 21].

These differences might be explained by the fact that young people are either apolitical, or because they do not see examples of the influence of the media on the government, and, therefore, do not consider the role of scrutinising the government as obvious. As for the journalist's task to shape opinions, views and values of different social communities, young people, unlike other age groups, do not associate this role of journalism with ideology or propaganda, as was the case in the Soviet period. In addition, among large flows of information presented on the internet and social networks, those materials that have a pronounced position of the author and emotional colouring attract a young user. This is the information that, as a rule, draws public attention and a large number of varying opinions of readers in the comments.

The survey also attempted to evaluate the activities of professional journalists from three perspectives — positive, neutral, and negative — by asking the respondents to select the appropriate statements. Most young people adhere to a neutral position and agree with the statement 'modern journalists are dependent on their superiors and act according to their instructions' (68.6 %). The second most frequent statement was 'modern journalists distort the facts and introduce chaos and disorder' (19.2 %). Finally, the least popular among young people statement was 'modern journalists try to improve life in Russia by providing objective information' (12.2 %).

A similar question was asked in the aforementioned study by the Mediastandard Foundation. More than half of their respondents (60 %) agreed that 'journalists, as a rule, are dependent people who act in the interests of their superiors. At the same time, half of the respondents agree that many journalists 'sincerely strive to improve life in Russia' (55 %). Finally, only a third of the respondents (36 %) chose the negative statement 'journalists often bring discord into the society' [Mediastandard, 2018].

These differences in terms of negative and positive assessments between young people and the older population are most likely related to a trend reported by the researchers of the Mediastandard Foundation. They argued for a shift in the responses of the youth group towards a more negative perception of journalists.

An additional challenge for professional journalists is the development of citizen journalism. Today anyone can post text, photo, and video of various content on the internet. As one of the respondents noted:



*This makes professional journalists stay ahead all the time. (a female respondent)*

Accordingly, the issue of competition between representatives of the journalist community and individuals claiming to be citizen journalists is becoming more acute. This leads to eroding of the boundaries of professional journalism and an institutional crisis of journalism in general. The role of the profession of a journalist is being questioned:

*I don't know how the media in general will develop, but it is already clear that the internet will become the main source of news, and there will be bloggers, citizen journalists, and professional journalists. The one who publish the information faster will win. (a female respondent)*

### **Conclusions**

The research draws the following conclusions. First, the results of the survey indicate diversified public requirements for modern journalism and a variety of expected social roles of a journalist. The perceptions of young people about modern Russian journalists differ from the perceptions of the whole population. This is primarily attributed to the fact that young people trust such sources of information as internet websites and social networks.

Second, in the modern media reality, the issue of deformation of a journalist's image has become more acute. Its emergence was influenced by several factors such as the digital revolution and changes within the profession. Deformation of the image of a journalist is expressed in the contradiction between what is expected and what is given and between the perceptions of various authors about the mission and tasks of the profession. In addition, professional journalists compete with bloggers and citizen journalists, which reduces the importance of professional journalism and leads to the erosion of the image of a journalist as a whole.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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## **Reflection of University Students' Interethnic Tolerance in Russian Media Education: Past and Present**

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the issue of students' interethnic tolerance in Russian scientific research. The aim is to identify the main periods of the development of interethnic tolerance issue in the post-Soviet times. Analyzing social and cultural, theoretical and methodological aspects of the research in the context of media education is strategically important for defining the main approaches to the further development of media education.

**Keywords:** Interethnic tolerance, media education, periods of development, post-Soviet times

### **1. Introduction**

The aggravation of interethnic relations among younger generation in the contemporary social and cultural conditions make it relevant to analyze