

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Impact Of Digital Technologies On Journalism: Transformation In Journalistic Functions

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## Abstract

This article examines the traditional and new functions of journalists that have emerged as a result of technological development, digital transformation, convergence, and mediatization. New roles that have appeared due to the intensification of information flows, rapid development of social networks, and the emergence of citizen journalism are revealed using examples from foreign media. Current problems in local journalism and practical proposals for their resolution are presented.

## KEY WORDS

Journalism, journalistic functions, digital transformation, convergence, mediatization, SEO, fact-checking.

## INTRODUCTION

Journalism is changing because it is part of society. Society, in turn, has a dynamic nature, constantly changing and renewing itself. For instance, today modern journalism is undergoing a dramatic digital transformation. The widespread use of the Internet, mobile devices, social networks and artificial intelligence is fundamentally altering the function of traditional mass media.

This transformation has significantly impacted not only the form and distribution channels of journalistic products but also the journalist's functions in society[1]. The speed of information delivery, interaction with users, and the ability to produce multimedia content have led to a renewal of the communicative model of journalism. Now journalists are becoming not just news distributors, but digital content creators who engage in interactive dialogue with listeners, readers, or viewers, taking their opinions into account. Therefore, it is important to conduct research on the impact of digital technologies on journalism, particularly how the

functions of journalists have changed, new requirements for journalists, and issues of ethics and skills.

So, what is a function?

Everything, living and non-living, has its own purpose in this world. For example, a car brings distant places closer, and water serves multiple functions. Thus, if something does not perform any function in nature, it is considered unnecessary.

From a scientific perspective, a function is a task, activity, or role performed by a certain social institution, structure, or entity in society[2].

So, what is the role of journalism?

Journalism is an institution that provides the information environment of society. Its functions include reporting, monitoring, commenting, and shaping public opinion[3].

In essence, journalism is a multifunctional system, formed based on the needs of social institutions and the mass

audience. Also, each function of journalism can vary depending on the type and format of the media (newspaper, television, internet, podcast, etc.). Secondly, journalism is a form of creativity. Creativity requires constant renewal. Therefore, with the rapid development of technology in this field, along with the methods and formats of information delivery, the functions of journalists are also changing.

### **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM FUNCTIONS.**

In the figurative words of Evgeny Pavlovich Prokhorov, the "field of functions" encompasses ideological, cultural-educational, direct organizational, advertising-informational, and recreational functions[4]. Another researcher - Professor S.G. Korkonosenko, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the press as a social phenomenon, distinguishes the following social roles of journalism: production-economic, information-communication, regulatory, and spiritual-ideological[5].

According to I.Y. Glinskaya's classification, there are information, communication, reflection, and management functions[6].

Thus, based on the research of scholars, we note the generally recognized functions of traditional mass media: information, communication, ideological, cultural-educational, organizational, relaxation (leisure), control, interpretation (analysis, discussion), and advertising.

Changes in the functions of journalism stem from changes in the journalism system. What new tasks are journalists performing today in the process of digital transformation, how have their traditional roles been reshaped, and how are these changes affecting the relationship with society and the audience? Such questions are among the issues that need to be studied in modern media studies and journalism theory.

The role of the press in deciding what information the public should or should not know is no longer a strict definition of journalism[7]. Today, the boundary between the journalist and the reader, the viewer and the listener has blurred. Additionally, citizen journalism has emerged due to users actively participating in news production. As a result, anyone can generate and distribute information online. This demonstrates the difficulty in providing a complete and accurate answer to the question "Who is a journalist today?"

So, how have traditional journalistic functions evolved on the internet? For instance, the informative function is now

performed not only by journalists but by any internet user. A citizen who records unexpected events on a mobile phone and shares them on social networks is acting as a journalist. They might not realize that the video they filmed is sensational, having only recorded it for friends and colleagues. But this video can unexpectedly spread worldwide. Today, the dissemination of news has accelerated with the help of such ordinary citizens. Consequently, the modern journalist is no longer just an informant, but an analyst, interpreter, communicator with the audience, manager of media traffic on digital platforms, and participant in cultural and political processes. This leads to the formation of journalistic functions such as editorial, communicative, interactive, fact-checking, and educational.

In digital media, a journalist often acts as a content curator - selecting relevant information from the existing flow and commenting on it. Simultaneously, in the digital environment, journalists establish interactive communication with the audience and consider their opinions and suggestions[8]. For example, they can exchange views on social networks, answer questions, and organize polls.

Additionally, journalists often work as multimedia content creators - producing audio, video, and graphic elements alongside text. Consequently, to meet the demands of flexibility and multifunctionality, today's journalists seemingly need skills such as working on mobile devices, managing social media marketing and social networks, and using visualization software.

### **AUDIENCE DEMANDS AND NEW FUNCTIONAL CHANGES.**

At first glance, while journalism remains fundamentally the same in terms of its content and responsibilities, the rapid development of technology has necessitated journalists to acquire new skills. This shift has led to the creation of new positions in media organizations. For example, the Washington Post employs a social media editor in the newsroom; USA Today and the New York Times also employ newsroom staff with job descriptions of social media editor and social media analyst[9].

Looking at numerous media organizations, we can observe the emergence of new roles such as SEO (search engine optimization) specialist and social media editor. The primary responsibility of these individuals is to manage and monitor the circulation of produced content in the online environment.

For example, SEO practices not only demonstrate the superiority of technological operations but also influence daily work, agenda communication, and editorial production process planning. For example, what is expected from SEO experts who work in the news centers of newspapers such as the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times is to determine the most searched words during the day by examining the search engines and to ensure that the news content is created in line with these words. The contents created by this method will ensure that the relevant news is at the top of the result pages, which will increase the reading rate of the newspaper. SEO professionals employed by major media outlets are often made up of people with tech expertise but no journalistic background.

SEO practices do not only represent the dominance of technological operation, but also affect the routine developments during the day, the communication of the agenda and the editorial production planning. Therefore, SEO practices are not only the responsibility of the expert working in that field, but also the editorial staff. [10].

Scientific research indicates that the boundaries of the journalistic profession are expanding. The convergence process has updated journalists' functions. New roles have emerged in convergent media, including: story producer, user-generated content editor, news manager, interactive content designer, digital rights manager, and social media coordinator[11]. Story producers guide media workers on how to process multimedia data and structure the flow of events. These individuals are familiar with the forms and characteristics of stories conveyed through each media outlet. News managers are responsible for developing appropriate information for various media channels. There is a growing need for editors to monitor and verify photos and information provided by citizen journalists. Digital rights managers are tasked with protecting the media organization's rights to use content or the rights of content creators. Interactive content designer positions require both technical software skills and knowledge in the field of journalism. Social media coordinators are responsible for sharing content across various social networks and engaging users in discussions about the shared content.

As journalism practices evolve, it appears that today's media professionals must simultaneously possess multiple skills. Saltzis and Dickinson suggest that allowing journalists to have multiple talents could reduce misunderstandings in journalism

[12]. For example, journalists in convergent media organizations can work across multiple platforms such as television, newspapers, or the internet. However, the BBC, which had initially encouraged its journalists to develop multiple talents within the organization, eventually abandoned this practice. The BBC now adheres to a policy that a talented radio reporter does not necessarily have to be an equally proficient television reporter. From this perspective, unlike many others, the BBC prioritizes content quality over cost reduction.

One of the main tasks facing journalists is to prepare products based on the audience's demand, that is, to produce content. However, it is not always necessary to comply with this requirement, especially if it contradicts the journalist's educational function. Unfortunately, today, low-quality content is increasing due to audience demand. Content that is analytical and educational has a small audience. People's interest in private life has grown. Consequently, genres, formats, and styles on the Internet are changing. While traditional journalism provides content in news, reviews, reports, articles, interviews, and other genres, digital media has expanded the boundaries of journalistic content through social media posts, memes, comments, user opinions, blogs, podcasts, quick responses, and life hacks. Information posted by individuals on their personal profiles has also become part of general content today. As a result, anyone with a smartphone is inadvertently becoming an information producer. On June 2, 2024, a video spread on social networks of a girl insulting and using rude words towards people from the regions. The girl filmed herself at a recreational facility in Tashkent, unjustifiably disparaging people from the regions, and posted the video on her Instagram page. On the same day, this video was widely circulated, and a trial regarding this case took place on June 3.

Indeed, since digital technologies have allowed ordinary users to produce information, managing, controlling, and regulating information flows has become complex, and disinformation and misinformation have increased in online journalism. The rise in disinformation has necessitated strengthening investigative mechanisms to make journalism a shield against this issue and a creator of authentic news. This has placed new demands on journalists. It has become necessary to balance the ecosystem of online journalism by deeply understanding and effectively applying concepts such as disinformation and social responsibility, artificial intelligence,

automated content and media literacy, and journalistic ethics in professional activities. This is because one of the main problems today is the spread of false information and rumors. "With the rapid spread of information through digital technologies, the number of false messages is also increasing. Therefore, journalists are required to prove the truth and verify facts.[13]

For this purpose, there are various fact-checking platforms: FactCheck.org, Snopes, PolitiFact, FullFact (<http://www.factcheck.org>, <http://www.snopes.com/fact-check/>, <http://www.politifact.co>, <http://fullfact.org>). However, these are not sufficient. There is a need to strengthen the responsibility of information disseminators and to adapt codes of ethics to modern media.

Digital technologies have also created problems regarding financial and independence issues. As advertising has become the main source of income on digital platforms, pressure on content quality and freedom is increasing in some cases. This leads to conflicts between a journalist's professional ethics and commercial interests. Indeed, from the perspective of mass media, journalism has become commercialized, but this should not prevent journalists from assuming the role of public servants. Journalism has important functions, such as analyzing pressing issues, reporting in the public interest, exposing shortcomings, ensuring that measures are taken to correct them, and supporting the mechanism for the functioning of laws. Therefore, despite technical and financial circumstances, it must maintain its integrity and fulfill its primary journalistic function.

Thus, digital technologies are radically changing the form and content of journalism, as well as the tasks of journalists. A journalist is no longer just a messenger, but also a content creator, commentator, curator, analyst, editor, and participant. They must become specialists with modern technology management skills, capable of communicating with their audience and ensuring the reliability of information. This is because in the digital media environment, "multi-subjectivity" has intensified: bloggers, influencers, Telegram channel managers, and podcasters have begun to compete with journalists. The monopoly of journalism is eroding.

#### **FROM ORDINARY CONSUMERS TO INDIVIDUAL MEDIA.**

Considering the challenges of digitalization and focusing on the additional opportunities that digital journalism offers to the

audience, A. Kammer examines the interaction between consumers and creators of media discourse. He identifies four types of collaboration: messaging, cooperation, conversation, and metacommunication[14]. Based on the author's perspective, let us explain these: the first type is founded on the principle that the audience provides journalists with necessary information. In this case, journalists utilize the audience's potential while maintaining control over news production. The exchange of information occurs behind the scenes, and this method is particularly useful when journalists cannot directly access the event location. Typically, it is not indicated that the information comes from the audience, thus preserving the journalist's institutional role. The journalist selects events to cover, edits information, and prepares the media product. In the second type of collaboration, the audience becomes an active participant, engaging in news preparation and performing journalistic tasks. Users personally analyze situations, create news content, and distribute it to various platforms, such as official media sites or personal blogs. The third type involves direct interaction between journalists and users. When discussing significant events or processes, meaningful audience content emerges. The ease of conversation and focus on the emotional aspects of news presentation creates a unique journalistic product (such as podcasts). This approach is often more effective with audience participation than a journalist's standard material on the same topic. The fourth type is metacommunication, which scholars define as "communication that occurs beyond and above direct information exchange." In this case, the focus shifts from the event itself to discussing aspects of preparing the report. For example, the technical specifications of cameras, their quantity, the composition of the creative team, the editing process, nuances of software use, participants' moods, voice tones, and other elements are discussed. This allows amateurs who produce personal content to gain valuable experience in professional practice. Through metacommunication, one can learn to set agendas, manage conversation direction, identify crucial information, develop news, improvise, and acquire professional methodologies.

The key takeaway from these ideas is that previously, journalists were information producers and the audience was the consumer. Today, due to the megaphone effect, the audience has also become an information producer. Consequently, the journalist's role now demands greater responsibility, accuracy, and commitment to social duty.

The author Vartanova, summarizing various scholars' opinions, notes the following new functions of journalism in the context of digital transformation:

Adaptation function - adapting to the digital environment, working on new platforms;

Integration function - strengthening connections between social institutions and people;

Humanitarian function - protecting human rights, values and interests;

Social construction function - shaping new social realities in society;

PR function - regulating public relations (reason: the roles of journalists and PR are converging);

Analytical functions - not only presenting information, but also analyzing and explaining it;

Initiative function - not just observing, but also driving social changes in society;

Creative function - producing creative content, like bloggers and content creators;

Emotional functions - influencing psychological states, maintaining balance[15].

When we combine all these functions, it becomes clear that a journalist is the most essential person for society. Because the events occurring in life are not mere facts, they embody social creativity, renewal of thought, and cultural changes. Thus, it becomes evident that the development of digital technologies has accelerated the process of mediatization.

What is mediatization? How does it affect social changes and the function of journalism?

Mediatization is the process by which all spheres of society's life, including politics, culture, education, and others, change under the influence of media and adapt to media logic[16]. As Stig Hjarvard explains, societal institutions are adapting to the media, and simultaneously, the media are becoming an integral part of other institutions such as politics, work, family, and religion. This is because an increasingly large portion of institutional activity is carried out both through interactive and mass media.

According to V.P. Kolomiys, "digitalization is the integration of the media component into social institutions and processes"[17]. It is the development of digital technologies

that has shaped a mediatized society. Indeed, mass media had a significant impact on society before, but the 21st century brought an entirely different type of communication technology. Social media penetrated all formats of communication and carried out a genuine communication revolution, transforming ordinary consumers into full-fledged content authors. Social media has become the main driving force of mediatization, as no media outlet before had the power to spread and attract on such a large scale.

Modern society is undoubtedly under the strong influence of social networks. Consequently, social media has significantly altered social reality. For example, people often perceive news on social networks as objective, without even considering whether this information is based on reality or not. Gradually, events in the virtual world are replacing those of the real world.

If we pay attention, indeed, all spheres of life are under the influence of media. Modern media has now become not only a technological platform but also a full-fledged institution that has a powerful influence on social life and other societal institutions. The penetration of media into everyday life is so profound that many social processes can no longer be considered without the media component, which confirms the mediatized nature of modern society[18].

Mediatization is not only about technology but also the reorganization of culture, thought, and activity through media. Mediatization also changes people's way of perceiving events, their worldview, and moral perspectives through media. In other words, life is being reconstructed through media. As a result, mass culture and views change rapidly, people's understanding of life and truth is formed through media, the boundaries between personal and social life blur, and the functions of journalism become more important and complex. Thus, the journalist is seen in this process not only as an observer but also as an active participant and formative force.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is functional hybridization and diffusion with other fields (advertising, PR) - which makes it difficult to delineate the boundaries of the profession. Journalism is becoming a job that can be performed anywhere and at any time. Digital journalism operates on platforms that are not restricted by geographical, linguistic, or other barriers. In general, digital technologies have eliminated the concepts of space and time, leading to the hybridization of media formats. This poses ever-



new challenges for journalism. The problems arising in our country are as follows:

Although digital technologies exist, their capabilities are not being fully utilized. Hybridization is low in newspapers and magazines, and there is a need to create fact-checking platforms adapted to the Karakalpak language and to introduce ethical standards for independent content creators. The quality of information is low, there are few creators of flexible multimedia content, and journalists' media literacy is insufficient. As the functions of journalists evolve with the times, journalists are required to be the most adaptable professionals. For this, it is necessary to retrain journalists and regularly enhance their professional skills. It is essential to establish new specializations in journalism universities and faculties to train personnel needed for today's technological society - for the new job positions we have analyzed above based on foreign experience. Because in a mediatized world, the state with the strongest media will be powerful.

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