

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DIGITAL JOURNALISM

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Abstract: In the modern age of digital technologies and rapid flow of information, online journalism is a key aspect of modern media. Traditional media, such as the press, radio and television, have undergone major changes under the influence of the Internet, which gave birth to a new form of information - online journalism. This form of journalism enables faster distribution of news, interaction with the audience and a higher degree of multimedia, but it also brings with it numerous challenges, such as problems with the credibility of information and ethical standards.

Keywords: network, social, digital, journalism.

Introduction

Online journalism (also known as digital journalism or electronic journalism) involves the collection, processing and distribution of news and information via the Internet. It was created in response to increasing digitization and changes in audience habits. “A concise, instant, objective, credible, verifiable account of a social situation“ (Vojinović, Torlak, 2021, p.9). The main characteristics of electronic journalism are speed, since news is published almost in real time, then multimedia which allows its consumers to use text, image, sound and video within a single content.

Interactivity is connected with the process of commenting, sharing and reacting to a specific content. „Interactivity is increasingly developing, a property completely new compared to paper, offered by the Network: the possibility for the user to navigate his original path through the virtual pages of the electronic edition“ (Gozzini, 2001, p.414). Archiving enables easy access to previously published news and personalization which is directed to the public. It presents the ability of users to choose content according to their interests.

Historical facts

The first forms of online journalism appeared in the early 1990s, when traditional media houses started to open their websites. During the 2000s, blogs, Internet portals and social networks flourished, which increasingly assumed the role of information sources.

Today, many users consume information exclusively through digital devices, while print media face declining circulation.“ The geographic distribution of electronic newspapers corresponds to the spread and presence of the Internet: the United States is asserting itself as the main protagonist of electronic publishing. With the arrival of the Internet, the projects about placing newspapers on videotext were definitely abandoned, and the following year the first daily newspapers arrived on the Internet: after the Chicago Tribune, followed by St. Louis, Post Dispatch and Charlotte Observer“ (Gozzini, 2001, p. 414).

Social networks

Media are starting to use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X to spread news. It represents the introduction to mobile journalism - news from the scene via phone. The focus is on video content, short forms and live reporting. Therefore the role of social networks has got positive and negative characteristics. Positive aspects could be: content distribution and direct communication with the audience, constant update, unlimitedness, two-way communication, openness and fragmentation. Negative aspects could be algorithms

that affect news visibility and risks of viral spread of disinformation. „The speed and flow of information, the accelerated pace of life, have contributed to the fact that the mass audience, without critical thinking, is looking for entertainment, sensation, an image without a lot of text“ (Vojinović et al.2022, p.53).

The role of journalists in the digital environment

A journalist as a researcher, but also a content curator - finds, selects, organizes and shares relevant information from a large number of sources, with the aim of saving the audience time and offering useful content.“The written word remains as a permanent testimony of man's deliberation and leads to the exchange of ideas and opinions that raise man to a higher level of consciousness“ (Vojinović, 2022, p.17). Nowadays journalists use digital tools and develop skills for faster decision-making. „In the digital world, which changes very quickly, but in which everything is available at the click of a button, it is much easier to advertise a product, do an analysis and make contact with customers. More and more often, the media are leaving the scope of their informative role and assume the role of an advertiser, presenter of a specific service or product“ (Vojinović, Jevtović, 2023, p.127-128).

Advantages and disadvantages of online journalism

If one is analyzing benefits of electronic journalism, it may be concluded that there are many of them. On the one hand, the authors of this paper will list the following advantages such as: availability to the general public, lower distribution of costs, greater interaction with users, freedom of expression, greater focus on personalized news, etc. On the other hand, authors need to point out negative aspects of online journalism such as: spreading disinformation, fake news, the pressure of speed over quality, monetization and dependancy on advertisers, increased use of AI (artificial intelligence) in content creation. Therefore the audience loses confidence; distrusts unverified sources. „The network is a huge supermarket of information, where collecting news often resembles the creation of collages and hypertextual linking of different websites of news agencies, television stations, commercial companies, public administrations, with little space left for writing and individual creativity“ (Gozzini, 2001, p.420).

Conclusion

Online journalism is an indispensable part of modern society. Although it provides numerous opportunities for the improvement of information, it also brings challenges that require a responsible approach. The authors of the book "History of journalism" talk about new media as a set of communication techniques, different forms and ways of presenting reality, they also look for new types of control, because the media represent an expression of freedom and free flow of information, (Bjelica, Jevtović, 2006). Quality online journalism should combine technological capabilities with professional journalistic standards, in order to maintain public trust and contribute to a democratic society.

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