

Multimedia Opportunities and Journalistic Skill in Covering Economic Topics

Said Ibodullaevich RAKHMANOV¹

¹ Independent Researcher, Uzbekistan National University named after Mirzo Ulugbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract:

The article investigates the use of multimedia capabilities and journalistic skills in covering economic topics in Uzbek print and online media. In today's rapidly advancing world of science and technology, the role of visual components in enhancing the effectiveness and impact of journalistic works is increasing. This is because multimedia tools have opened up wide avenues for the rapid transmission of large amounts of information. The current state of visualization in the two main types of national mass media, the internet and print media, has been comprehensively studied, with specific examples highlighting the achievements and shortcomings in this direction. The article compares the scientific views of domestic and foreign scholars, analyzing the use of text, images, graphics (infographics), tables, decorations, colors, audio, video, and animation components in creating quality content. It is demonstrated that the effectiveness of journalistic activity depends not only on the efficient use of multimedia capabilities but also largely on the journalist's professional skills and expertise. It has been identified through a series of materials that central print publications do not adequately utilize multimedia tools due to a lack of qualified specialists, and scientific recommendations for solving this problem have been provided. The article's relevance lies in its examination of the relatively under-researched role of journalistic skills and visualization in economic journalism, particularly through materials related to the cotton-textile industry. By studying the unique aspects of multimedia and journalistic skills in covering economic topics, the article presents scientific proposals and recommendations, showcasing its novelty from a scientific perspective. The practical implementation of these findings will undoubtedly contribute to the success of journalistic works and enhance the appeal of media content in both print and online publications.

Keywords: economic journalism; multimedia; skill; newspaper; internet; component; topic; textile industry; visualization; infographic.

Introduction

In today's world, where information has become the essence of our lives, presenting data in traditional ways does not always yield the expected results. The reason is that time is limited, information is abundant, and news feeds change by the hour. This places new demands on journalists in terms of structuring, transmitting texts, and ensuring their mass appeal. Economic topics, in particular, require materials to be concise, rich in facts and information, understandable, and attractive to everyone. The advent of multimedia programs, which allow for visual presentation of information, has eased the work of mass media professionals. Multimedia, by integrating fields like informatics, design, and statistics, has paved the way for the rapid transmission of large volumes of information.

The term "multimedia" is derived from the English words "multi" and "media," where "multi" means "many" and "media" means "environment." It has various definitions in scientific and educational literature. The "New Dictionary of Foreign Words" briefly defines it as "Multimedia is various means of information transmission - text, sound, image, animation, etc." [14, 603].

Today, there are many variations of this concept, interpreted as "multi-media," "multimedia environment," "multi-layered environment," "multimedia is more than one medium," and "information carrier." Many researchers believe that one of the first definitions revealing the technical and technological characteristics of multimedia was formed by I.I. Romanovsky. According to him, "Multimedia is a computer-adapted method of displaying information based on the use of text, graphic, and sound capabilities of computer devices in interactive mode" [3, 230]. The Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication explains, "Multimedia is digital technology that combines various forms of text, audio, and video" [15].

The term "multimedia" began to appear in scientific sources and books in Uzbekistan by the late 1990s. The initial information about it was provided by S.S. Gulomov and others in their textbooks on "Economic Informatics." The textbook describes multimedia as "a rapidly developing modern information technology." It elaborates, "It integrates various types of information: traditional (text, tables, decorations, etc.), and original (speech, music, video clips, television frames, animation, etc.) into a single software product" [6, 528].

Renowned scholar Nargis Kosimova emphasizes that multimedia journalistic material allows the reader to choose from various elements when getting acquainted with the information. According to her, the concept of multimedia encompasses the transmission of information using at least two combined elements, such as text, image, sound, and visuals. "Multimedia journalistic material is a media product dedicated to a single topic but incorporating multiple forms — photos, videos, text, infographics, and interactivity" [5, 245]. A multimedia user is always active, not only passively absorbing the material but also attempting to logically connect them.

Looking at the history of multimedia, the initial information about it emerged after the 1980s. At that time, famous American computer specialists, particularly Bill Gates, created the first multimedia software product called "National Art Gallery London." By 1986, all components of multimedia were established, and this year is recognized as the "birth year" of multimedia. Multimedia was first applied in practice in the 1990s in America, then in Russia. It came to Uzbekistan around 1995-1996.

Main Body

According to our scholars, the expansion of multimedia capabilities in national journalism plays a crucial role in the emergence of new modified genres and formats where multimedia is the main feature. "In Uzbekistan, the internet space is changing in terms of quantity and quality, with online publications gaining a distinct position. These publications vary widely, and their typology is increasing. Consequently, new modified genres and formats where multimedia is the main feature is

emerging. Therefore, it is a critical process to continually analyze the fundamental and practical characteristics of online journalism, its multimedia and convergent features" [10, 5], says Dr. N. Murotova in her research.

We examine the multimedia capabilities of media texts and journalistic skills in covering economic topics using examples from central print publications and internet sites. According to our research, Uzbek print publications currently use multimedia components such as text, images, graphics (infographics), tables, decorations, and colors. Online media have relatively greater capabilities in this regard, with the addition of audio, video, and animation.

What does this mean for the development of national journalism? Two key aspects can be highlighted. First, multimedia components enhance the impact and effectiveness of the media product being prepared. Second, media texts rich in multimedia elements are quickly accepted by the audience and remain in the viewers' memory for a long time.

Multimedia is considered the cornerstone and primary promotional tool of economic journalism. Especially in newspapers and magazines, presenting economic information in the form of infographics and tables rather than text is convenient for publications and makes it easier for readers to grasp the essence of the issue. This is because infographics take up less space on a newspaper page and can transmit information more quickly than text. Additionally, unlike photographs, infographics are appealing because they can include thesis-like comments. Therefore, infographics are becoming a primary means of information transmission in economic journalism. "Biznes Daily Birja" is a leading Uzbek publication in utilizing multimedia capabilities. It presents a significant portion of important information related to the privatization of state property, stock exchange and securities market, exchange bulletins, quotes, listings, tenders, and auctions, as well as information on real estate, small business, and private entrepreneurship using multimedia components.

It should be noted that the visual direction in economic journalism is developing due to the growing inclination of people to receive large amounts of information in a small volume. As a result, media texts rich in quick, relevant facts and figures are being presented in the form of tables, diagrams, and infographics. The last, 16th page of "Biznes Daily Birja" is usually dedicated to infographics, regularly providing information on the results of the "E-Auksion" electronic trading platform.

It is known that the editors of "USA Today" began using text and graphics to transmit information in 1982. As a result, the newspaper's circulation increased, and its audience expanded in a short period. Consequently, both American journalists and readers quickly realized the advantages of infographics.

Currently, modern multimedia programs have been created, increasing the possibilities of using its components. Infographics, diagrams, and graphs are no longer drawn for hours; convenient and easy technologies are used to display the necessary facts on a large scale.

Infographics play an important role in visualizing information in economic journalism. It has many forms, such as tables, graphics, diagrams, pictograms, and infocards. Today, newspapers like "Biznes Daily Birja", "Pravda Vostoka", "Xalq So'zi", "Yangi O'zbekiston", "Ishonch" and "Qishloq Hayoti" are striving to use the capabilities of infographics. At present, simple multimedia components like tables and infographics are being used more frequently.

The low level of multimedia use in Uzbek print publications is explained by a shortage of personnel and financial resources. Newspapers and magazines lack qualified graphic designers who can use modern technologies. Consequently, this task is often an additional burden on technical staff like layout designers, whose infographics often fail to meet expectations and do not attract readers' attention. As dedicated professionals lament, "Unfortunately, in most cases, infographics are viewed merely as a means of transmitting statistical information, which to some extent explains their rare use in mass media" [5, 254].

Our research confirms that in central newspapers, multimedia components such as text, images, tables, and decorations are being used based on outdated methods and approaches, failing to bring significant changes to the quality of text design. While in global publishing practices, images are being brought to near 3D and even 4D formats, the national press is still adhering to styles from 30 years ago. The images provided lack meaningful content, appearing staged and evidently arranged. There are very few dynamic, live shots. Even in reports prepared from plenary sessions of the Legislative Chamber and Senate, where serious issues are discussed, striking images are not seen. In the materials related to parliamentary activities in the "Xalq So'zi" newspaper, only senators and deputies in formal attire and general views of administrative buildings are depicted. The personalities of politicians, political character, and the atmosphere of the discussions are not conveyed. Seeing some images, one might naturally think that our politicians have posed for a commemorative photo.

The analysis of multimedia capabilities in media texts shows that the tradition of "printing with fortress-like templates" still persists in the page layout of print publications. Most newspapers exhibit uniformity in their layout and design, lacking distinctiveness. Only social-political newspapers like "Ishonch", "XXI Asr Gazetasi", "Milliy Tiklanish" and "O'zbekiston Ovozi" demonstrate a creative approach to design and layout. However, they too have yet to find their unique style and signature. Other national newspapers traditionally use horizontal and vertical lines, placing part of the articles on the front page and continuing them on the inside pages. There is almost no main article accompanied by appropriate multimedia components.

In our opinion, there is a great need for technological renewal and modernization in print publications. Moreover, it is time to review the staffing structures. Editorial offices lack skilled graphic designers and adept designers who can showcase the creative efforts of the staff and the skills of journalists. As a result, even high-quality media texts presented fail to attract readers' attention. One aspect of the current crises in classic journalism, in our view, stems from the insufficient utilization of multimedia capabilities.

As E. Zerba, a media specialist at the University of Texas, stated in his research, "Multimedia is a dynamic form of journalism that uses interactivity in information delivery and thus serves to unite the audience" [11].

In 2001, E. Zerba, who worked as an editor for the "New York Times" magazine, conducted an interesting study. He organized a survey among seven journalists and editors working with multimedia materials. The results showed that for journalists, "multimedia is a combination of text, photo, audio, video, and graphics in a single material; an effective and good multimedia material is the harmonious combination of quality text, photo, audio, video, and graphics within that material." The experts participating in the survey identified two main tasks of multimedia in journalism:

- 1) attracting users' attention;
- 2) expanding the possibilities of information transmission" [9, 3].

Using multimedia in economic journalism allows for maximizing the specific features of information assimilation. As a result, the effectiveness of the media text increases. This can be explained by the following aspects:

- During the reading process, information is integrated based on several reception channels of the audience at once, through different sensory organs.
- The level of information visibility increases due to the dynamic presentation of ongoing events and processes.

Today, with the proliferation of multimedia tools, the development of media convergence, and the introduction of artificial intelligence, some authors in the field of journalism are drawing

conclusions that are close and similar in content. In particular, the authors of the book "Multimedia Journalism" describe society as follows: "...the world we live in is saturated with mass media. For modern society, the very word 'media,' which is common to a number of important characteristics of phenomena (media literacy, media culture, media technologies, media space, etc.), is still interpreted by specialists either too narrowly or too broadly, with the word itself having various concepts and interpretations. Additionally, the media phenomenon comes with numerous myths and stereotypes, making it difficult to accurately interpret and express" [1, 55].

The effectiveness of a journalist's work is not solely dependent on the efficient use of multimedia capabilities but is also largely related to their professional skills and expertise. Professional competence generally refers to the knowledge and skills that a specialist applies in practice. If a journalist wants to succeed in their career, they must not only thoroughly grasp theoretical knowledge but also be able to apply it in practice, harnessing their potential and showcasing their creative skills during the material preparation process. As recognized by scholars, a journalist's skill is assessed based on the materials they prepare. "Professional skill is the level of professional competence, the ability to apply knowledge related to one's profession in performing tasks pertinent to the professional activity. The degree of a journalist's professional skill should be evaluated by the quality of the information they disseminate" [4, 167].

In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, the word "skill" is defined as: "The expertise, art, or dexterity acquired in a specific job or profession" [13, 78]. The term "art" is often used as a synonym for skill. Hence, in any field, when daily work rises to the level of art, it is possible to speak of skill.

In journalism, professional skill is determined by aspects such as topic selection, writing quality text, deeply analyzing the issues raised, finding attractive headlines and sections, and presenting new ideas. However, when discussing journalistic skill, some argue that talented journalists do not need to study, suggesting that "only through reading can one become a skilled journalist." Others argue the opposite, stating that journalists must acquire theoretical knowledge. They believe that journalistic skill is formed through creative research, gaining experience, and acquiring skills. "A good creator will not emerge from someone who does not master the art of writing style and editing. In this regard, the creator must first have solid theoretical knowledge. The mentor who intends to teach theory must also prove themselves in practice" [12].

The initial condition for attracting public attention for a journalist is the ability to choose a relevant topic. If they address "routine" topics, no one will be interested, and their material will not be read. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on issues that readers expect and those that have become the sore points of society. Indeed, studying such topics and collecting facts and evidence does not proceed smoothly. It requires a certain amount of time, patience, and sometimes ingenuity from the creator. Because no one will simply hand over information to the journalist with open arms. It is obtained through continuous research, observation, inquiry, and lengthy conversations with characters. For this reason, journalists working in daily publications do not always tackle serious topics. This should not be attributed to the journalist's lack of skill. Instead, it should be noted that they are often tied up with daily and prompt material preparation, simply fulfilling editorial assignments. Naturally, great results cannot be expected from materials prepared on order.

Renowned journalist Karim Bahriyev, while emphasizing that skill is instilled in journalists during their higher education, believes that skill alone is insufficient for a creator. "A journalist and any creator need three things: courage, skill, and enlightenment. Higher educational institutions or schools that train journalists should instill these three qualities. Why do I place courage first? Because people who know everything, are sufficiently enlightened, and can speak and write well, remain silent because they lack courage and fortitude. Moreover, the bravery of a courageous person also affects their writing. Therefore, a journalist must be courageous first. If they are brave

but lack skill, they cannot convey their thoughts, write interestingly, or reach the hearts of people directly; they will either babble or make noise. Enlightenment is necessary for a journalist to conduct broad observations, acquire knowledge, distinguish between truth and falsehood, and possess an inner culture. Readers cannot tolerate vulgarity" [7].

The perspective of this creator, who has established their own school in Uzbek journalism, on the courage of a journalist can be fully agreed upon. Especially in economic journalism, this is a very important professional quality. Because if a journalist is courageous, they will not self-censor, avoid taboo topics, or turn a blind eye to the shortcomings and problems in economic sectors, and will be able to speak out boldly. However, it cannot be said that the schools of journalism pay sufficient attention to legal culture and economic knowledge that would encourage the creator. As a result, many young professionals face various problems during their practice.

Due to the lack of sufficient economic knowledge and skills among new journalists entering the field, they rarely tackle serious topics. In most of the materials being prepared, there is no deep dive into the topic, and a superficial approach is noticeable. At such a moment, the issue of specialization of journalists comes to the fore. In this sense, a journalist specializing in a particular field is the first step toward improving their skills.

Due to such objective and subjective reasons, analytical and critical publications in print and internet media are decreasing, and dry and emotionless information, daily news, and corporate news are taking their place. The style of "the news has been disseminated, mission accomplished!" is defining the "weather" of modern journalism. However, primary information dissemination is just the beginning of journalism. True journalism analyzes, investigates, comments, encourages thinking, shapes worldviews, guides, and inspires. Only print publications — newspapers and magazine pages with well-written, substantial articles — can take on such a broad task" [8].

Based on our research, it is appropriate to acknowledge that the skills of a group of journalists working in central publications in covering issues of the cotton-textile industry are improving. Let us continue our point with the example of the article "Industrializing Region" under the headline ("New Uzbekistan" newspaper, December 30, 2022, No. 266(788)). The topic chosen for this material is the cluster, a new form of production in the cotton-textile sector. It was studied in detail in the example of one district and thoroughly analyzed.

The author's skill, Akbar Rakhmonov, lies in finding a relevant section for the chosen topic: "New System." Although the headline is not very striking or highly attractive, it matches the content of the material. In any case, it can attract the reader's attention. That is, a person who sees the headline on the newspaper page will at least glance at the material to find out which region is industrializing. Moreover, the article is divided into several sections through subheadings. This certainly helps to maintain the reader's attention.

The text of the article is short in length, fluent in language, and simple in style. Most importantly, the conventional approach has been abandoned in addressing the topic. According to research, economic materials, especially articles published in socio-political publications, typically dedicate the first paragraph to the reforms being carried out in the field, and their importance in the development of the economy and the improvement of the population's standard of living. In the article under consideration, this conventionality is avoided. The purpose is stated right in the initial sentence, and the advantages of the cluster system are analyzed through clear examples: "The cluster system, widely implemented in recent years, has begun to show results in a short period. Particularly in the cotton industry, this direction has long proven to be the most effective. Until recently, the Mirishkor district, which only dealt with raw material supply in the agricultural sector, has now become one of the regions with developed industry. In the last two years, seven large enterprises have been launched in the district. As a result, in 2020-2022, 511 billion soums worth of industrial products were produced in the region." Admittedly, the text of the article is not without

minor flaws. Some clichés and phrases have been used, and economic reforms and the effectiveness of social registers have also been mentioned. However, the author has found directly relevant aspects to address, which is a significant achievement. By using the method of comparison, positive changes in the textile industry are skillfully revealed.

The journalist's skill is also evident in the selection of interviewees. Three interviews were used in this article, involving a local government representative, a cluster head, and an ordinary worker. Opinions on the topic were heard from all sides. However, this article once again confirmed that a method characteristic of Uzbek journalism, more precisely, a painful issue, still persists. This involves making ordinary citizens express gratitude to the authorities and thank them. For example, in this article, the cluster seamstress Kholida Namozova is made to say, "May the cluster leaders be blessed, they are providing opportunities for people."

Another shortcoming in the article is the quality of the photograph. It is evident that the photojournalist's skills were lacking. Perhaps the editorial team did not choose a quality image. In any case, the used photograph lacks naturalness. Although the workers are at their workplace, there is no work process visible, and the characters appear to be posing for a commemorative photo. The collaboration between the reporter and the photojournalist is crucial to the success of a journalistic piece. Especially in the current environment with expanded multimedia capabilities, photos should not only match the text but also enrich it and enhance its appeal. For this, a photojournalist must be skillful. "Journalism is a field of creative process, and a journalist is a creative person. Looking back at history, it is evident that the press has always operated in a world of certain contradictions. Even in the most challenging conditions, creative skills have saved journalism and journalists. The saving force is in creative skills!" [8].

Our analysis indicates that the language of textile industry-related materials published in newspapers often tends to be generic. Even in some analytical pieces, the journalist's "I," their personality, and the author's opinion are not evident. The subject is usually narrated in the third person. The approach to the issue is general, and the ideological thoughts are not concretized.

Several reasons can be cited for this situation observed in national journalism.

Firstly, recently, the pages of central print media have been filled with daily official materials and legal documents, leaving no room for analytical articles that invite readers to reflect and ponder.

Secondly, due to the predominant use of informational genre materials, the journalist's views in the presented materials are downplayed according to genre requirements.

Thirdly, increased creative caution in editorial offices leads to general comments rather than openly discussing the issue. Listening to others' opinions when expressing a view on a person or event is a good quality, but the conclusion should be your own. A journalist with their own opinion will have sharp and impactful words.

Fourthly, during each stage of the editing process, the texts become overly polished, leading to the loss of the author's "I" and personal views. Thus, it can be concluded that courage plays an important role in revealing a journalist's skills.

The article "The Path to the World Market" published under the section "Development Criteria" in the newspaper "New Uzbekistan" (May 30, 2024, No. 105(1166)) can be considered a material rich in analysis and research. In this material, the journalist's skills are evident as the topic is deeply delved into, with the cotton-textile industry thoroughly analyzed. The thoroughness of the article's text indicates that the authors Dilshod Ulugmurodov and Rasuljon Kamolov have a good understanding of the field. Importantly, they have abandoned the usual approach in presenting and explaining the issue. They have used new terms and phrases and provided new descriptions previously unused. It seems that the pen of a skilled journalist submits to their mastery.

Admittedly, elements of propaganda are noticeable in the article, and statistical facts and figures are frequently used. However, the authors' ability to maintain balance during the creative process is the greatest achievement. As a result, the material is rich in content, comprehensible, and readable for everyone.

Our studies show that most materials related to the cotton-textile industry exhibit "dry" language and conventionality in narration. New words and ideas are rarely expressed, and the essence of the issue is not fully revealed. For example, take the material "Cooperation in the Textile Sector" ("Biznes Daily Birja" newspaper, June 4, 2024, No. 43/44 (3134/3135)). The headline of the article by Oydin Latipova is overly simple. This is a "routine" title that has been used many times. "Writing an article is one skill, finding a title is another. The reason many worthy articles go unread in today's fast-paced information flow is that they are given poor, unappealing titles. Just as a product prominently displayed on a market shelf attracts buyers, a good title should attract readers' attention" [2, 192].

The content of the material does not fully meet the requirements of journalism and the genre. The following shortcomings can be highlighted:

- The text contains numerous repetitions, indicating the author's limited vocabulary. When a journalist starts writing material on a topic, they should demonstrate a good understanding of the subject and be able to freely discuss related facts, figures, conditions, outcomes, and issues.
- Language rules are not followed, and punctuation marks are missing. Most notably, in a text written in the Cyrillic alphabet, the names of foreign specialists are given in English. This is considered a gross mistake in print publications.
- Some words and phrases are used incorrectly. For example, the phrase "qishloq xo'jalik mahsulotlari" is missing the possessive suffix and should be used as "qishloq xo'jaligi mahsulotlari". In another sentence, the phrase "textile and to'qimachilik mahsulotlari" is used, while the Uzbek equivalent of "textile" is "to'qimachilik". Similarly, the phrase "matolarni bo'yash va bosish texnologiyalari" should be used as "matolarni bo'yash va gul bosish texnologiyalari."

For an author to showcase their skills in economic journalism, they must research, study, and be meticulous. Talent may be innate, and the ability to learn may be gifted. However, mastery emerges through acquiring solid theoretical knowledge, developing practical skills, and gaining rich experience. In this process, a journalist's creative imagination also plays an important role. However, it differs from artistic imagination in that, while artistic creation uses imaginative images, journalism reflects specific, unique tasks.

Overall, journalistic skills are a complex concept with many facets. Summarizing, journalistic skill is explained by the creator conscientiously performing their duties, adhering to ethical standards, combining unique talent, high professional potential, and journalistic courage, thereby performing their work at an art level.

Conclusion

In our study dedicated to the issue of multimedia capabilities and journalistic skill in covering economic topics, the following conclusions were drawn:

Firstly, adherence to literary language and speech norms is necessary when creating media text, ensuring the purity of the Uzbek language without losing its national characteristics even for a moment.

Secondly, media text is the product of creative labor, and its preparation requires moving away from traditional styles and templates, using more visual components. While it is possible to compromise on this in information genres due to time and volume constraints, it is unacceptable in analytical and journalistic materials.

Thirdly, when composing media text, it is necessary to maintain moderation in using frequently repeated "stamps," "cliches," and "templates," which are characteristic of the journalistic style, and to find a golden mean.

Fourthly, making wider use of multimedia capabilities in newspaper texts and website media texts. Photos, infographics, collages in newspapers, and voice, video, and animation effects on websites enhance the impact of the text, ultimately leading to its effectiveness.

Fifthly, paying attention to specialization in higher education institutions and continuously improving young people's creative skills, professional courage, and economic potential is extremely important. In this way, the ranks of skilled journalists who can write media texts that meet the demands placed on journalists today and prepare quality media content will expand.

In conclusion, no matter how popular multimedia tools become, they can never replace the word. At least, there is a need to use words in interpreting such information and in audio explanations. Therefore, for a journalist, whether they are a newspaper reporter, a television/radio journalist, or an information website correspondent, journalistic skill, knowledge, and experience play a decisive role in creating quality content.

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