Responsibility of Journalists and Bloggers in the Digital Information Space

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the role and accountability of journalists and bloggers in the newly formed information space shaped by the development of digital technologies. By comparing the professional and ethical criteria of journalistic activity with blogging practices, attention is focused on the responsibility of both entities in disseminating information. The article illustrates, through examples, the social significance of spreading truthful and accurate information, as well as the consequences of disseminating inaccurate or unverified information. Additionally, the necessity of regulating blogging activities within the framework of legal and information policy is substantiated.

Keywords: digital information space, journalist, blogger, information culture, information accuracy, social responsibility, media literacy, social networks.

Introduction.

The development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the modern information landscape. Opportunities for obtaining, disseminating, and evaluating information through the Internet, social networks, and various platforms have expanded. Alongside journalists, bloggers are also actively participating in this process. In particular, with the acceleration of digitalization, the speed of information exchange has increased, information sources have multiplied, and controlling them has become more challenging. Consequently, issues of information authenticity, accuracy, and social responsibility have gained crucial importance. Today, content produced by internet media is acquiring the status of a product subject to the laws of supply and demand. It possesses unique characteristics, forms, status, and functions that differ from those of traditional media. Currently, almost all publications are striving to establish their presence on the Internet: they are creating electronic versions, launching pages on social networks, and developing mobile applications. [2]

While journalists working in traditional media operate based on specific ethical norms and professional requirements, bloggers often freely express their personal opinions and views on their platforms. This imposes on them the necessity to be responsible in disseminating information. Notably, the mass spread of false or unverified information can lead to misguided decisions, misunderstandings, and social conflicts in society. From this perspective, it is crucial to scientifically analyze the role and responsibility of journalists and bloggers in information exchange within the process of digitalization. This article highlights this issue and examines the differences, commonalities, and roles in shaping information culture in the activities of journalists and bloggers.

One of the specialists who conducted research on the ethical issues of digital journalism, mass communications, and media in the global scientific sphere is Manuel Castells, who analyzed the flow of information and its social impact in the new media environment through the concepts of "network society" and "information society" (Castells, The Rise of the Network Society, 1996). In his opinion, the dissemination of information from multiple sources in the digital environment increases responsibility in the selection and evaluation of information.

Clay Shirky also studied the social impact of content creators - including bloggers - on digital platforms. His work "Here Comes Everybody" (2008) emphasizes the democratization of digital activity and the complexity of determining responsibility in this process.

Media analysts, such as Jay Rosen, promote the concept of "participatory journalism" and emphasize the role of bloggers in disseminating information in society. However, he emphasizes that bloggers should act in accordance with journalistic norms and standards.

Among researchers from the CIS countries and, in particular, from Russia, Ekaterina Shulman, Alexey Venediktov, and Oleg Dmitriev are known for their views on the balance of information policy and personal freedom in the digital media space. As they emphasized, blogging activities should also be carried out within certain ethical and legal boundaries.

In Uzbekistan, scientific research on the issues of social, moral, and legal responsibility of journalists and bloggers in the digital media environment has intensified in recent years. In particular, the works of several scholars who have analyzed problems related to media culture, professionalism in the media, and media freedom serve as important sources in this field.

Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor Gulyamova Dilorom emphasizes in her scientific works the ethical principles in the field of mass communication and journalism, especially the growing responsibility of journalists in light of the development of digital journalism. Her research extensively covers the issues of fact-checking, objectivity, and reliance on sources in the dissemination of information on digital platforms.

Candidate of Philological Sciences Muqaddas Niyozova has expressed analytical views on the role of blogging activities in the mass communication system, its influence on public opinion, and bloggers' legal status. Her research compares the differences between bloggers and journalists, as well as their respective responsibilities in the general information space.

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Yunusova Mavluda's research in the field of media literacy and digital journalism is devoted to the relationship between consumers and creators of information in the digital space. She scientifically illuminates the moral and legal responsibility not only of journalists but also of the audience in disseminating information.

MAIN ISSUES IN THE ACTIVITIES OF JOURNALISTS AND BLOGGERS

1 CLARITY AND OBJECTIVITY
identifying and verifying the source of information, and delivering unbiased informaion.

2 TRUST AND SOCIAL BALANCE
An approach to information that promotes trust and stability.

3 RESPONSIBILITY AND INFORMATION CULTURE
The necessity to adhere to principles of responsible information exchange

4 NEGATIVE IMPACT OF UNVERIFIED INFORMATION
Unverified information may harm social balance and potentialy influence public opinion negalvely.

The expansion of the digital information space is causing a convergence in the activities of journalists and bloggers. While traditional journalism aims to deliver verified, well-grounded, and reliable information through media outlets, blogging is characterized by a more personal approach, speed, and freedom.[3] Consequently, the approach and responsibility of representatives from these two groups in information exchange can differ. However, this does not imply that they bear unequal responsibility for disseminating information.

The primary professional principle in journalists' activities is identifying, confirming, and objectively conveying information sources. Bloggers often do not adhere to these rules, which increases the risk of spreading false, inaccurate, or misleading information. Particularly, the viral dissemination of news on social networks further amplifies the responsibility of bloggers. However, the lack of legal regulation and information culture creates challenges in monitoring their activities.

Moreover, the approach of journalists and bloggers to information directly influences the level of trust in society. The role of both sides in fostering social stability, informed decision-making by citizens, and a healthy information environment is invaluable. Therefore, journalists and bloggers should adhere not only to the principle of freedom but also to the principle of responsibility in the process of information exchange. In the context of digitalization, the need to systematize these principles and regulate blogging activities within the framework of information policy is becoming a pressing issue.

In 2023, the incident of "A student beaten at a school in Tashkent" spread across social networks. This event was quickly covered by bloggers on social media platforms. Some bloggers discussed the incident emotionally and with bias, without investigating it thoroughly. In response, professional journalists - particularly representatives of media outlets such as gazeta.uz, kun.uz, and daryo.uz - confirmed the incident through official sources and provided balanced and impartial information. This example clearly illustrates the difference between the approaches of bloggers and journalists.

In 2022, inaccurate information circulated regarding "infant mortality in Chortoq." Some bloggers sensationalized this incident and hastily condemned medical workers. Shortly after, the Ministry of Health issued an official statement, revealing that some of the disseminated information was unfounded. This situation demonstrated the irresponsible approach of bloggers and the negative impact of unverified information on public consciousness.

A journalistic investigation was conducted into the "theft at the Aral Sea Museum." Journalists from the "Central Studio" program on UzA and Sevimli TV carried out a well-founded, documented investigation on this topic. Through this, reliable information was provided to the public, and the issue was addressed by the authorities.

As evident from these examples, unverified or biased information can disrupt social equilibrium. Therefore, fostering a culture of responsible approach to information among journalists and bloggers, as well as providing them with legal and professional support, is a pressing issue.

Discussion.

The rapid development of the digital information space is placing new responsibilities on journalists and bloggers. The principles of traditional journalism - truthfulness, objectivity, accuracy - have not lost their significance in the digital environment, but the forms and mechanisms of their practical application are fundamentally changing. In particular, the speed of information dissemination on social networks is pushing in-depth content analysis to the background. This is leading to the spread of incorrect or unverified information.

Analyses show that some bloggers, without knowledge of journalistic ethics, are having a significant influence on public opinion. As a result, instances of false information, manipulative content, and violations of personal honor and dignity are becoming more frequent. Therefore, a need has arisen to regulate blogging activities based on certain criteria. However, this regulation should not restrict freedom of thought and speech. Otherwise, the positive function of this field in social oversight will be weakened.

Journalists are required to continuously improve their media literacy, technological knowledge, and network culture in adapting to the new information environment. [1] Indeed, maintaining one's position as a reliable source of information on digital platforms is a strategic task for today's journalist. At the same time, their professional activities should serve public interests more and take precedence over personal interests. Scientific research shows that there is a certain blurring of boundaries between digital journalism and blogging activities. This brings their responsibilities closer together. In such conditions, a professional approach, transparency, social responsibility, and adherence to ethical principles in disseminating information are required from representatives of both groups - journalists and bloggers alike.

Conclusion.

In the process of digitalization, the exchange of information has become more important and influential than ever before. In this process, journalists and bloggers must have equal social responsibility in the creation and dissemination of information. While journalists strive to cover information based on professional criteria, bloggers, as actors capable of influencing a wide audience, must also adhere to information culture.

In the future, it will be possible to create a healthy information space by developing unified ethical principles within the framework of information policy in this field, fostering an environment of cooperation between journalists and bloggers, and increasing the media literacy of the population. In this way, the digital information landscape will take on a more reliable, fair, and socially responsible form.

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