

Functioning of Tatar Journalism in Digital Environment

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Abstract

The main trend of mass media evolution in the world is the desire for creation of the information environment, primarily related to the latest occurrence of digital technologies. Today, Russian and Western journalism is on the eve of a transition to a new level. Over the past decades, all traditional mass media models have become digital. These changes contribute to the active development of "new mass media", that is, the acquisition of their increasing relevance in public life. This paper identifies features of the modern mass media space. The main features of the "new mass media", its characteristics are described. The paper is devoted to the analysis of the development of new mass media in the Republic of Tatarstan. The main goal of the work is to identify the characteristics of promotion of Tatar-speaking mass media in the Internet environment in the context of the process of their multimediaization and the emergence of convergent editions, forecasting the future vector of development of national Tatar-speaking journalism. In the national information space, new mass media are becoming increasingly active and successful. They are gradually replacing traditional mass media resources. However, their promotion tactics can be applied to traditional mass media. This applies primarily to reformatting the same material for different social networks, primarily for multimedia. Thus, the need arises for the convergence of traditional journalism. The authors found that in the present conditions the most convergent publications among the Tatar-speaking mass media are Tatar-inform, Internet and Azatlyk Radios (Radio Liberty).

Keywords: Mass media; Convergence; Journalism; Editorial; National mass media.



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1. Introduction

According to the statistical portal Statista, in an average of 60 seconds users manage to send 29 million messages to WhatsApp, post 65,000 posts on Instagram and enter 3.8 million requests to Google (Statista, 2018). Among this gigantic information flow, there is a large amount of products from the mass media. In turn, it is from this gigantic flow of information that mass media products are formed, these flows of information interpenetrate and enrich each other. With the advent of digital mass media, journalism has undergone significant changes over the past 20-30 years. The so-called "new mass media" different from the traditional mass media in that they are interactive, are focused on distributing information to online users who can communicate with each other, are formed.

Unfortunately, this sphere is poorly understood. Recently, Russian-language mass media have been actively filling up the mass media space, and social networks and unwritten rules of behavior in them have become the area that has a strong influence on journalism. The very concept of journalism is being transformed.

The purpose of this work is to identify the characteristics of the behavior of Tatar-speaking publications in social networks, in digital space, and to predict the vector of future development. The object of the research is the Tatar-speaking social networks as part of the information space, printed newspapers, news agencies, and online sites of these publications.

2. Methods

The methodological basis for the study was the articles and scientific works of such well-known domestic and foreign researchers of the Internet-sphere as Vartanova (1999); Zasursky (2007); Kachkaeva (2010); Kachkaevoy (2010); Bardoel (2001); Gordon (2003); Jenkins (2001); Henry (2013) and others. The transformation of mass media space has been little studied in the context of national journalism. However, to some extent, the Tatar mass media space was the object of study by Sibgatullin (2009); Garifullin and Khasanova (2017); and Garifullin and Sabirova (2017).

The methodological basis of the study was the principles of systemic, structural and complex analysis. The authors used systematization and various methods of analysis (interpretation, classification, pragmatic and contextual analysis, and content analysis) in the capacity of the scientific methods.

3. Results and Discussion

The transformation of traditional mass media into multimedia has significantly changed the traditional editorial processes. If the websites of traditional mass media originally were exactly the Internet versions of their printed counterparts (with a complete reprint of papers and photos from the main version of the publication), then by the beginning of 2000 it has come to the understanding that the Internet is a special environment for which a special language and special content are peculiar. Prior to this, an Internet editorial office was a department that has been isolated within a mass media office in general, and was engaged in “repacking” (more precisely, simply placing) of a traditional content into online form. With multimediating of any content, it took a deep insight into the principles of multimedia creation in the editorial process itself. It became insufficient to simply make a report, and then give it to the Internet department for posting. It was necessary to understand that in addition to this report, its author considers it important to place on the Internet taking into account the specifics of the Internet audience and to prepare such materials. And this, in turn, required new responsibilities and new competencies from journalists. Thus, multimedia or, as they are called, convergent editorial offices, where content is distributed centrally by type of mass media, gradually appear. The result was the emergence of new mass media, i.e. interactive electronic periodicals and new digital and network forms of communication of content producers. Convergence and multimedia editions have become common elements of today's journalism.

An important advantage of the new mass media is the democratization associated with the opportunity for any citizen of society to create their own mass media resource (Zayni and Sabirova, 2014). In this regard, it is necessary to highlight the most important feature that distinguishes new mass media from traditional journalism: the focus on the reaction of users, rather than on information delivery to the audience. On the contrary, such researcher as M. Budolak interprets new mass media as an online form of journalism, traditional mass media, with the added bonus of receiving an instant response to a mass media product. In other words, according to his version, the distinction between traditional mass media and new mass media is strongly excluded (Budolak, 2009).

In our opinion, the differences are still there. We can also include blogs, i. e. popular pages on social networks that do not carry journalistic information into the category of new mass media, in addition to official periodicals where professional journalists work. After all, a journalist is primarily distinguished by motivation to deliver the facts to fulfill one of his or her main functions to inform the authorities about the interests of the population. Whatever it is, civil or professional, but it comes down to journalism, while blogging and other behaviors of social network users have little to do with this position.

Today, all types of new mass media in Tatarstan work in the two official languages of the republic. An example of a new Tatar-speaking mass media is “Radio Azatlyk” with content on 7 social networking platforms other than the site, and the traditional one is the newspaper “Shekhri Kazan” (“Kazan City”), “Vatanym Tatarstan” (“My Homeland Tatarstan”), etc. At the same time, it is impossible not to notice the tendency of the traditional mass media to gradually enter into the digital area.

The following types of digital output can be distinguished:

1) Electronic subscription to predominantly printed publications. This method implies either a subscription through the network, but with the delivery of the printed publication home, or a subscription to the electronic version of the periodical. In particular, this type of distribution is practiced by the magazine “Idel” (“Volga”) which is published in two languages, and by the literary magazine “Kazan Utlary” (“The Lights of Kazan”). The advantage of an electronic subscription to an electronic version is the cheapness of the products, despite the fact that the magazines arrive at the e-mail in pdf format, it is possible to evaluate the layout, and to scroll the pages.

2) Transfer of the content to social networks in its original form. The method cannot be called particularly inventive; however, it was from this one that an active struggle began for the readers' attention on the way to the development of online journalism.

3) Repackaging of content. This can be practiced in the form of transferring content to the web-site in another or in the same form, followed by distribution on social networks with an indication of the link, and with writing a completely different lead. The key role at this stage is played by SMM.

4) Creating of separate content for the web and print versions.

This method is the most effective; we can consider the newspaper "Vatanym Tatarstan" as an example. The periodical is distinguished by the fact that some materials may be published in the printed version as a “seed” in the incomplete version in the newspaper, and the full version on the website. This method was chosen on the basis of economic considerations. Often these are the stories of the readers themselves, which have an insignificant role on the agenda.

The competition among the mass media for the consumer's attention has greatly increased, and the total time that a person is willing to spend on all these types of information consumption has not changed significantly. The only thing that happened was the appearance of such types of mass media products that a person has more opportunities to consume during working hours. That is, the time spent in the digital environment has also increased, sometimes even to the detriment of working time.

Under these conditions of limited time for a consumer of information, this time is redistributed in favor of individual and interactive mass media (not only because they are more visual, but also because their consumption is more individual and discrete: a person can consume them “on the run”). At the same time, traditional mass media are losing: first of all those that require careful study (newspapers). The amount of average daily time that a Western European person or an American spends to reading a newspaper is steadily decreasing. Today in many countries (in the USA, for example) this time has decreased to 25 minutes a day. Today, about 50% of the inhabitants of large

cities are so-called “supersonic readers”, that is, they read newspapers extremely irregularly, not every day and very selectively (Kachkaevoy, 2010).

It turns out that, on the one hand, the traditional mass media is gradually individualizing, turning into the mass media focused on an individualized consumer; but on the other hand, we are witnessing an increasing growth of visualization in the mass media. This is the key to understand current trends in the behavior of a mass media consumer.

In order not to lose the audience, traditional newspapers were forced to offer content that meets their needs, i.e. in an online environment. Such a context is a completely new product that combines all the capabilities of an online environment: interactivity, the ability to respond, video, audio, links, animation and infographics. So, multimedia or “convergent” mass media editorial offices built on the basis of major newspapers (for example, the newspaper “Daily Telegraph” in the UK), news agencies (RIA “Novosti” in Russia) or television and radio broadcasters (BBC) began to appear. At the same time, the audience of a printed periodical is also often attracted to online content by means of “anchors,” that is, links to an Internet site from the pages of a printed periodical. For example, the newspaper “Vatanyam Tatarstan”, without bothering to publish long letters from readers, is sometimes limited to indicating their links in the network. In addition, today, on traditional mass media sites there are more or less familiar “author’s columns” in which expressed opinions have been replaced by journalists’ blogs, where an expressed opinion can immediately turn into a discussion between bloggers and with the participation of the magazine itself. This allows for periodicals to attract the Internet audience to traditional mass media and vice versa. The most successful in this respect periodical is the online platform of the online mass media “Snob” organized in such a manner that some famous people are included in the debate with each other, conduct their column, write review on those or other situations in the country and give their interpretation to them. For example, the column reviews by Ivan Davydov are an attempt to reflect Russian news with a bias for an opposition point of view. (<https://snob.ru/selected/entry/136087>) is a vivid example of the April 6 publication titled as “A Man with a Sledge Hammer” which was a reflection on the situation in Russia where good news already seems incredible, and false news about the alleged Russian “peasant who smashed a neighbor’s “Range Rover” with a sledgehammer” is interpreted as a symbol of the manifestation of a senseless anti-Western mood.

It is impossible not to mention the April fool’s joke of the “Inde” editorial board about the alleged retirement to offline - the transition from the Internet to printed version. This comedy melts into the grotesque, because whimsicality stands behind the joke about saving a print journalism taking into account the economy, and the tragedy is, taking into account reality.

What can be said about multimediating of national periodicals published in the Tatar language? Since the Internet is a habitat where it is more interesting to run around with the majority, its narrow segment united by the Tatar language loses much in terms of economics. Advertisers are more willing to invest in the digital sphere.

The content mostly intended for a periodical’s website is the same high-quality journalistic works, plus individual news items published only on the site for the sake of updating the content. This method is actively used by “Idel” magazine. Sometimes, some periodicals misuse the update of the newswire by submitting one and the same material several times a day after a short period of time, and with repeated lead formulation. In this case, it is clear that the level of loyalty of readers falls.

It is interesting to follow the convergence process in the monthly editions making their way to the reader through the thickness of the news flow of news agencies. For example, the monthly print periodical “Sekhne” (“Stage”) specializing in theater and other types of productions, is famous for its volume materials. Such a format is acceptable for the printed version of a magazine, but studies show that users often don’t read to the end not only big articles, even posts. Following the tendencies of time, “Sekhne” splits such materials into several parts and puts them on a site, then distributes them via social networks with a direct link to them. Another option is also practiced, when a material is completely available on the Internet, and then it is broadcast several times on social networks, repacking them in different posts. But since the magazine is monthly and the staff is small, this kind of material is published 1-2 times a week. For the rest of the time, the magazine releases news from the original source of “Tatmedia” changing the headlines, correcting errors, and in some cases replacing agency photos with photo materials from its own archive. Another way to update the content on the site and in social networks is news from press conferences, reports on campaign events for readers, as well as materials from the readers themselves: all this is published on the site.

This way of updating the content (adding online news) is practiced quite widely among Tatar-speaking mass media: “Vatanyam Tatarstan”, “Idel” magazine, Tatarstan state television and radio company, “Novy Vek” TV and Radio Company, etc.

The highest indicator of the effectiveness of convergent editorial offices is the preparation of the material taking into account the interests of users. Here, there are few promotions in the Tatar-speaking segment of the mass media space so far. “Vatanyam Tatarstan” packs materials in social networks writing a separate post with a lead in a rather neutral tone referring to the newspaper text, which is in the same form posted on the website (Vatanyam, 2017). After reading the text, it turns out that this lead is the fourth paragraph of the material. So, a SMM specialist of the periodical did not bother to write their own text, taking into account the specifics of the social network. And, nevertheless, the plus is that the subtitle in the printed version of the newspaper and the electronic lead are different. In the print version, the subtitle sounds more descriptive (Vatanyam, 2018).

But the most advanced of all in the SMM practices is “Azatlyk Radiosy”. A characteristic feature of the periodical is the formulation of the conflict or problem already in the lead. This style, perhaps, could be called “to rattle reader’s nerves”. Accustomed to the nature of the periodical, a reader will somehow follow the link to familiarize himself/herself with the solutions to the problem. Another feature is the combination of video clips and

photos in the same paper what is a clear feature of a convergent edition. We see that the materials have an easily readable structure and design, the opportunity is not to read the text at all, but to watch the video with the commentary of a speaker, who in most cases presents the essence of the article.

Thus, we see that in many cases, “Azatlyk Radiosy” increases its traffic by luring social network users with twofold and sometimes emotional leads, even if the main content is written in a rather neutral tone. But the headlines are written as always vividly, and with personal judgments.

It should be noted that unlike the federal mass media, “Azatlyk Radios ” does not repack the same material for different social networks. The same lead is used for Vkontakte and Facebook. In Instagram, the content is published completely, that is, their plans do not include the goal to lure the reader through Intstagram. But most often there is a message to read the full version of the material, if it does not fit completely on the site without direct references to this material.

“Tatar-inform” is an information portal that has gathered a large audience in social networks thanks to operational broadcasting, sometimes even online play-by-play. It has about 4 thousand subscribers on YouTube, and about two thousand on Facebook and Vkontakte. There is no particular originality in the presentation of information on various platforms. It can be assumed that the materials themselves are tailored to an online reader. Since information agencies do not have to transfer the same material from a newspaper to a network, it is noted that in terms of format they resemble Internet reports: the readers themselves create an idea of an event or something else, authors do not “chew over” a topic, everything is completely readable due to a simplified style and an averaged volume of articles. Also various mass media formats are published here: videos from press conferences, photo reports along with the text, what is an advantage in terms of readers' perception. Messages are duplicated in the information wires by titles of the materials. The edition is more creative in managing its Instagram page: even if there are no links to materials in posts, they are short, detailed messages with a brief paper content, maybe that's why the Instagram page is not updated often because it takes more time and effort.

The record number of subscribers in Vkontakte and Instagram among the Tatar-language periodicals is found in the Internet periodical “Intertat”. There are about 26 thousand of them on Vkontakte, as well as on Instagram. Content is very similar to the content of the periodical in “Tatar Inform”: this is news that does not require special analytical skills. But the content is delivered more succinctly. Here we can see high-quality graphic materials: infographics, and photos. The link to the YouTube channel is their common feature with “Tatar-inform”. There are at an average 4 thousand subscribers here. The remaining platforms are not so structured and popular as to their content.

So, we can conclude that the Tatar-speaking mass media actively promote content in open social networks; we can familiarize with their content without registering in these platforms. Materials often appear on social networks in their original form, but the feature of their modification up to the tastes of Internet users or the writing of individual ones specifically for this platform is used poorly so far. Even if readers get acquainted with the content being broadcast on the platform, can bypass the offline version of such a periodical, having once familiarized with the same materials placed in the printed version, expecting the same trend. While abroad and in Russia, online promotion is a common form of promotion offline version of the periodical.

4. Summary

Convergence is the reproduction of the essence of a material in various formats, like text, photography, video, audio, and their combination, which is briefly called multimediating, as well as the transition from one format to another based on the promotion platform. It is obvious that Tatar-language periodicals will hold a course for the convergence of texts in different formats, and not just the distribution of materials to the web using the copy-and-paste method, which is currently a favorite and a little effective periodical strategy. We found that, unlike traditional mass media, there are new mass media that compete with traditional mass media, but their promotion tactics can be applied to traditional mass media. This applies primarily to the reformatting of the same material for different social networks, namely multimediating. Under the current conditions, the most convergent periodicals among the mass media analyzed by us are “Tatar-inform”, “Intertat” and “Azatlyk Radios”. However, it will be fair to say that traditional periodicals in Tatarstan do not fully enjoy all the advantages of social networks and are working to the extent that they are using the offline version of the materials.

As for the specifics of the distribution of content in social networks and the convergence of materials depending on the platform, news agencies are leading in terms of adaptation, while traditional mass media are only just beginning to master the digital environment and are not resourceful.

5. Conclusions

In this study, the ways of developing journalism in the conditions of development of digital environment were considered. Globally, people work less and consume more mass media products, and sociological research proves that sometimes even to the detriment of the working time; therefore, periodicals are guided by the production of materials that are convenient to read at any time, even on the run, i.e. online ones. Using the example of functioning of new mass media in Tatar-speaking mass media space, we can assume that we are on the verge of the emergence of all new convergent editions, and at the same time that this may affect not only the approach to work, the stages and implementation of the content, but also the content itself.

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