



THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF JOURNALISM AND ITS REFLECTION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 8th April 2025 Accepted: 7th May 2025</p>	<p>This article analyzes the transition of journalism to the online system and its impact on society through its activities on social networks. It explores new methods of information dissemination, the problem of fake news, and issues related to media literacy. The article reconsiders the role and responsibility of journalism in the modern media environment. Scientifically grounded suggestions and conclusions are presented.</p>

Keywords: Journalism, online journalism, media, marketing, media market, digital media, social networks, information flow, social impact, media transformation, information consumption, digital literacy, mass media, audience engagement.

The rapid development of information technologies in the 21st century has led to fundamental changes in the field of journalism. Traditional print and broadcast media have given way to digital technologies that enable the fast, interactive, and widespread dissemination of information. In particular, the growing popularity of the internet and social media has significantly influenced the forms and methods of journalism. "The discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art. ¹"

Today, journalism is no longer confined to traditional media institutions; it has evolved into a broad activity carried out with user participation on social media platforms. At the same time, the speed of content distribution, the ability to access information from various sources, and direct interaction with the audience have further enhanced the social significance of journalism.

However, this process also brings with it certain risks, such as a decline in the quality of information, the spread of false data (fake news), and the blurring of boundaries between journalism and blogging. Therefore, thoroughly studying the presence of online journalism on social networks and its social impact is one of today's most pressing tasks.

"We do not first see and then define; we define first and then see. ²"

The global advancement of digital technologies has also encompassed the field of journalism. With the increasing speed of the Internet, the widespread use of smartphones, and the expansion of digital platforms, the processes of receiving, processing, and distributing information have undergone fundamental changes. These developments have facilitated the gradual transition from traditional forms of journalism to online media.

"To succeed in online journalism, journalists must master digital tools and build interactive relationships with their audience. ³"

Online journalism is characterized by speed, interactivity, and the ability to communicate directly with the audience. Internet-based media outlets – such as electronic publications, websites, mobile applications, and multimedia platforms (like BBC Online, The Guardian, and The New York Times digital) – have gained advantages over traditional media.

The process of media convergence in journalism – the merging of text, video, audio, and graphics into a single media space – has led to the emergence of new formats. Podcasts, video blogs, live streams, and interactive reports are clear examples. Thus, journalism

¹ **McNair, B.** (2017). *An Introduction to Political Communication (6th ed.)*. London: Routledge. (McNair, 2017, b. 89)

² Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion (54-6et)*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

³ Higgins, E. (2021). *We Are Bellingcat: Global Crime, Online Sleuths, and the Bold Future of News* (p. 45). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.



in the online environment has evolved not only into an information disseminator but also into an active participant in social dialogue.

"Today, anyone can use open data from the internet to help uncover international crimes."⁴

At the same time, this transformation has introduced new requirements for journalists, such as SEO optimization, digital security, and multimedia content creation. Online media is becoming not just a new platform, but a professional environment that demands new standards.

Due to the development of internet technologies and the widespread use of smartphones, social networks have turned into a global information space. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (Twitter) have created new opportunities for journalism while also intensifying content distribution competition.

Journalists and media outlets now communicate with their audiences not only through official websites but also through social media. Today, many media organizations first distribute their news via Telegram channels, Instagram stories, or Twitter. This approach enables direct, fast, and interactive engagement with the audience.

Furthermore, the types of content on social networks have become more diverse:

- short text posts,
- visual infographics,
- live streams and video reports,
- short videos (Reels, Shorts, TikTok), which have become increasingly popular.

Journalists now serve not only as information distributors, but also as sources, analysts, and even creators of entertainment content. Additionally, the line between journalist and blogger continues to blur, as some journalists develop personal brands and become public figures.

However, these opportunities are accompanied by certain threats: lack of content oversight, spread of fake information, clickbait headlines, and audience manipulation are on the rise. Consequently, for journalists active on social media, responsibility, factual accuracy, and adherence to ethical standards are becoming increasingly important.

The shift of journalism to the online system and the dissemination of information via social networks have had a range of social impacts on public life. Most

notably, information consumption has increased dramatically: people now expect to receive news in real time via their smartphones on social networks, rather than from newspapers.

On the one hand, this process has increased media activity within society — ordinary citizens can now become information distributors simply by reposting or commenting on social networks. In this way, journalism has evolved from a purely professional domain into a broader activity involving the general public.

The speed of news dissemination via social media has increased, but so has the risk of spreading fake news — false or manipulative information. Such content can negatively influence public opinion and disrupt social order.

On the other hand, the spread of information through social networks has sparked widespread public discussions on various topics. Issues such as social justice, equality, and human rights are increasingly debated within the framework of online journalism, helping shape active public opinion.

At the same time, audience attention spans have shortened, and the demand for visual, easily digestible content has grown. This has pushed journalists to produce shorter, more impactful, and often emotionally driven content.

It must be noted that the transition of journalism to the online environment has significantly transformed the information landscape of society. While it has allowed for quick and unrestricted access to information, it has also made trust in that information a more critical issue. The digital transformation of journalism and the dissemination of content through social media have fundamentally altered its content, form, and social function. Modern journalism is no longer a one-way communication tool; it has become a fast, interactive, and multi-sourced media system that engages in direct dialogue with its audience.

This process has expanded access to information, strengthened civic engagement, and created new platforms for public discourse. However, it has also led to serious problems such as a decline in content quality, the spread of unverified information, a lack of media literacy, and violations of journalistic ethics.

Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Promote media literacy — citizens must be taught how to identify fake news and critically analyze sources.

⁴ Higgins, E. (2021). *We Are Bellingcat: Global Crime, Online Sleuths, and the Bold Future of News* (p. 45). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.



Given the digitalization of the media environment and the diversity of information sources, enhancing media literacy has become one of the most urgent tasks. In the context of fake news, manipulative content, and disinformation, the ability of the public to critically evaluate information and distinguish reliable sources must be high.

"Media literacy enables individuals to critically analyze and creatively produce messages in various forms — visual, textual, and audio. It is a vital skill for life in the 21st century."⁵

To achieve this, it is essential to implement educational programs on media literacy in schools, media outlets, and on social platforms. A media-literate citizen is someone who selects, analyzes, and responsibly shares information within society.

2. Update the code of ethics for online journalists

— New standards should cover journalistic activities on social media as well. The expansion of online journalism and the widespread dissemination of news via social networks have introduced new responsibilities and expectations for journalists.

"Internet journalism means that news is no longer produced and distributed solely by major media institutions — any individual can now create and share news."⁶

Since traditional journalistic ethics may not be fully applicable in the digital space, there is a need to develop a dynamic, universal code of ethics adapted to the online environment. Such a code should clearly regulate issues such as combating fake news, protecting personal privacy, ensuring source confidentiality, ethical use of artificial intelligence, and rejecting clickbait practices. This would help preserve public trust in journalism and ensure responsible service to the audience.

3. Support for verified information platforms

— independent and trustworthy media outlets should be encouraged.

In today's digital environment, the sheer volume of information sources is accompanied by a significant increase in the flow of false and unverified content.

"Today, anyone can use open-source information from the internet to participate in exposing international crimes."⁷

⁵ Hobbs, R. (2021). *Media Literacy in Action* (p. 12). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

⁶ Gillmor, D. (2004). *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People* (p. 150). Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media.

This situation has led to manipulation of public opinion, the creation of false sensations, and a decline in attention to credible journalism. Therefore, supporting verified and reliable information platforms at the state, NGO, and public levels is crucial for ensuring media security in society. Such platforms must not only distribute information but also serve as tools for informing the public based on facts, performing analytical and watchdog functions.

4. Smart use of technological tools

— AI, algorithms, and network analysis should be effectively applied in journalism. Modern technological tools in journalism—artificial intelligence, algorithms, multimedia platforms, and data analysis software—are taking the process of creating and distributing information to a new level. However, these tools should not be used merely for technical convenience; they must be employed within the framework of accuracy, impartiality, and accountability. Rational and targeted use of technology enhances journalistic professionalism and helps maintain not only the speed but also the quality of information. In the context of digital journalism, technology should not replace the human element but serve as a supportive tool.

5. Clarifying the responsibility gap between bloggers and journalists

— a clear boundary must be drawn between citizen journalism and professional journalism. Although the line between bloggers and journalists continues to blur in the modern information environment, the level of social responsibility between the two remains distinctly different.

A journalist is a professional obligated to present information with accuracy, impartiality, and based on verified sources. A blogger, by contrast, often shares personal views, impressions, or eyewitness accounts.

For journalists, the reliability of information and adherence to ethical standards are both legal and professional responsibilities. For bloggers, such responsibilities are more personal and informal in nature.

Properly communicating this distinction to the public is an important factor in enhancing media literacy and combating fake news.

⁷ Higgins, E. (2021). *We Are Bellingcat: Global Crime, Online Sleuths, and the Bold Future of News* (p. 45). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.



Over the past two decades, the rapid development of information technologies and the expansion of digital infrastructure in Uzbekistan have taken journalism to a new level.

As the number of internet users has grown, and smartphones and social media platforms have become widespread, traditional media outlets have actively transitioned to the online environment.

In the early 2000s, electronic news websites such as UzReport, Gazeta.uz, and Podrobno.uz began to emerge. Since the 2010s, media outlets have launched and actively used their Telegram, Facebook, and Instagram channels.

Today, the most widely read sources of information are online media operating on messenger apps and social networks.

The widespread dissemination of content through social media—especially news, video reports, and analytical articles—has drastically changed the habits of information consumption among citizens.

In particular, Telegram channels such as Daryo, Kun.uz, Xabar.uz, and Sof.uz have become leading platforms for fast news delivery.

The development of online journalism in Uzbekistan is also being driven by government policy. For example, laws such as the “Law on Mass Media” and “Law on Informatization,” along with media-supporting reforms, contribute to creating an open and competitive media space.

However, certain challenges persist, including low levels of media literacy, an increase in sources spreading fake news, underdeveloped investigative journalism mechanisms, and occasional breaches of ethical standards.

Thus, while the growth of online journalism in Uzbekistan has opened up new opportunities in the media sector, ensuring its effectiveness and social responsibility requires deeper analysis and a more systematic approach.

It can be said that the transition of journalism to online platforms and its growing presence on social media have had a significant impact on information consumption culture, public discourse, and civic engagement. The speed, interactivity, and mass accessibility of information dissemination have expanded journalism’s social influence. At the same time, this shift has also given rise to challenges such as fake news, media manipulation, and information stagnation.

Online journalism is shaping a modern media environment that encompasses both new opportunities and new threats. In this context, raising media literacy, adhering to ethical standards, supporting verified

sources of information, and using digital technologies wisely all play a crucial role.

Moreover, clearly defining the boundaries of responsibility between blogging and professional journalism is essential for building a trustworthy information environment within society. Therefore, properly managing the social impact of online journalism is a key factor in ensuring both freedom of information and societal stability.

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