

## FUNCTIONING OF CIVIC/CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA SPACE OF THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN

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### ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to analyzing the main factors of formation and development of the citizen journalism system and functioning specifics in the current social and economic conditions. The article analyzes the interpretation features of the term "citizen journalism", its similarities and differences with the concepts of "grassroots journalism" and "participatory journalism". The regional journalism in Tatarstan was studied from the standpoint of manifestation of the citizen journalism specifics. Today, the national media are going through a transformation process that is associated with the globalization conditions and their forced presence in the network space, which imposes special responsibility on manifestation of the author's citizen position. According to the authors, the leading citizen journalism edition is "Tatarstan yashlere" in the Tatar newspaper periodicals.

**Keywords:** *journalism, Russia, Tatarstan, newspaper, magazine, typology.*

### 1.INTRODUCTION

In the nineties of XX century, the Russian journalism was intensively losing the readers' trust. Information wars led to the fact that people began to perceive journalists not as their defenders but as mercenaries. Search for a way of this situation caused emergence of a new Russian mass media direction - citizen journalism. It is not aimed at informing the masses in order to have some commercial benefit, agitating or propagandizing for mind management; its purpose is a joint (with the audience) solution of socially significant problems of the society.

### 2.MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors used such empirical and general scientific methods like observation, comparison, analysis, as well as a specific method for the study of mass media texts - content analysis. The study is based on scientific works of the citizen journalism theorists. Problems of citizen journalism formation and development in the world and Russia were studied in a number of publications and monographs of A. Bolkunov [1], S. Ogandzhanyan [2], N. Khlebnikova [3], E. Miller [4], I. Dzyaloshinskiy [5], S. Shaykhitdinova [6] and others .

### 3 .RESULTS

One of the fundamental citizen journalism principles is the principle of social partnership with all those who are interested in improving the lives of people - public, business and governmental structures. But first of all - with readers, ordinary citizens. In this case, a journalist is not psychologically "above" the

audience (as common in Soviet times), "close" to it (as traditional in the reconstruction epoch), but "within" it - as one of many components [1].

Using the term "citizen journalism", the Russian scientists mean different phenomena. Quite often this is a designation of processes occurring in the foreign media. For example, S. Ogandzhanyan notes that each registered user of the America's National Public Radio (NPR) can upload his/her own video clip there [2, p.117]. Thus, the media editorial office does not only save on obtaining video, it also supports the citizen journalism. The author explains that citizen journalism means deliberate actions of citizens and non-professional journalists playing an active role in collecting, transmitting, analyzing and disseminating information [2, p. 117].

Both meanings that the "citizen journalism" concept bears came into the international journalism from the US, where they established themselves in various lexical units: one is "civic journalism" and the other – "citizen journalism."

The "civic journalism" appeared in the pre-Internet era, and it means professional journalism aimed at developing the readers' civic engagement and involvement in public life. The "citizen journalism" implies non-professional authors' activities carried out in the Internet - blogs, social networks, through microblogging, as well as on the traditional media services.

If the basis for comparison includes the criteria adopted in the Russian journalism typology, it is obvious that the 'civic' and 'citizen' may vary by their topic, audience composition, as well as their goals. But the main difference is a factor that emerged in recent years and changes not only the traditional approaches to the typology, but also journalism as a social institution. This is the subject of journalistic activity. The "civic journalism" sees in a reader more than a source of information and its recipient, but a partner, nonetheless, a professional journalist is the main subject of this area of journalistic activity.

The "citizen journalism" clearly indicates that citizens are engaged in journalism. It is no accident that the "citizen journalists" term occurs more frequently that allows however to distinguish the first journalism from the second.

The name of "civic journalism" is not limited to any historical period in the journalism development of only one country. The concept went beyond the USA, and it is often used in practice to refer to contemporary processes. So, in December 2010, 50 European journalists adopted a resolution on the need to promote social and citizen journalism [3]. As indicated in the resolution, the reasons for this initiative were an economic crisis and a necessity to involve citizens in public activities and strengthening the united Europe. It is noteworthy that there are different models of citizen participation through mass media in Europe, Asia, Oceania and South America [7].

In Russia, the "civic journalism" concept came with the book "The Charlotte Project: Helping Citizens Take Back Democracy" [4]. References are made to it as an example of a new approach to the interaction with readers, journalist's social responsibility, media participation in the civil society development. The book has contributed to the fact that today the "civic journalism" is found even more frequently than the "public" among the Russian media analysts.

In Russia over the last decades, the civic journalism was not a widespread phenomenon. It was more interesting to scientists. The practice was mostly gained in grant projects, and it did not become a mass one [5, p. 31]. As a result, the concept did not go outside a narrow circle of specialists, and it was little known to the traditional media journalists.

The most well-known analogue of the "citizen journalism" term in Russian is the "participatory journalism", a term proposed by I.M. Dzyaloshinskiy. The scientist believes that the "direct use" of the "citizen journalism" concept is not quite correct. In the Russian consciousness, the "citizen" word has a slightly different meaning than in the American mentality. Our citizen does not mean an average person. It is a repository of public virtues. The phrase "citizen journalism" immediately causes bad associations with the "party press" in the professional consciousness [ibid]. The term "participatory journalism" is actively used by other scientists, but they do not refuse the "citizen journalism" concept either. Moreover, the author of the term "participatory journalism" refers again to the definition "citizen journalism", when he considers it from a new angle in the system of "citizen communications" and "media matrices" [8, p. 136].

In Runet the civic journalism has been partially used since the beginning of the 2000s. The turning point occurred in 2007 when there was a mass access to the blogosphere in Russia, more precisely, to the Live Journal service. The term "citizen journalism" became familiar in the Internet, then the traditional professional journalism mastered it as well.

Professional journalists have recently started to regard the citizen journalists as additional information providers close to the "reporter" concept. According to this view, the traditional media journalists, as well as scientists, lose the concept of social and civic/citizen initiative, which is the essence of the civic and citizen journalism. When identifying themselves, the citizen journalists act differently. A smaller part finds its roots in the civic journalism, such as the Youth Human Rights Movement, which defines the essence of civic journalism as promotion of human rights and freedoms in the media space [9]. There are enough examples that bloggers vaguely their represent civic position as can be seen from the manifesto of the Civil Journalism Center in Yekaterinburg [10].

Manifestation of the citizen journalism can be found in the pages of many printed media published in the Republic of Tatarstan. But still a leader in this area is the "Tatarstan yashlere" (Youth of Tatarstan) newspaper. During the Soviet period, the newspaper's circulation reached 200 thousand copies, today this figure is much lower. Unlike all Tatar editions, the "Tatarstan yashlere" mainly publishes readers' materials. The skill of some of them grew so that they can compete with professional journalists. For example, in the first issue of the newspaper of 2016, one of the regular authors Raushaniya Shayakhmetova recounts in her article "I will not return to Ukraine" about her conversation with a Ukrainian named Danila. The author pushes one of the most urgent public issues of the present time. Articles on this subject are written every day, but Mrs. Shayakhmetova could find a form interesting and warm for the general reader. She tells about the events in Ukraine through the prism of maternal feelings.

Going back to the citizen journalism division in types, then this article, however, as all materials published in the "Tatarstan yashlere" can be attributed to the citizen journalism. It implies the non-professional authors' activities not only in the Internet, but also in the traditional media services. And all newspaper articles are published on the edition site.

Another edition author - Milyausha Khairullina - also pushes a very relevant issue of our time - mass migration from the South in the article "What do they want?". The author writes about the situation with migrant workers who do not undergo registration. During an inspection, it became known that 32 people are registered in an abandoned village house of 36 square meters. Milyausha was asked in every possible way not to write about it. The migrant workers who are considered to be cheap labor cost less to an employer without undergoing formal procedures. But now, for obvious reasons, the same management is trumpeting: "Be careful with migrant workers". And where is the logic? The author draws a parallel with Germany and France, which folded in their arms millions of migrants. Not every journalist can argue on such global themes and even in such an accessible manner. The article pushes the major pressing issues of the society: international policy, social issues (pension, security), tolerance. The author is not concerned

about herself, she speaks on behalf of the people and pushes an issue of not a single person, but the general public. Therefore, there is no doubt that Khairullina is a prominent representative of the citizen journalism.

Such popular editions as "Akcharlak" (Seagull) and "Beznen gezhit" (Our Newspaper) actively apply to the citizen journalists' creativity. It is explained, firstly, by the fact that, as private editions, they are forced to have a small editorial staff in order to save money, and secondly, in the competition for their audience, they have to "feel the pulse" constantly being interested in the audience's daily requests through active authors from many readers.

Through the efforts of active readers of these editions as Madina Safina, Nail Vakhitov, Rafael Salmushev, Nurisa Gabdullina, Dinar Valiev, Alsu Nurgatina, Rafis Zagidullin and others, in recent years the Republic's most actual social issues have been pushed. It happens very often that after the media exposure by a freelance reporter in the edition a problem is not solved immediately. In this case, subsequent materials appear, which involve special newspaper correspondents. In many Republic's rural areas these efforts resulted in new roads, gas heating systems and electric power, resumed operation of closed health facilities, identification of corruption facts among officials; many readers obtained specific assistance in the form of legal advice.

If styles of professional and citizen journalists are compared, it often turns out that the citizen journalists' articles are much more sincere. This is, firstly, associated with the professional approach, that is, gushing emotions is not particularly typical for journalists. And, secondly, the "Tatarstan yashlere" authors, as well as the readers are people of middle and older generation, who have a decent luggage of experience under their belt. The citizen authors push not only local issues, but often argue on such global issues as development of the world policy and economy, discuss the country's social issues (pensions, security, tolerance, etc.). First of all, the author are not concerned about themselves; speaking on behalf of the people, they push an issue of not a single person, but the general public. Therefore, there is no doubt that many freelance authors of these editions are prominent representatives of the citizen journalism.

#### **4.CONCLUSIONS**

Today, the national media are going through a transformation process that is associated with the globalization conditions and their forced presence in the network space, which imposes special responsibility on manifestation of the author's citizen position. According to the authors, the leading citizen journalism edition is "Tatarstan yashlere" in the Tatar newspaper periodicals.

#### **5.SUMMARY**

Since 2007, when there was a mass access to the blogosphere in Russia, more precisely, to the Live Journal service, the citizen journalism phenomenon has become familiar in the Internet. The traditional professional journalism mastered gradually its methods and techniques. However, unlike many professional journalists, the citizen journalism representatives manage to convey their thoughts and views on one or another social issue more effectively in terms of affordability and emotional presentation. Today, the task is relevant to build a strong system of the Tatar citizen journalism using all possibilities of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio channels, Internet resources and audiovisual media of information delivery, development of incentive mechanisms for its activities.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The author confirms that the provided data do not contain any conflict of interests.

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