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Transformation processes of professional identity against the background of media convergence

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Abstract: The purpose of the work is to study the transformation processes of constructing professional identity under the influence of new information technologies and to consider the evolution of views on the processes of scientific and practical understanding of new media resources in the context of the development of convergent journalism as a phenomenon of the modern information society. It was established based on the conducted research that the values and beliefs of journalists, reflecting the process of professional self-identification, are forming in the process of choosing certain options among a variety of alternatives and transforming further under the current conditions of the information and communication environment. In the process of the study, the article identifies the features, content, and main trends in the transformational processes of professional identity and professional culture of journalists in the context of technological changes in the media industry. The dynamics of the development of media convergence are shown from the point of view of the mutual influence of traditional and new media and the tendency of improving their technological and dialogue features and capabilities in content creation and broadcasting. An assessment is made of the degree of adaptation of regional media to modern conditions of the information and communication environment in the context of organizational, professional, and communicative convergence.

Keywords: professional identity; convergence; mass media; communication technologies; digitalization

1. Introduction

The relevance and significance of this study are predetermined by the improvement of media, the digitalization of content, as well as the need for a theoretical understanding of the journalists' creative activity in the context of media convergence. A nation's level of innovative development is typically assessed by advancements in technology and the sophistication of its production equipment. A progressive phenomenon at one time was the introduction of printing complexes serving journalism, then the development of television centers and radio stations, and later the invention of the linotype, phototypesetting, laser, computer tech, etc. In recent decades, scientists have repeatedly confirmed the undoubted uniqueness of new media. Moreover, on the scale of the history of the means of communication, an advance in reaching a wide audience, the volume and quantity of news have no analogs. The creation of a multifaceted communication product is underway, reflecting a diverse range of voices and perspectives. There's no denying that the

Internet is superior to traditional media in terms of efficiency, visibility, and accessibility. These factors have influenced the activities of the mass media in general.

The study hypothesizes that in an environment of widespread new information technologies, when the number of sources of information increases, their nature, functions, and orientation are modified, the professional identity of a journalist becomes an important factor in the formation of a personality with a high need for self-determination and presentation of truthful information. The concept of identity in the context of this study is used to designate a set of attitudes and values that reflect a certain collective standard and allow an individual to determine his place in the world and the meaning of existence through synchronization with social goals and values. Acceptance of identity sets the goal, direction and path of self-development.

Self-identification is the process of choosing and moving along the intended path. Accordingly, the professional identity is usually comprehended as a collectively set pattern that determines the process of self-identification and affects the worldview and values of the individual who has chosen this profession. Professional identity is a structure of the collective psyche; it organizes emotional and cognitive processes. In accordance with the working hypothesis, the attitudes and values of journalists, reflecting the process of professional self-identification, are gradually changing under the influence of new information technologies.

The evolution of media and new forms of Internet communication contribute to the strengthening of the basic characteristics of identity and also stimulate personal growth by increasing self-determination and independence. The latest media technologies can realize their role in the progressive development of society only with the observance of such classical principles of journalism as objectivity, truthfulness, and humanism. These principles have been elevated to the standard of professional identity as a kind of modulator that blocks negative and stimulates positive effects.

Under the conditions of media convergence, the activities of the manufacturer of mass media are being transformed; the idea of introducing universalization is being popularized. In this regard, new types of skills become necessary that a specialist must possess to create materials for any media. The formation of a journalist's professional identity of a convergent editorial office is predetermined not only by the permanent development of digital technologies and the Internet as a discursive space but also by the need of management structures and media owners to implement a new model of information interaction and dialogue relations with a mass audience that is currently relevant for society.

The interests of scientists who analyze the problems of professional identity in the context of convergent journalism are characterized today by increased attention to the processes caused by permanent changes in information and communication technologies.

2. Literature review

The theoretical basis of the study is represented by the current research in the field of new media, professional identity, and convergent journalism. The multidimensional nature of the topic required an extensive review of the literature in two main theoretical areas:

1) Studies of the professional identity of a modern journalist.

The topic of the professional identity of journalists, despite its little study, has been touched upon in the works of foreign scientists in recent years (Grubermann and Meckel 2017; Hanitzsch, 2017; Lichtenstein, 2021; Raemy, 2021). An important step in understanding the problems of the formation of professional identity was the scientific project 'Professional identity of a journalist in the context of media transformation', implemented at the Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University (Pronina, 2016). Recent foreign studies also expanded theories about journalistic roles, professional identity, and the adaptation processes of media workers at different levels: social, discursive, blocking the negative and stimulating the positive effects of information technology (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Li, 2019; Standaert, 2021). The scholars rightly claim that the theory of intercultural communication can help people of different cultures avoid misunderstandings and conflicts (Banafsheh, 2020; Raemy, 2021; Sahin, 2021). Swiss scholar Patric Raemy outlines the theory of professional identity in journalism in the process of interaction with other people and socializing against the background of psychological resilience. His theory aims to explain the behavior of individuals in intercultural conflicts. Communication is seen here as a flow of feelings, thoughts, and information from the sender to the recipient (Raemy and Vos, 2021).

Professor Hanitzsch (2017) argues that the main way to understand the identity of journalism and its place in society is to study the professional roles of journalists in terms of discursive institutionalism: propagandist, populist mobilizer, manipulator, oppositionist and opportunistic mediator, etc., which emphasizes the responsibility of the journalist to society for providing information (Hanitzsch, 2017). This approach to the study of the concepts of journalistic roles from a dynamic point of view in terms of professional identity is supported by such authors, as Grubermann S., Hanitzsch T., Meckel M., Scherr S., Bachl M, and Standaert O.

The question of the correspondence between the perception of journalists and the public of what is good and bad in journalism and of professionalism as a concept based on the specialization of labor and control of professional practice is raised in the work by Meyers and Davidson (2016). Tara Ross's article is interesting for its qualitative analysis of major New Zealand's Pacific news media and interviews with 23 Pacific media producers and journalists, where, while discussing traditional values, the author highlights issues of identity in the practice of a multinational ethnic media audience (Ross, 2021).

2) Another direction in the study of convergent journalism.

3) Kachkayeva sees the ongoing processes as the result of revolutionary changes in the world of media in the 21st century. The textbook edited by her expands the understanding of media, the relationship of multi- and transmedia with the creative industries, and media communications with the digital economy. The

authors are quite convinced that changes in traditional media editorial offices are inevitable; however, our society should come prepared for these changes (Kachkaeva and Shomova, 2017). Jiaying Liu expresses a similar opinion, arguing that the advent of convergent journalism not only breaks the privilege of journalists in the traditional concept of news distribution but also changes the information structure and news work of traditional media (Liu, 2020).

4) Kobiruzzaman (2021) believes that media convergence in journalism is an important step towards survival in the era of new media (Li, 2019). According to Mark Deuze, convergence is not just a buzzword; it is a label that is easy to apply to a wide range of activities that affect the media operations (Deuze and Quandt, 2007). As the scientists note, this is a key identifier for many different trends in today's digital culture and digital Journalism (Abisheva et al., 2017; Gutsche, 2021; Scott, 2021).

The research by Oleshko (2020) proves that with the expansion of the capabilities of the Global Network, the meaning of mass communication as a form of intellectual activity is fundamentally changing. The Russian academician is convinced that a social request has been formed for the formation of a personality not only technologically savvy and able to easily find any information but also creative and aimed at a successful activity (Oleshko, 2020).

Features of the influence of various external and internal factors on the development of convergent journalism and ways of finding new opportunities to attract a new audience in the context of the rapid development of information and communication technologies are analyzed in the textbook by Baranova (2019). The regional aspect and the specifics of the functioning of the media in the context of convergence are considered by Yufereva (2021).

Further, a group of scientists introduces the new trends in the development of multimedia journalism in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The described work experience of the staff of the Faculty of Journalism of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University highlights trends in the field of new media and provides almost visual imagery on the use of new digital information technologies in the educational process, including examples of restructuring the traditional editorial office into a convergent one (Barlybayeva, 2015).

Also, the authors consider the presented educational sources extremely relevant since analysis of studies show that the transition to new media business forms and ways of operation may be accompanied by certain complexities, in particular, the invasion of non-professionals in social networks and the blogosphere. Besides, several authors note that convergent elements in the media are often represented mainly by photographs and hyperlinks. The presence of video and audio elements in media texts is still very limited (Galkina et al., 2016).

Still, there are different opinions on the issue of new technologies in the media. Some celebrate the death of traditional journalism; others are convinced that these are great times for the media world. Some seem to enjoy the possibilities, being inspired by new challenges. Apparently, the latter members of the media community seem to rely on a flexible concept of identity, able to absorb change and adapt to new situations and demands. Others are somewhat nostalgic and concerned that the core principles of journalism are under threat. A few years ago, Dutch journalist and

author Piet Bakker (Bakker, 2014) pointed out that technological innovation has changed every step of the journalistic workflow. Thus, the time calls for new skill sets and new research.

3. Materials and methods

The theoretical substantiation of the research results was carried out in accordance with the methodology of dialectical-materialistic analysis of the development of the professional activity of a journalist. The methodological base of the research is determined by a set of general scientific methods of cognition; it is of interdisciplinary nature and relies on a systematic approach. Verification of theoretical positions and hypothesis generation were conducted using methods of empirical research, including such as analysis, observation, comparison, description, which contributed to the generalization, classification, and systematization of the information received. Sociological methods were also employed to collect practical data: content analysis, interviews, modeling, and thematic monitoring.

The fundamental methodological basis that determined the set of research methods was a systemic integrative approach, which allowed the authors of the work, when studying the relationship between information processes and the professional identification of a journalist, to identify the specifics of identity transformation in the context of professional culture, the most important aspects of modern convergence theory and to consider them in accordance with the general scientific principles of objectivity and reliability. The institutional approach as a system of cognitive principles and theories developed in various fields of knowledge made it possible to interpret reality in line with current global and social changes in the media space and to determine the key factors of competence of a convergent editorial journalist in the digital age. Structural-functional analysis contributed to the consideration of the functional model of journalistic activity in the dialectical unity of its constituent elements. As a result of the study, differences in the professional self-identification of journalists were revealed, and their attitude to new technologies was analyzed.

To form the methodological basis of the work and develop specific research methods, it was necessary to thoroughly study a wide range of works in many scientific disciplines, primarily in the theory of mass communications, sociology, and philology. The fundamental principle of the study was an integrative approach, which allowed the authors, when considering the relationship between social, sociocultural, informational processes and the identification of a journalist, to analyze them in the unity of systemic and procedural properties and to determine the key types of professional competence in the context of media convergence.

Modern sociological, philosophical and political science trends in the analysis of the border topic of this article were concentrated around the study of changes in the information sphere caused by the processes of globalization and ubiquitous informatization, as well as contradictions in the formation and development of the information culture of society. Key attention is paid to the problems of social, personal and professional identity, including within the framework of the latest concept of professional and educational trajectories.

General scientific methods: observation, comparison, description and others—contributed to the generalization, analysis, classification, interpretation and systematization of the obtained data. Also, to collect empirical facts as the initial form of scientific knowledge, sociological methods were used: content analysis, semi-formalized interviews, thematic monitoring, the method of modeling, observation, and generalization. In order to form a methodological basis for scientific research and develop specific research methods, the authors needed to select for analysis and thoroughly study a large array of works, primarily in such areas as sociology, philosophy, philology, mass communications theory, journalism studies, etc. Their study provided the opportunity to implement an interdisciplinary concept of the chosen problem, the formation of the worldview position of society, the analysis of socio-cultural patterns and changes in modern society.

While implementing an interdisciplinary approach to the subject under study within the framework of the latest concepts of information and communication activities, as well as professional and educational trajectories and media education, the authors relied on the scientific works of Russian and Kazakh scientists Vartanova E. L., Kachkaeva A. G., Kalmykov A. A., Pronin E. I., Shesterkina L. P., S. Kh. Barlybaev, and others. The scientific works also employed a thorough analysis of academic papers by foreign authors such as M. Castells, M. McLuhan, T. H. Eriksen, S. Scherr, M. Bachland, and others. The data obtained as a result of text analysis are summarized and systematized within the framework of the research concept.

The digitalization of content predetermined the importance of such characteristics of media texts as the utmost efficiency, variety of topics, the exclusivity of information occasions, multimedia attributes, and others. In the context of professional identity, the conceptual basis of the study was considered as the understanding of convergence as a multidimensional process of functioning of the media system, the interpenetration of technologies, the integration of innovative processes in the field of storage and distribution of information products, and the unification of previously disparate media.

Experience shows that scientific discussions related to the development of the convergence process, as well as essential professional identification, are still ongoing. In the existing theoretical base, despite the diversity of directions, views, and attitudes of researchers, most often the factors of technological development of mass media are highlighted and conclusions are made about the effectiveness of activities based only on the applied value of this type of skills and competencies. At the same time, there is an obvious lack of theoretical research in which the key components are the socio-economic and value-based components of journalists' activities. In this regard, a scientific analysis of the professional culture of journalists is necessary in the context of technological development, improvement of media practices and formation of identity.

The theoretical basis of this work is made up of the works of domestic and foreign authors, which reveal the essence of the general methodological basis for the systematic study of the professional identity of journalists in the digital age within the framework of its interaction with information culture.

4. Results and discussion

The informational era of the development of the world society makes a formation of a single global community of a new quality objectively inevitable. This new community of ‘planetary linguistic personalities’ would certainly manifest an intention to reach a quick consensus and mutual understanding on all pressing issues of humanity (Vorozhbitova et al., 2018). Solving these issues may also shed light on the important problems of modern humanities, such as the problem of an individual’s inner self-cognition (Nesterik et al., 2016), the problem of interaction of identity and language (Beisembayeva et al., 2022). One of the most important sources of knowledge about the world’s influence on the personal worldview is the mass media. Changes in this area are happening rapidly, although they mostly relate to such areas as new forms of media consumption and experimental formats. All this significantly affects the future of journalism.

In recent years, the journalistic profession has undergone significant transformations that have an impact on the entire field of activity. The digital era has practically erased most of the previous boundaries of communication, thereby changing many roles of people “living” simultaneously in the real and virtual world created by the media, cultural artifacts, business, advertising, PR, and opinion leaders.

The development of multimedia has made it possible not only to synthesize photos, video, and audio in single content but also to include hyperlinks to other resources, thus wise introducing interactive forms of voting, ratings, and comments. The advantage of new media over traditional ones is efficiency, interconnectedness, and the two-way nature of electronic communication. By virtue of modern technologies, it has become possible to receive the latest news and conduct a dialogue in real-time.

According to Professor of the University of Amsterdam M. Deuze, media convergence should be seen as having its cultural logic, blurring the boundaries between different channels, forms, and formats, different departments of the media enterprise, and acts of production and consumption, as well as between the creation and use of media (Deuze, 2008). The American philosopher and culturologist, professor of journalism and cinematography Henry Jenkins define the culture of convergence as an intersection of mass and corporate media, a place where old and new media collide. Jenkins, one of the first media researchers, described the impact of media on society, politics, and culture, the impact of new media on product quality, and traced the changes in the role of the audience in the context of the development of digital technologies (Jenkins, 2006). According to Henry Jenkins, convergence will soon change the face of popular culture and media.

From a variety of definitions, the authors have isolated the essence of the concept: convergence in journalism is the content interpenetration of media communication channels, the fusion of diverse media into one whole. That concerns both the structure and the possibility of transferring interconnected information materials. The Russian education expert Vartanova (2003) believes that in the coming decades, convergence may completely change not only the media and communications systems but also the various associated industries (Vartanova, 2003).

Describing the integration of information and communication technologies that have begun in the 1970s, particular significance should be assigned to the gradual introduction of new media. The latter concept has acquired a deep practical meaning in the development of several scientific areas such as computer science, communication science, communication technology, etc. New formats of presentation, along with text and graphic publications, as well as audio materials, began to appear first in foreign print media. In the mid-1990s, video news appeared in the online versions of American press. Later, specialists began to expand the capabilities of their media entities, creating mobile versions of sites and mastering new platforms. Among the pioneers in the post-Soviet media space were websites of Russian ‘*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*’, ‘*Izvestia*’, and ‘*Kommersant*’ newspapers. Their online versions emerged in 1994. At first, they were a complete copy paste of the printed edition, over time turning into independent multimedia resources. That time was also marked by the first opportunity for journalists and presenters to communicate directly with the audience and discuss current topics in real-time via online radio stations broadcasting.

In Kazakhstan, new Internet technologies are now actively used as an effective and profitable tool for marketing and media communications. The percentage of the population with access to the Internet and mobile communications is quite high. New media are already making their adjustments to the life of Kazakhstani society.

The professional identity of a journalist retains its reference properties in the context of the transition of mass media to digital technologies and remains the main condition for the implementation of socially significant functions of journalism. According to Vartanova (2003), digitalization, eliminating differences between individual media and equalizing their content, paves the way for their convergence (Vartanova, 2003).

As confirmed by recent publications, the process of convergence in many countries of the world is successfully mastered by regional media platforms. This also applies to the practice of the Kazakh media. Examples of the successful transition of print publications to a convergent format testify to the originality of this idea, backed up by successful interactive multimedia projects in the country (Amirkhanova, 2021). Thus, the city newspaper ‘*Uralskaya Nedelya*’ became an interactive technologies pioneer in Western Kazakhstan. In the first week after launching the resource uralskweek.kz, at least ten thousand views were recorded daily. The most popular were the rubrics ‘*Do Good*’ and ‘*People’s News*’, one of the main tasks of which were to support people in difficult situations and help seriously ill children in Uralsk to receive the necessary treatment.

With the transition to the new format of the local Kostanay ‘*Nasha Gazeta*’ newspaper, the structure of the editorial work has also changed. Taking cue from journalists, photographers began to use convergent and multimedia forms of work in ng.kz. A lot of enthusiastic responses from readers were caused by the story of N. Solovyov, who managed to capture spearfishing with the flip camera. Three branches of Otyrar-tv.kz TV channel, representing South Kazakhstan, were the first media outlets in the republic to launch different editions of their site: in Russian and the state language.

The public information service of Central Kazakhstan ‘Novy Vestnik’ (nv.kz), which also became a pioneer in the development of Internet versions as independent multimedia resources, managed to provoke an interest of recipients in creative video projects. One of the popular media resources, for example, began to appear under the heading ‘City of Masters’. The e-Karaganda site became a large information and entertainment portal, attracting attention with its hot-button and entertaining materials under the slogan ‘Learn everything about the life of the city on one site’. This resource can be fully called a modern convergent platform. Online TV, a news portal, pages in social networks, and author’s blogs are involved in covering the events of the region. As it turned out during a survey of Karaganda users, the leading positions in priority ranking were occupied by the columns ‘Photo-comics’, ‘Collage of the week’, ‘Collage of the year’, and ‘Photo of the day’. The analysis of regional media showed that the convergent format contributes to the development of the genre of photo essay.

An interactive type of text dominates in convergent media, when contributors seek to create non-standard relationships with the addressee. A number of traditional genres of journalism have undergone changes, turning into multimedia. In fact, it wouldn’t be easy to single out the typology of online publications since ‘pure’ genres gradually began to succumb to new, ‘hybrid’ ones, so a note can easily be supplemented by a report, a report can be replaced by a survey, or interview. As a result, the audience receives a ‘multi-genre’ product. Observations show that ‘pure’ genre forms can only be found in clone publications that copy their traditional versions. Typical for media convergence is the emergence of content products common to different channels, contributing to the birth of new integrated genres – ‘infotainment’ (information + entertainment), edutainment (education + entertainment), etc.

Modern technology allows instant news flash. The unlimited capacity of the World Wide Web, the nature of hypertext, the ability to link all media together increase their potential for a more complete and in-depth description of reality. In this regard, professor at the University of Birmingham, journalist and blogger Paul Bradshaw (Bradshaw, 2022) noted that online media operates with two complementary and mutually contradictory factors: speed and quality. With such interaction, the main essence of the work is to create content for all types of media and manage this information flow from a single center. That refers to the combination of various information channels in a creative convergent edition, in which the maximum synergy of all media is achieved.

The contradictory development of media practice in recent years has occurred in conditions where each media outlet has several options for presenting texts of different formats. Their generic categories—verbal, auditory, visual—are, as it were, refracted by the prism of technologies used to collect information, create/form this or that content and its transmission. But it is difficult to deny the fact that at each of these stages of creative activity, the level and nature of the communicative properties of texts is largely determined by the subjective component of their author, i.e., the level of professionalism of the one who performs specific duties in the mass media and ultimately contributes to the implementation of the convergent possibilities of modern journalism.

Thus, several external factors including the rise of the mobile industry market and growing number of users of the worldwide network have influenced the development of convergence in many editorial offices that are actively using new channels for disseminating information. Noteworthy that the financial and commercial factor in the context of the development of market processes created the prerequisites for the transformation of media establishments from traditional to convergent ones, which led to significant changes in the principles of planning and production of a complex of materials: photo, video, audio and other products, such as infographics, text and other messages. The use of sources of multimedia information, along with the introduction of new business models, services, and advertising has become essentially relevant.

Thus, it can be concluded that the idea of convergence as a merger of technologies for the creation and transmission of multimedia texts, the rapprochement/unification of media markets and various mass media, functioning on the principles of coordination, interaction and systematic work with a real and potential audience, has objective prerequisites not only of a technological and economic nature, but also of a socially determined nature. For convergent journalism researchers, the media sphere as a whole is a specific object of analysis, since it includes many potential subjects of display.

Proceeding from the traditional editorial to the multimedia newsroom, the requirements for organizing the work of the editorial team change significantly, including a necessity to equip the offices with new technology. Obviously, any innovation creates both supporters and doubters. A number of practicing journalists, including media executives, expressed the opinion during the survey that universalization is hardly worth striving for. The key specialization should be preserved with the basic skills of preparing materials for different media platforms. Among the factors that are difficult to avoid and that may complicate the operations of a particular media, the following deserve particular consideration: excessive intensification of work, narrowing of classical methods of journalism, secondary information, and loss of the quality of exclusivity. Along with this, fears were expressed that with increased attention to purely external criteria for the preparation and presentation of information, the process of journalistic work may become less creative, and representatives of the creative profession will turn into ordinary news broadcasters since working in several formats in pursuit of the addressee they are risking to lose their individuality. As noted, it is difficult to meaningfully comment on an event and capture it on video at the same time and against the backdrop of what is happening. For example, employees of 'The Sun Online' website believe that a journalist does not have to hold a pen in one hand and camera in the other - these are different specializations, and each employs its own professionals (Thurman, 2008).

Kazakh scholar Kalmykov (2011) draws attention to the issues possibly associated with the psychological discomfort of older-generation employees during the transition to a new labor system. In this regard, he notes that convergence can become stressful for the media as an industry. The emergence of new content delivery channels is influenced by the requirements of the consumer who wants to quickly receive news at a convenient time and through a certain information

channel—and all of that requires additional skills from journalists, causing a rethinking of many principles of work. That is why Western experts are considering the process of convergence in terms of new professional roles and skills of reporters and editors.

Bradshaw (2022) highlights the following roles in a convergent media: editor-aggregator, mobile journalist, journalist-analyst, multimedia producer, editor-expert (navigator of industry specialization), online community editor, etc. According to this list of specializations in the converged newsroom, journalists, whose requirements are certainly changing, must be able to create an information product in various formats. The latter also popularized the idea of introducing a ‘universal journalist’. The tasks of such employee may require not only the skill of writing a text but shooting a video without crew assistance, as well as edit and voice it, master the skills of working with photographic equipment, and much more.

Noteworthy that foreign sources often contain the concepts of ‘cross-media trained journalist’, ‘multi-skilling journalist’, i.e., a journalist who knows how to prepare materials for different media and other platforms. Hence, one may come across the term ‘do-it-all journalists’ (Bradshaw, 2022), that is, jack-of-all-trades in journalism.

Based on the analysis, it is possible to identify the features of communication practices characteristic of domestic mass media: interaction in the exchange of content between the main editorial office of the media and the online editorial office (department); an example of productive interaction between the online editorial office (department) and mass media employees can be cross-promotion, which includes creative technologies using cross-references of printed materials to website publications, and vice versa. In the practical activities of the mass media, there is often a transition from a purely news paradigm to an educational and entertaining one, including “storytelling”, which, in our opinion, is one of the promising directions for the development of media text.

The survey has shown that accredited domestic media professionals and theorists rarely mention such criteria as the ability to interact with other departments and divisions of a media company when discussing skills and competencies necessary for modern journalists (Saladounikava, 2020). Western journalists and researchers often single out the quality of ‘co-operation’ as one of the main ones, rightly believing that cross-media journalism is largely based on the joint efforts of all the associated branches. Today, as is known, convergent journalism is understood as a special type of professional activity in the production of texts intended for transmission through various channels united in an integrated media market by specific software products and multimedia services. According to a number of experts, “New Media” are no longer media in the traditional sense. These are software products with the ability to “feedback”, with algorithms for interaction with users, with transformable structures and interfaces. “New Media” are no longer so much means of transmitting information as individual (“adapting” to the interests of the user) communication channels.

One of the most significant factors influencing the professional identity of an individual in the modern world is the digitalization of public life. The influence of this factor is ambiguous: on the one hand, it promotes the active formation of an

individual's professional identity with the help of Internet communication and virtual communities of professionals; on the other hand, there is a "blurring of the boundaries" of professional identity, and tools appear in the media space that create distorted professional images. Under the influence of digital technologies, the requirements for journalists are also changing. The multimedia factor, on the one hand, has certainly brought to the forefront the requirement for multidisciplinary media specialists as one of the main criteria for assessing the professionalism of the team, and on the other hand, it has very quickly exposed a kind of "gaps" in the organization of their training or retraining. Moreover, the development of the civil journalism system, the active use of social media products and bloggers' creativity by the mass media have led to some top managers and authoritative media personalities even asking the question: "Does the media need specialists with a journalistic education at all?" Discussions were held on the topic: "Will the Internet destroy classical education?". Information itself is acquiring the highest power in the new society. Perhaps this thesis has become attractive to a certain category of young people who, calling themselves bloggers, targetologists, content managers, write information on social networks, post photos on Instagram, where we often see not a real photo chronicle of life, but an alternative world that users create with the help of staged shots and filters. For a certain category of young people, the emergence of new forms of activity is characteristic, occupying an intermediate position between leisure and professional areas. Scientists and experts have been warning for years that social networks can have a negative impact on people's self-esteem and even cause depression. At the same time, today opinion leaders—Instagram bloggers—have taken on the role of the media. Most of them do not work for any publication, they do not have contractual relations with their employer, they do not prepare material according to journalistic standards, but publish only their view of the situation. At the same time, not all of them, unlike journalists, are professional in their use of words. Few are familiar with the law that requires them to be held accountable for their publications on par with journalists.

Of course, the process of convergence—the possibility of universal journalism within the framework of professional identity—is associated with the training and retraining of employees throughout the world. A specialist should not stop updating his/her knowledge after graduating from an educational institution. In a rapidly changing information environment, people must have the opportunity to receive new education from time to time.

The trend of mass media development is shifting to those areas that are more focused on innovation, cognition, understanding the realities (Uaikhanova et al., 2020), self-identification of the individual, and achieving mutual understanding between people, which, of course, imposes increased requirements on the quality of the preparation of journalistic materials covering the changing reality.

5. Conclusions

Convergent journalism in the information age requires not only professional skills, competencies, proficiency of operative administration under extreme conditions, knowledge, and compliance with collective norms and rules of behavior.

Time calls for social sensitivity, information intelligence, attentive inclusion in the professional community and public affairs.

The profession of a journalist, sensitive to global changes, is undergoing significant transformations that have an impact on the entire field of activity. Determining the key areas for the formation of competencies relevant for specialists of the new formation will allow a better understanding of the essence of the processes taking place in the field of mass media in the digital age.

The professional identity of a journalist serves, on the one hand, as an indicator of the realization of professional and personal qualities, and on the other, acts as a factor determining the choice of a particular media specialization. Journalists are now a part of the process where communication through the latest technologies is becoming not only a form of lifestyle but also a form of self-realization in the new realm of the convergent media world.

The emergence and development of social networks and blogging culture, along with the rise of new communication formats for a mass audience, influenced the spread of identity standards in society—while also causing the growth in the number of active participants in Internet communication. The dawn of active development of media technologies calls for a specialist who understands the nature of different formats (print and electronic media) and, most of all, who knows how to prepare a high-quality information product for various media platforms. Multimedia as a technological embodiment of the idea of convergent journalism is not only actualized by the constantly changing practice of organizing dialogue relations with the audience, but is also closely interconnected with the problem of increasing the professionalism of journalists and other subjects from among the mass media employees.

The era of globalization imposes more stringent requirements on professionalism. The practical component of identity becomes dominant: the more qualified and successful journalist copes better with his professional activities, and his identity becomes even stronger.

The authors are entitled to the opinion that in order to work effectively in convergent media, a journalist needs to study the specifics of activities peculiar to all traditional media. Superficial knowledge and the ability to do a little bit of everything are clearly not enough for professional functioning. The activities of media staff can be hampered by insufficient preparedness for innovation - a key development factor. At the same time, it should be noted that scientific discussions on the evolution of the process of convergence (as well as on the essential identification of intentions) remain actively seized of the matter. In the existing theoretical base, despite the variety of approaches, concepts, attitudes of researchers, the factors of technological development of mass media and applied value of this kind of skills and competencies are most often singled out.

As is evident from the foregoing, convergence as a phenomenon of universal journalism within the framework of professional identity appears as an evolving process that determined the direction of further progress of the media and shortly may transform the economy, culture, and the media market. The evolution of the Internet and mobile communications is pretty unstoppable. Its expanses are endless and provide great career opportunities, along with a capacity for further

improvement of the latest technologies. Modern journalism cannot exist without mobile innovations, by virtue of which the works of the current media empires meet the main criterion—efficiency. Journalists have to keep up with the development of technology. In the authors' opinion, the communication environment makes it necessary to reconsider the previous educational model for journalists' training and create a new one - the one that would be consistent with the goals and objectives of convergent journalism in the development of the information society. Both foreign and domestic researchers note that transition to new forms and methods of media operations requires implementing a system-activity approach, not a forced one. The appearance of modern mass media is entirely dependent on digital technologies. Digitalization, i.e., the translation of texts into digital form, has been proven to make it possible to further transform any physical or scanned materials into information that can be easily searched electronically, as well as—which is very important in a situation of permanent growth in its volumes—categorization and systematization of various forms and types of information products. Digital innovations dictate the emergence of new methods of working with audiences.

Thus, evolving, transforming, and expanding information space in the age of mass communication society touches upon many social processes and therefore affect the formation of each new generation.

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