Daša Nováčiková
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
dnovacikova@ukf.sk

Cultural Message Through the Specific Characteristics of New Media

SUMMARY

This study is primarily concerned with how the new media is currently modifying the existing perception of journalism. The aim is not to summarize all new technologies and media, but to examine the specific characteristics of online media. This study strives to offer the most comprehensive view of specifics and differences between online media (incorporating online journalism) and the traditional media. It also deals with important issues, such as how cultural factors can modify our perception of new media or vice versa – how media and technologies shape the cultural environment in which they operate.

KEYWORDS: new media, culture, convergence, online journalism, internet, journalist

STRESZCZENIE

Wpływ specyfiki nowych mediów na odbiór przekazu kulturowego.

W artykule podjęta została tematyka wpływu nowych mediów na postrzeganie współczesnego dziennikarstwa. Celem artykułu jest nie tyle omówienie typów nowych technologii, ile ich udział w kształtowaniu mediów internetowych. W opracowaniu omówiona została specyfika mediów cyfrowych, zostały też wskazane najistotniejsze różnice pomiędzy mediami internetowymi a tradycyjnymi. W tym kontekście

została dokonana analiza dziennikarstwa internetowego. W tekście zwrócono także uwagę na inne ważne kwestie, takie jak wpływ czynników kulturowych na postrzeganie nowych mediów. Podjęta też została próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, w jaki sposób media i technologia wpływają na środowisko kulturowe, w którym działają.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: nowe media, kultura, konwergencja, dziennikarstwo online, Internet, dziennikarz

1. Introduction

We live in a society and time in which new technologies and the new media play a key role. The media, with their reporting and obtaining of information are the most important in shaping public opinion. Based on the recipient's feedback we can sense how and to what extent the cultural society is formed. Society is currently influenced to a very large extent by the media and the latest technologies. Obviously, the society (in the context of media) differentiates. We can therefor distinguish between different groups of recipients. By looking at how they interact with the broadcasted specific content and how they communicate with the media. This also includes the viewership, listenership, readership and web traffic media have. In the long term the tabloid media are figuring at the top. Those that can be qualified as serious,[1] try (or more precisely: should try) to provide relevant and the most objective content. In consequence, several authors in their scientific outputs based the research on the concept of journalism culture.[2] As the most typical feature of the media of our time I consider convergence.

> Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who's speaking and what they think is talking about. (…) Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. (...) It is "the flow of content across multiple media platforms.[3]

---

1   We can extend this to the public media.
2   Hanitzsch, T. Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Towards a universal theory. *Communication Theory* 17(4): 367-385; Deuze, M. Online Journalism: Modelling the First Generation of News Media on the World Wide Web. *First Monday*, 2001, Vol 6, Number 10.
3   Jenkins, H. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York : New York University Press, 2006, p. 2-3, 17.

As content distribution through various channels understands it McQuail,[4] many authors identify it as the mutual interconnection between the different media.[5,6] Convergence in terms of inseparability of new and old media considered Lawson-Borders:

> Convergence is the window of opportunity for traditional media to align itself with technologies of the 21st century. (…) The integration of content across media platforms to connect users is part of the goal of convergence in media organizations.[7]

Likewise, Lev Manovich summarizes "some of the key differences between old and new media."[8]

In connection with modifications of the cultural heritage and convergence it is essential to reflect on the definition of new media. Several authors agree that it is a difficult task and their views on them vary. Significant media theoretician Marshall McLuhan is considered as the first who named new media. There are many other authors dealing with the nature and definition of new media.[9] A book New Media: a Critical Introduction can be regarded as very comprehensive. It is trying to bring the survey about the issues of new media.[10] Among the new media, we include a

> personal computer, tablet or mobile phone up to network protocols (web, ICQ, ftp as well.) and specific web services (Google, Bing, YouTube, Facebook, G+, Twitter, Flickr) or software applications (computer game, music player files, mail client, RSS reader, web browser, text editor, IM messenger).[11]

The aim of this contribution is to provide analysis of the specific characteristics of online media from the journalistic point of view. More specifically, based on concrete examples, to note specific aspects of internet

---

4   McQuail, D. 1999. *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. Praha : Portál, 1999, p. 43.

5   Deuze, M. "What is Multimedia Journalism?" In *Journalism Studies* 7 (2), p. 140.

6   Nováčiková, D. Koexistencia, konkurencia a konvergencia internetových médií In: *(KO) MÉDIÁ : monografia odborných a vedeckých štúdií.* Nitra : UKF, 2007, p. 133-144.

7   Lawson-Borders, G. Integrating New Media and Old Media: Seven Observations of Convergence as a Strategy for Best Practices in Media Organizations. In *The International Journal on Media Management*, 2003, Vol. 5, No. II : p. 91.

8   Manovich, L. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2001, p. 49.

9   Macek, J. *Úvod do nových médií*. Ostrava : Ostravská Univerzita, 2011, p. 71.

10 Lister, M. et al. *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. New York : Routledge, 2009, p. 446.

11 Macek, Jakub. *Úvod do nových médií.* Ostrava : Ostravská univerzita, 2011, pp. 13-14.

publishing – typical signs of internet media.[12] Internet is in fact a significant source of information which has already acquired a position that is in this respect more important than traditional media.

2. Online journalism

Online journalism during it's not very long history has acquired an irreplaceable position as the dominant pendant of traditional forms of media. The classic form of journalism, thanks to the internet, acquires a new dimension. In 2017 a history of online publishing has lasted exactly thirty--seven years. During this period of profound transformations, we can consider the internet as the fastest developing mass medium. Although the history of the internet dates back to the year 1969, it is very difficult to determine which medium was online first. We assume that the first attempt of a newspaper published on the internet comes from the 1. July 1980. The newspaper was called The Columbus Dispatch and has been issued in Ohio. Thanks to the immediate transmission of information its concept allowed direct, interactive feedback. The reader could participate in creating the electronic (internet) of the content of the periodical for the first time.

Fig. 1. The title page of the first newspaper published on the internet – The Columbus Dispatch.

---

12   With their positives and negatives.

> It was part of a unique CompuServe and Associated Press experiment about the potential of online papers. Eventually other AP member newspapers were part of the project, including the Washington Post, The New York Times, The Minneapolis Star Tribune (…). Although it ended in 1982, the CompuServe/AP experiment became a crucial step in the history of online journalism. [13]

The Palo Alto Weekly (California) was the first newspaper regularly published on the web (19. January 1994). Twice a week it posted its full content. In Slovakia, the mainstream media had initially a cautious approach to the internet. They were worried about the publication of its content. The first online version of the newspaper SME was on the internet in 1994. The domain www.sme.sk with news content has been running since 1996. The Internet and internet media are currently figuring not only as final information portals, but particularly as a primary source for search and retrieval of information. The form and content of online journalism has acquired the typical contours that make it unconvertible and even at present irreplaceable. Global reach in the case of online journalism has achieved its maximum dimension, journalistic articles and texts are accessible for nearly every recipient, on any given time. We would be very hard pressed to find[14] a journal or newspaper, which does not have its web version. New media and new technologies contribute to the possibility of dissemination of journalistic texts. Journalistic content can be offered via different platforms in order to reach the widest possible group of potential users. At the beginning, it was a classic computer, then a laptop, a tablet, and now smartphones. Smartphones have gradually become the most frequently used tools for communication, searching, reading and sharing information. Thanks to the smartphones applications, individual media is now compendious and accessible. They provide the users new possibilities and convenience in the perception of the content offered.

---

13 Shedden, D. *Today in media history: CompuServe and the first online newspapers.* Online: https://www.poynter.org/2014/today-in-media-history-compuserve-and-the-first-online-newspapers/270993/ (August 24, 2017).

14 Especially in the more developed countries of the world.

3. Specific features of internet journalism (compared with traditional forms of publishing)

3.1. Immediacy

Internet articles may be reported in real time, where certain events are monitored online. In fact, in this case it is nothing new – this ability had (and have) for example telegraph (in the past), radio and television. In the case of traditional media, however, it is a much more complicated process. There are more demands on the broadcast time, processing time to simultaneously release information. It is also more expensive. In the case of internet media this process is carried out much more easily. Reports are published earlier than in traditional media, often immediately or directly after an event has occurred. This is the most notably and visible difference in the news. Continuous publishing of the current information has, often however, some negatives. In an aspiration to give the news of an event as the first, or in the shortest amount of time, can sometimes push the quality of the contribution to the side-lines. Thorough verification and processing of information is done many times after its publication, which can be misleading to the recipients. The reader may receive the information in its initial form or content. However, the subsequent revisions and corrections are not open to interpretation by the recipient. In addition, the user expects that the information he receives is true. Despite the hectic speed of the internet publications, the media must preserve the nature and professionalism of the industry. The media must be held accountable, to be a serious and trustworthy source of information for the reading public. Another perceivable negative is the absence of high quality journalistic' contributions. In the context of the Slovak internet we can find only a few internet media that can provide (even if simple) variability of journalistic genres which are currently often pushed into the background. Time stress has resulted a lack of stylistic and grammar level. Of course, in Slovakia there are web media sites that offer high-quality journalism.

Fig. 2. One way of correction of an inaccurate information in the report in the online journal SME. Source: www.sme.sk.

3.2. The timeliness and continuity of the provision of information (Journalism without deadlines)

In online media, almost without exception, deadlines do not exist. They do not work in cycles, but continuously. New journalistic manifestations are not published in packages – releases[15] are gradual, so as and when news comes in. In practice, items are published usually in the order in which the authors send them to the editors for publication. Of course, on the front page are selected articles that have the greatest potential to attract readers' interest. These articles are continuously changing. It is necessary to constantly monitor the news agencies. It is important for the editor to respond and produce the relevant, interesting articles. The user of the internet medium largely expects that for each new visit on a news website, in any of the day or night time, they will find up to date information. The internet media is akin to the news agencies, which are also characterized by the continuous issuing of reports. In addition, the published text can be further strengthened, replenished or updated with new facts, details and information. Often, we witness the publication of information in „minute by minute", almost real time, where we are getting the most recent messages on the events. From the content point of view, it is about different disasters, terrorists' attacks, natural disasters or elections. In the media appear notifications like "Update", the "Extraordinary" or "We Know as the First" "Right Now" or "Breaking

---

15   Such as in television or radio broadcasting.

News". This kind of articles is very popular. The publication can be very fast and relatively easy, thanks to a sophisticated content management (editorial) system. Journalists can work much faster and more efficiently than ever before, the articles can be posted almost immediately. The texts can be complemented with new facts, details and information. Updates are done continuously and "minute by minute".

3.3. Unlimited time and space (global reach and perception)

Journalistic expressions are posted online and then archived, so the reader has them comfortably available. They do not have to walk to the library, flipping through old newspapers and magazines. We can now find an article within a few seconds using a searched word, term or author. Of course, the opposite is also true that, articles posted on the internet can be corrected or deleted at high speed so that no one can get to them any longer.

The editor is not limited to the space with a certain number of lines or characters. We can say that (in theory) the extent, to which an article is written, is unlimited. However, in this case, it is important to perceive the current needs of the recipient, who can accept the specified range of the selected journalistic genres. Some supplementary information can be added to an article – detailed statistics, in-depth analysis of the problem, info graphics or even official announcements. Individual media are available to the readers at any time and almost anywhere. So, there is no problem for the Slovak internet user to read everyday materials, articles from the world newspapers The New York Times, Le Monde, The Guardian or the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Or in Bratislava to read about world events on the websites of news agencies Reuters, AP, Bloomberg, ČTK etc.

3.4. Credibility

Print media, broadcast (radio) or television purport that they are more credible than online media. The recipient should sense the work of the editorial team in the background, the head of the edition. Recipients may often assume the truth from the contributions that are published by the radio or on television. This (older) electronic media and print should not be misleading. The information should be verified from multiple sources. They need to build awareness of trust around the medium. If the website wants to gain the confidence, it must seek an adequate procedure for obtaining information. The main demand must be to publish qualitative

journalistic texts that comply with the specifics and variable journalistic genres. Editing is crucial in this case. The quality of online journalistic expressions also affects the work with the text. The headline belongs to the most important components of the writings published on the internet. The user is attacked on a daily bases by the huge amount of information. This is one of the reasons why the selection is important. A good headline can entice a recipient into the reading of a given contribution. Reliability is also confirmed by the good stylistics and flawless spelling. If the user reads regularly from the same website, they tend to construct confidence[16] in the reliability and credibility of the information provided.

3.5. Multimedia possibility

Another of the attractive benefits of internet publishing, which distinguish it from the print versions of the periodicals, is the small space in which it provides the reader the text, (info)graphics, photos, sound, music, videos, animations, 3D, links to YouTube (for example) and photo galleries etc. Online journals, web pages of various media can become (because of multimedia) more dynamic and attractive for the readers. As mentioned multimedia possibility are endless (with regards to interactivity), the magazine Wired makes full use of developing technologies. The digital edition of the magazine offers to a reader a new dimension to receive information. The published text has "broken", non-linear structure and is extended by all sorts of media attributes. During the reading, it is possible to look at associated videos, graphics, rotate 3D objects, or move into virtual reality. The content is enriched by the extra dimension, it becomes much complex, and at the same time more attractive for a reader.

3.6. Hypertextuality, interactivity

Internet journalism is interactive. Hypertext represents the primary mechanism for publishing on the web; it is able to connect different elements and contents. It is

> a kind of writing facilitated by computer technology in which documents and parts of documents are linked together to allow the reader to follow his or her own "path" through a body of information or a narrative.[17]

---

16   Of course, if the boulevard is excluded.
17   Lister, M. et. al. *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 424.

Whether it is a longer analysis, a comprehensive work – added value is the possibility of instant access to multiple opinions that can add depth and detail to the published content. Traditional journalism leads the reader through the linear narrative perspective. Online journalism is non-linear. In online news reports, we can connect with the last information about the current state of an event and in addition we have the possibility to look at the preceding development of events from referencing earlier messages. Not to mention the possibility of further links to information about the wider background of the events through suitably selected hypertext links. Online journalist lets the recipients become part of a specific journalistic product. As mentioned above, online texts have a non-linear structure. Thanks to the links to other sites, there is an ideal space and mechanism to give the reader the source of the documents and background information that each other can shape the investigative journalism.

> The World Wide Web system of hypertext documents was proved to be the ideal medium for the distribution of text information on the internet. (…) [World Wide Web] was consistently easy to use for the layman. Those who would like to publish the information then offered a very simple way to do so. (...) The original technology of the World Wide Web has been expanded to include more advanced text formatting options, supplemented by the support of multimedia content and subsequently with some other (…) things which suit the online media.[18]

The users have (increased) the ability to control the content, to communicate with the author of the text, to notify them about the discrepancies or factual errors. They have several options. Either, write an email to the author or feedback through comments or discussions under the article. Other options are the social networks that provide more possibilities for communication and expression of one's own opinions. With the above properties is also related to the change of the job of a journalist. They has to be multi-skilled: write news and current affairs in print and online media, create articles for print and online, and each is interlinked; write a blog, edit news and current affairs for print and online media, record conversations as audio and video, record stand-up at the camera, edit video or audio to be published, use CMS, be active in their own online community and moderate the discussions.[19]

---

18 Bednář, V. *Internetová publicistika*, Praha : Grada, 2011, p. 43.
19 Bull, A. *Multimedia Journalism. A practical Guide.* London – New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 478.

3.7. Instant feedback

A few years ago there existed certain journalistic genres in the framework of the epistolary publicism. The reader, viewer or listener had reserved and limited space to communicate with the editors, or gave them a news tip. Users play an active role. Currently the online media provide a space, where published tips or posts from users who have mentioned the type of interaction of interest. This relates to the pre-mentioned interactivity. In the framework of the internet, more than in any other media the recipient can modify content of offered information. They use the camera of the cell phone to publicize what they are seeing at the moment. Then it comes to user-generated content. Online media content is personalized, modified and diversified. Users use the discussion below the article, to comment on information and express their views. Other possibilities are blogs. They can be considered a form of citizen journalism.[20] It happens very often, that blogger is the first one at an event, informs as the first. However citizen journalism may conceal some negatives. Probably the most important problem in this case is credibility, accuracy and the possibility of using manipulation. Mostly they are people who do not have a journalistic education. Of course, even a journalist can be a blogger. Either they publish blogs for themselves or in the context of media in which they act.

4. Conclusion

The world is constantly changing. From hour to hour we are witnessing the visibility of new devices, applications, and technological achievements. Technologies are changing the environment in which we exist, create, work and they also create changes in our society and culture. Cultural environment affects not only a huge variety of websites offering their media content, but also many social networks. They are interconnected with the web pages of each media. They share their content, modify or adapt to the specific medium and or its recipients. The methodology of journalistic work is changing too. The journalists must be multi-skilled. The print is gradually transformed into the internet editions and this is related to the above-mentioned characteristics (immediacy, convergence, proximity, global reach, credibility, instant feedback…), which are typical for web media. They form a sort of foundation on which it is possible to build. Traditional journalism is transformed, converted to online journalism. This

---

20   Or – it can be called public, participatory, democratic or street journalism.

change is gradual and involves graphic aspects, editing individual jour-
nalistic expressions and their classification. Journalistic genres are also
changing to accommodate to the new environment. Every year, the mar-
ket is enriched by the latest technologies, which affect journalistic con-
tent and creative processes. It is important to note that the traditional me-
dia type will still exist in many years to come, and that online journalism
is still journalism. Over the years, the work of journalists and editors has
changed, both in content, design and composition. By this same change
the traditional newspapers are transformed too. However, the essence re-
mains identical: to be responsible, distribute and provide reliable informa-
tion in an appropriate, professional and credible form.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bull, Andy. 2010. *Multimedia Journalism. A practical Guide*. London – New
    York: Routledge, p. 478.
Craig, R. 2005. *Online Journalism: Reporting, Writing, and Editing for New Me-
    dia*. Canada: Thompson-Wadsworth.
Deuze, M. 2001. Online Journalism: Modelling the First Generation of News
    Media on the World Wide Web. *First Monday*, Vol 6, Number 10.
Deuze, Mark. 2004. "What is Multimedia Journalism?" In *Journalism Studies*
    7 (2), pp. 237-255.
Hanitzsch, Thomas (2007). *Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Towards a uni-
    versal theory. Communication Theory* 17(4): 367-385.
Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*.
    New York : New York University Press. P. 308. ISBN 978-0-8147-4281-5.
Lawson-Borders, Gracie. 2003. Integrating New Media and Old Media: Se-
    ven Observations of Convergence as a Strategy for Best Practices in Media
    Organizations. In *The International Journal on Media Management*. Vol. 5,
    No. II : pp 91-99.
Lister, Martin et. al. 2009. *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. New York:
    Routledge. Pp. 446 ISBN 978-0-415-43160-3.
Macek, Jakub. *Úvod do nových medií*. Ostrava : Ostravská univerzita 2011,
    p. 71, ISBN 978-80-7464-025-4.
Manovich, Lev. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
McQuail, Denis. 1999. *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. Praha: Portál.
Nováčiková, D. 2007. Koexistencia, konkurencia a konvergencia interne-
    tových médií In: *(KO)MÉDIÁ : monografia odborných a vedeckých štúdií*.
    Nitra : UKF, 2007. – ISBN 978-80-8094-213-7, pp. 133-144.
Shedden, David. *Today in media history: CompuServe and the first online ne-
    wspapers*. Online: (https://www.poynter.org/2014/today-in-media-history
    -compuserve-and-the-first-online-newspapers/270993/ (April 24, 2017).

Daša Nováčiková, PhD. – an assistant professor of Journalism at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra). She is focused on the journalistic genres and new media studies. Her field of professional orientation is concentrated mainly on new media development tendencies in print and on-line media. Within literary research it is devoted to the plane of journalistic genres and historical aspects of literary criticism.