


## DIGITAL JOURNALISM AS A NEW TYPE OF MEDIA ACTIVITY

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The relevance of the study is caused by the continuous transformation and innovations of the digital environment, the undefined categorical apparatus of digital journalism, and national peculiarities of the process of creating online journalistic discourse. The main purpose of the study is to identify the conceptual features of digital journalism and to highlight the communication specificity of the designated type of media. Based on the studies of R. Salaverría, it is proposed to understand under digital journalism all types of journalism performed with the help of digital technologies, that is changeable social journalistic practice focused on a heterogeneous mass audience, presented in specific but at the same time changeable genres and formats. Thus, there are debates on the application of the terms ‘cyberjournalism’, ‘online journalism’, ‘multi-media journalism’, ‘computational journalism’, ‘algorithmic journalism’, ‘data-driven journalism’, and others to this type of media activity. The main research method applied in this study is discourse analysis, which made it possible to understand the problems of a modern digital environment, to trace the genesis of digital journalism, to carry out typological analysis of the existing digital media system, to determine the specifics of media products and audience participation in digital creation and consumption of news. The novelty of the study lies in an attempt to introduce a systematic definition of ‘digital journalism’ into the scientific discourse, to pay attention to such features as uncertainty and variability, a transformation of the traditional categorical apparatus, changing roles and functions of participants in the communicative process. The results of the study clarify the subject-object and structural characteristics of modern journalism as well as determine the organizational and technological transformations of digital media production.

*Keywords:* journalism; digitalization; digital media; digital media audience.

**Problem statement.** The relevance of this study is due to several factors. First, the prevalence and widespread use of the term “digital” entails some uncertainty in the definition. When using concepts in the synonymous list together with “network”, “online”, “latest”, “computer”, etc., most domestic researchers do not always take into account the established tradition of their interpretation and application. Secondly, understanding under “digital environment” everything related to computer or network activities blurs the boundaries of this activity, hindering the design of a certain categorical apparatus, formation and effective use of the methodological base, and clear understanding of the features, such as content creation, activity, etc.

Modern scientific discourse is saturated with researches on various features of the digital media environment. Scientists are interested in the correlation of digital media with the specifics of the development of political, economic, social spaces of the world, national, regional levels. They study epistemological, philosophical, technological, linguistic, structural, and other aspects of the new era media, build new communicative models, analyze auditory transformations, offer new journalistic discourse development strategies. However, with all the variety of theoretical and applied studies, there is still no clear understanding of digital journalism’s definition.

**Latest research works and publications analysis.** Scientists began to show an active interest in studying the specifics of digital communication and digital media in the 1980s. In 1980, G. Marci-Boehncke and M. Delere (Marci-Boehncke & Delere, 1985) opened one of the first scientific discussions on the features of the digital media environment. Further, F. Dietrich (Dietrich, 1986) has shown his interest in the topic by publishing his works related to changes in the process of information presentation, interactivity, and poly-format nature of digital media in 1986. In 1990, P. Samuelson reflected on intellectual property issues in the digital media era (Samuelson, 1990). In the last decade of the twentieth century, the term “digital” is gradually becoming trendy. Stable expressions “digital revolution”, “digital democracy”, “digital age”, “digital society”, “digital literature”, “digital media” and so on define the choice of research areas. Textbooks and manuals on digital media are appearing, and the phrase “journalism in the digital age” is gradually being transformed into “digital journalism.” It is during this period that the distinction between the concepts of “digital” and “new media” appears. Some researchers agreed to understand “digital media” as a general category that includes the phenomenon of “new media”. Others, on the other hand, considered “new media” to be a general phenomenon, referring to the presence in terms

such as “digital media” and “electronic media” of a specific formal feature. The approach when both terms were used as synonyms also turned out to be relevant. It should be noted that such uncertainty still exists. Thus, E. Siapera, writing about the understanding of the phenomenon of “new media”, suggests not paying attention to its three modern components: digital, online, and social. At the same time, A. Suvorova insists on “the identity of the indicated terms [digital and new media. — *G. Sh.*] in the technical plane of consideration of the issue” (Suvorova, 2017, p. 741). Thus, the need for a detailed analysis of the situation surrounding these phenomena is beyond doubt. Regarding the definition of “digital journalism”, the study of R. Salaverría (Salaverría, 2019b) is useful in this context. It presents a detailed bibliographic review of scientific works on digital media for the period from 1995 to 2019. Salaverría emphasizes that researchers have not agreed on this issue. As in the above situation from media, there is no certainty in the use of terms. The concepts of “digital journalism”, “cyberjournalism”, “online journalism”, “multimedia journalism”, “computational journalism”, “algorithmic journalism”, “data-driven journalism” etc are equally present in scientific studies. The fact worth mentioning is that the prevalence of a term depends on the geography of researchers. Salaverría noticed a pattern: Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking scholars often use the term “cyberjournalism.” The term “digital journalism” is popular in French-language discourse. English and German-language studies of the last 25 years speak of “online journalism” (both, English and German). However, for the last 10 years, “digital journalism has dominated the world” (Salaverría, 2019b, p. 2). At the same time, Salaverría himself considers the term “cyberjournalism” to be more accurate and appropriate, despite its limitations in the professional environment. “It [the term ‘cyberjournalism’. — *G. Sh.*] defines the speciality of journalism that uses cyberspace to investigate, produce and, above all, disseminate news content. It, therefore, identifies the journalism carried out “on” digital networks. But the expression *periodismo digital* is broader, as it refers to all journalism carried out “with” digital technologies” (Salaverría, 2019b, p. 3).

Scientific considerations on certain aspects of digital journalism have become a popular trend today. Thus, its epistemology (Ekström & Westlund, 2019), interdisciplinarity (Steensen, 2021; Franklin & Canter, 2019), communicative specifics, structural and functional features (Humprecht & Esser, 2018), an adaptation of traditional media production systems have entered the scientific interests of recent years, caused by the demands of the digital age (Kyrylova, 2019a; Pashchenko, 2020; Wirtz, 2020) forecasts for the future (Deuze, 2017), etc. However, this phenomenon requires a constant correlation with the processes that permanently transform the modern digital environment, and adaptation to national situations.

**Purpose of the paper** — to identify conceptual features of digital journalism and distinguish the communicative specificity of media activity that is mentioned here.

**Research methods.** Modern dictionaries define “digital” as the use of a system for receiving and correcting physical information in the form of binary code, sequences of 0 and 1. If we are talking about “digital”, it means one that is created using digital technology.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “digital” as the use of digital data, computers and digital devices, and related technologies or media (digital radio, digital television, etc.) / “involving digital data”; making use of digital computers or devices. Also: of or relating to such technologies or media. In this case, there are two derivatives of “digital”, which have fundamentally different meanings. The first is digitization, the process of converting an analog form to a digital one. The second, digitalization, is a change in the business model through the use of digital technologies, the creation of new opportunities, and the expansion of functionality. When we talk about digital journalism, we mean the second process, which transforms the classical notion of media creativity, changes the content of the term “journalism”, significantly expands its methodological basis for finding, interpreting, producing, storing, and disseminating information, affects technology media production, financial and economic aspects of the activity, the specifics of working with the audience and interaction with social and civic institutions, etc. That is, in this case, we are dealing with other journalism. The nature of this otherness is placed at the center of this study. This study uses S. Steensen’s definition as a working one, according to which “digital journalism is the transforming social practice of selecting, interpreting, editing and distributing factual information of perceived public interest to various kinds of audiences in specific, but changing genres and formats. As such, digital journalism both shapes and is shaped by new technologies and platforms, and it is marked by an increasingly symbiotic relationship with the audiences. The actors engaged in this social practice are bound by the structures of social institutions publicly recognized as journalistic institutions” (Steensen, 2021, p. 17). The results of the discourse analysis available in the article are obtained based on the above definition.

**Findings.** Writing about the journalists of the first digital media, R. Salaverría emphasized their multitasking and versatility. “The journalists of the first digital media were multitasking and multiskilled workers. Barely specialized in any function, they often combined editorial responsibilities with technical tasks” (Salaverría, 2019a). Only then, these journalists specialized based on the specifics of their activities, becoming multimedia reporters, home page managers, multimedia producers, SMM managers, interactive content editors, cross-platform promotion managers, and more. The well-known superdesk,

which is now a structural element of most newsrooms, was initially a long way off, and journalists often randomly adapted classic analog content to the demands of digital media.

Interestingly seen by the fact that the argument for the thesis of the evolution of digital journalism scholars see its first sprouts in the 1950s. When the American television network CBS UNIVAC computer was first used for the preparation of the forecast results of presidential elections during a live broadcast on the night of vote counting (1952). The computer dealt with the task by selecting Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was elected by American citizens (Bohn, 1980; Hermida & Young, 2019; Lepore, 2020). The basis of this type of activity was laid in the 1990s, when hypertext, an interactive, multimedia environment, invented in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee was introduced to the technology of media production. It has surprisingly quickly adopted around the world thanks to technological versatility, advanced functionality, and the ability to produce huge amounts of free content. The first online publications appeared in the mid-1990s, and by the end of this decade, online discourse numbered tens of thousands of texts around the world.

R. Salaverría identifies three stages in the evolution of digital media (Salaverría, 2019a):

1. Imitation.
2. Adaptation.
3. Innovation.

The imitation stage lasted until the end of the 1990s. This stage is characterized by a primitive online reproduction of news that have already been published in analog media. Such publications were called “shovelware”, ie a by-product. At this stage, the crisis in the media industry began, as Internet users stopped paying for content in newspapers, magazines, and cable TV, looking for free versions online. At the same time, there was no rapid increase in revenue from online advertising. At this stage, traditional media did not take digital space seriously. A website’s launch was more of a trend than a real expansion of production areas. For example, The New York Times’ website nytimes.com was launched on January 22, 1996, with the sole purpose of giving the world audience free access to the previous newspaper’s texts and illustrations on the night of the next publication release. To do this, the editorial board created a small department that adapted the content to the requirements of online: changed the titles, sizes of photos, captions, added hyperlinks (Kyrylova, 2016). Updating the site once a day simulated the publication of the newspaper.

The adaptation stage is featured in the years 2000–2010. During this period there was an expansion and constant updating of news and multimedia formats, the volume of original digital content increased, its variety expanded in comparison with traditional media. At the same time, there was a revolutionary change in the organization of the news production process. The new convergent editions not

only transformed the process of passing manuscripts, but they also led to the integration of traditional and digital media activities. The already mentioned The New York Times created a new service called The New York Times Digital, which helped to expand the subject of the site with the introduction of new thematic sections, which were not in the paper version of the publication. For example, a new section of the Cyber Times devoted to the analysis of media technologies added opportunities for feedback for readers to exchange views, comment on articles, and ask questions to journalists. The New York Times began offering users not only structured online content but also expanding the news feed with texts from other sources (so-called message import). In 2000, the newspaper’s news department and The New York Times Digital merged to produce an online 24-hour news feed, and by the end of 2010, they already had certain news services for which users agreed to pay (in 2011 a metered paywall (paid dosed access to online content) appeared) (Kyrylova, 2019b).

The innovation stage began in 2010 and continues to this day. The success of social networks, the development of Web 2.0 have changed the role of the audience in the media space and transformed the profile of digital journalism. During this period, mobile journalism appeared, which simultaneously changed the perception of the media channel (the audience switched from stationary devices to mobile) and influenced the process of news production (mobile devices significantly facilitate the process of journalistic professional activity and enable amateurs to join media production). At the same time, the process of finding and checking facts is being transformed. Journalists are moving from traditional sources and techniques to social networks and digital fact-checking tools. Also, social networks are changing the way we search, receive, and share news.

Unlike the traditional model of news consumption, which consisted of choosing a media channel and learning news from it, online services offer a model of scanning messages: fast viewing of texts in news feeds, mostly by headlines without going to the original source. Technologies of immersion and engagement of the audience transform the roles and functions of authors and consumers of news information, change the algorithm of production and consumption of content, expand the boundaries of the information space. VR, AR, MR-content in the segment of digital news forms in the audience not a system of knowledge, but certain fragments of life experience, allowing the audience to experience events and phenomena, to feel like a participant in the action.

For a more or less clear typology of digital media, R. Salaverría suggests paying attention to nine criteria (Salaverría, 2019a): platform, temporality, topic, scope, ownership, authorship, approach, economic purpose, and dynamism.

According to the specifics of the platform, the scientist identifies four types of digital news media:

“web-only, tablet-only, mobile-only, and multiplatform publications”.

Temporality or periodicity allows us to distinguish three types of resources: with constant periodicity (with publication at certain intervals), constantly updated (those that publish texts on the principle of their readiness for publication), and multi-time / multi-timed (combining features of the first two types).

In terms of topics, among digital media as well as among traditional ones, there are general and specialized. The latter Salaverría proposes to divide into political, economic, sports, cultural, and others.

The scale criterion indicates the coverage of resources, distinguishing between national and local. Salaverría believes that “digital journalism has boosted a double expansion: on the one hand, toward wider spaces (global media), and on the other, toward smaller areas (hyperlocal media)”.

Ownership and authorship rights have common features. The first refers to the institution that owns the media (public or private), the second indicates who produces the content, an element that directly depends on the owner. At the same time, modern digital resources are diverse in terms of authorship, and their content is usually created in a team way. The number of employees is also unlimited: from a few people to hundreds of employees.

The last three criteria are approach, economic goal, and dynamism. The approach indicates the nature of the content. Online activities at the present stage can afford not to pay attention to such structural elements of traditional journalism as ethical norms and professional standards. Thus, digital media discourse consists of both full-fledged journalistic materials and biased texts, jeans, and candid advertising of a political and commercial nature. There are also a number of resources that, posing as the media, deliberately produce and distribute fakes, produce viral content, and engage in misinformation. The economic criterion indicates the commercial or non-commercial nature of the resource. Finally, the dynamism indicates the degree of interactivity and multimedia of the channel. This criterion distinguishes between static media, which are mostly focused on the production of text publications with static illustrations, as well as dynamic resources that use most of the capabilities of the multimedia narrative.

A. Duffy and P. H. Ang consider that digitization affects the social possibilities of journalism because users share news on social networks. The Internet thus spreads news on the edge of national borders and provides an appropriate flow of information and opinions on the stories that cross borders and cultures. Further transformation of the cultural environment takes place. The professional dimension of online provides new additional opportunities for user content and increases the level of awareness of the audience through web analytics. And if before journalism was the “first draft of history”, traditionally

recording the facts, now it is the fluidity of flow (Duffy & Ang, 2019).

As for the audience, digital platforms are changing the way we define it, helping editors to monitor, track and interact with users of online content directly. Online analytics provide quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the audience in real-time, track its behavior and activity, provide detailed data for each fragment of online content, regardless of its volume or format. Of course, there are some difficulties that prevent real users from being distinguished from bots, determining the real reaction of the audience to the content, accurately predicting the life cycle of messages, and so on. However, in this area of activity, the editorial offices reoriented themselves from the principles of systemic and complexity to speed and simultaneity, maximizing the possibilities of interactive interaction in real-time.

According to the “4Vs” model of big data (digital, variety, velocity, and veracity), digital technologies have changed the volume of news, the speed of their spread, the variety of sources, and the assessment of their reliability by the audience. All this adds to the uncertainty of journalism: readers move away from online news due to uncertainty about its authenticity, returning to traditional media, blurring the boundaries between professional and amateur journalist, interactivity of publications, and audience involvement in the narrative lead to a combination of physical and digital environments events and the processes of consumption, interpretation, and dissemination of messages about this news continue. Traditional notions of spatial and temporal boundaries also change: places become heroes, witnesses, authors of messages, and time is actualized during the consumption of news, ie the event occurs when the user learns about it. At the same time, the certainty of what media is, also becomes conditional. Back in 2003, M. Deuze said that in fact “the very limits of what a medium is and what it is not have become diffused” (Deuze, 2003). Exclusively online media compete with cross-media systems, free resources with paid ones, global publications with national, local, and even hyperlocal ones, blogs with epistolary genres, traditional brands with native media, etc. Today, this list is almost endless, constantly updated, creating new services and offering new forms of media interaction.

Taking into account the challenges of digitalization and paying attention to the additional functionality that digital journalism offers to the audience, A. Kammer (2020) analyzed the interaction of consumers and creators of media discourse, identifying four types of cooperation: information exchange, collaboration, conversation, and metacommunication. The first is based on the principle that the audience provides journalists with the necessary information and inspires future projects. This is the most common type because it allows journalists to harness the audience’s potential and “allows the journalists to retain control over the news production”

(Kammer, 2020). The exchange of information takes place behind the scenes and is especially useful for media organizations if journalists do not have direct access to the scene. The text usually does not indicate the fact that the information was provided by the audience, so the institutional role of the journalist remains unchanged, it's the journalist who chooses the events to be covered, edits the information, prepares the media product, taking on the traditional role of gatekeeper. "A hierarchical relationship between the news workers and the audiences remains" (Kammer, 2020). Today, in this way, posts of users of social networks are transformed into journalistic materials. At the same time, when it comes to official accounts, they are correctly cited by making appropriate references, but ordinary posts in private profiles or groups can be considered to be ordinary journalistic texts, sometimes with accents needed by the media, there are outright falsifications of facts, when, for example, some phrases are taken out of context or a witness to the event is given as an expert, a commentary as a news report, a photo collage as an illustration, and so on.

The hierarchy of relations is somewhat aligned in the second type of collaboration. Here the audience becomes an active subject, participates in the production of news, performs journalistic tasks. We can say that the differences between a journalist and an audience disappear. Users personally analyze the situation, create news content, distribute it to different audiences, for example, through the section "Blogs" on the official media site. This type of interaction involves close interaction between the author of the message and the editors. The latter reserves the right to grant permission for publication, to require compliance with editorial standards. So a certain hierarchy is still maintained. Proven contributors are often involved in the process of improving the publication of a professional journalist, offering to check details, find and communicate with witnesses, observe the situation, and so on. This type of interaction between professional media and bloggers was formed during the coverage of the Balkan conflict. Then it could be observed in various hot spots, when ordinary citizens on behalf of the editors tell about the events, publish photos, launch streams.

The third type involves a meeting of the journalist and users for casual communication. Of course, such a conversation can be called a kind of comment from the audience. But A. Kammer believes that the result of such interaction is meaningful audience content when it comes to significant events or processes. The ease of conversation, the focus on the emotional side of the news presentation create a kind of journalistic text, which often works more effectively with other users than the standard text of a professional journalist on the same topic.

And finally, the fourth type is metacommunication, which scientists describe as "the communication that takes place above and beyond the exchange of literal information" (Kammer, 2020). In this case,

the focus of the event message is shifted to discussing aspects of the preparation of this message. For example, the technical characteristics of TV cameras, their number, the composition of the creative team, the installation process, the nuances of using software, etc. are discussed. In this way, journalists become respondents, allowing the audience to ask questions and receive the necessary information. Users begin to set the agenda, manage the course of the story, set priorities, reflect on the production of news, apply professional methodology.

**Conclusion.** The results of the study indicate the systemic changes that digital technology is making with traditional journalism activities. The subject understanding is being transformed: today, almost anyone with access to the Internet can take part in digital journalism. Professional journalists and newsrooms are no longer the main providers of news, facts, and opinions. Modern news is no longer what journalists pay attention to. Average citizens, once considered a passive audience, create, publish, review, distribute, comment, change various texts, updating certain thematic areas, and developing long-term discourses around certain problems and phenomena. Active audience participation is observed at all stages of news production: fact-checkers constantly cooperate with social networks, PR companies, and marketing structures effectively use native methods and viral technologies, government agencies communicate directly with citizens without using traditional media channels. Public and non-governmental organizations, commercial structures behave in the same way, crowdsalers constantly create a news stream in the space of Web 2.0, professional journalists use various forms of interaction with the audience, involving it in the process of content creation.

In scientific discourse, however, there are lively discussions about providing a clear answer to the question "Who is a digital journalist?", as digital journalism makes everyone a potential creator of news information. At the same time, the objective existence of hierarchical relations makes it impossible to create a horizontal egalitarian model of journalistic practice. Huge disparities between ordinary users and traditional news brands, digital giants, large news agencies persist despite the ubiquity of digital technology. And no matter how much the other scenario is desired, their dominance is based on the long-standing inequality of access to information and communication technologies, political and economic power, and the notorious monopolization and concentration of information markets.

The transformation of the news production process could not but affect the final product. If traditional journalism offers content consisting of news, comments, opinions, reports, analytics, interviews, and other texts of traditional genres, then digital media has expanded the boundaries of journalistic text through social media posts, memes, comments and user reviews, blogs, podcasts, replicas, life hacks,

hoaxes, gossip, fakes, etc. A digital journalist working in a fluid space is limited only by the requirements of the platform. However, experience has shown that they are not rigid and unchanging. So photo hosting users get the opportunity not only to create verbal stories but also to expand them to the size of long grids (Instagram, for example); first, purely verbal channels expand the functionality and audience coverage through, for example, video content (purchase by the Reddit network of the short video creation service Dubsmash); the basis of journalistic (as well as advertising, branding, political and even scientific) story begins to be storytelling.

As for the chronotope, we also observe a certain change here. Scientists attribute the space to the digital environment, “emphasizing its ability to tell about events and serve various forms of activity” (Kirilova, 2020). On the one hand, digital journalism works on platforms that are not limited by geography, language, or other barriers. On the other hand, the environment that is formed around the event is able to immerse the user in the story, involve him or her in interaction with the digital environment, and form not knowledge about the situation, but a new experience perceived by the audience as natural. Regarding the category of time, there is almost nothing left of its traditional understanding. Digital journalism has destroyed both the principle of prompt coverage of the event and the principle of chronological organization of facts and phenomena. In the traditional form, there are clear ideas about time both in the definition of news (when a socially significant event took place) and in their consumption (when it was reported by the media). From these principles came the idea of “news cycles”, “deadlines”, understanding the “calculated audience”, building a broadcast network with its prime and downtimes, and so on. Digital journalism is characterized by constant circulation of news, modifications, and updates of content. The 24/7 format forces you to work at a constant pace, regardless of the day of the week or the time of day. For the audience, the category of time works on the principle of “news happen when I learn about them”, and the answer to the question “when” will always be “now”, ie the moment when the user consumes the content.

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## ДИДЖИТАЛЬНА ЖУРНАЛІСТИКА ЯК НОВИЙ ТИП МЕДІАДІЯЛЬНОСТІ

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Актуальність дослідження зумовлена постійною трансформацією та оновленням диджитального середовища, невизначеністю категоріального апарату цифрової журналістики та національними особливостями процесу творення онлайн-журналістського дискурсу. Мета статті — визначити концептуальні особливості диджитальної журналістики та виокремити комунікаційну специфіку зазначеного виду медіадіяльності. Базуючись на роботах R. Salaverría, пропонується розуміти під диджитальною журналістикою усю журналістику, яка здійснюється за допомогою цифрових технологій, є мінливою соціальною публіцистичною практикою, орієнтованою на гетерогенну масову аудиторію, представлену у певних, але одночасно мінливих жанрах та форматах. Таким чином дискусійні моменти щодо застосування до цього виду медіадіяльності термінів «кібержурналістика», «онлайн-журналістика», «мультимедійна журналістика», «обчислювальна журналістика», «алгоритмічна журналістика», «журналістика, керована даними» та ін. Головним методом дослідження обрано дискурсний аналіз, який дозволив досягнути проблематику сучасного диджитального середовища, простежити генезу цифрової журналістики, здійснити типологічний аналіз існуючої системи цифрових медіа, визначити специфіку медіапродукту та особливості участі аудиторії у процесі диджитального творення та споживання новинної інформації. Новизна роботи полягає у спробі ввести у науковий дискурс системного визначення поняття «диджитальна журналістика», звернути увагу на такі її особливості як невизначеність та мінливість, трансформація традиційного категоріального апарату, зміна ролей та функцій учасників комунікативного процесу. У результаті дослідження з'ясовано суб'єктно-об'єктні та структурні характеристики сучасної журналістики, визначено організаційні й технологічні трансформації цифрового медіавиробництва.

*Ключові слова:* журналістика; диджиталізація; диджитальні медіа; аудиторія диджитальних медіа.

*Стаття надійшла до редколегії 19.04.2021*