Platform Adaptation of Russian News Media Content

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Abstract. The research work is aimed at a comprehensive study of the platform adaptation of news media content. The purpose of the study is to identify the features of platform adaptation, and the result is practical recommendations for adaptation. The research methodology that led to the necessary conclusions is described below. In the course of the study, content analysis and in-depth interviews were conducted with decision makers for adapting and publishing news content to digital platforms in the leading Russian federal media, RBC and Kommersant.

Keywords: news, news content, media platforms, news selection, content adaptation, platform adaptation

1 Introduction. The question of how the process of selecting news content in the modern Russian media is often raised in the scientific and journalistic fields. The volume of information and the speed of its dissemination is growing. There is a request in the scientific community to systemize knowledge about the practical editorial policy of news media, as well as to identify the principles for selecting news content, but to date, a few scientific research works have been written about this. In order to understand who and at what level has access to news production, it is necessary to identify what stages of selection news content goes through before being publishes on a digital platform.

The media have become part of not only public but also interpersonal communication, having received numerous resources for their development. Today, journalism is one of the most promising areas for business, in which many companies and news agencies are successfully developing. However, the turbulence that has been observed in journalism in recent years instills fear in most of the leaders of large publications, information portals and their correspondents.

Turbulence is primarily associated with public sentiment and the domestic political and international situation. Today there is a decrease in the number of local news agencies due to the development of the process of globalization [14], [17]. Every day, journalists are under pressure not only from the state, government officials and law enforcement agencies, but also from celebrities who do their best to attract attention and «highlight» the side that is beneficial to them [2].

In addition, the events of late March 2022, namely the blocking of social networks owned by Meta, Instagram and Facebook in the Russia and the recognition of Meta as an extremist organization, caused huge changes in user behavior: according to a Mediascope study, the Instagram audience in Russia after blocking decreased by 16%, and the number of active followers on Facebook decreased by as much as 8 times. At the same time, TikTok has restricted the ability for Russian users to upload new videos from Russia and view foreign content. This provoked an outflow of the audience from these sites and redistribution to other platforms, mainly in Telegram and Vkontakte.

All of the above trends in media journalism are undermining the trust of the general public in the media, which is why the demand for entertainment content is growing as a consumer response.

More than 10 years after the advent of social networks, the mass media are beginning to develop a new communication channel - instant messengers such as WhatsApp and Telegram, and multi-channel is a new trend in digital journalism that dictates its own difficulties, for example, the need to adapt content to platform and audience features.

RQ1: How is the editorial policy in selecting news for different digital platforms?

RQ2: How do gatekeeping theory and agenda setting theory relate to platform specifics?

2 News and news content.

2.1 News: terminology

News is difficult to define and this is the reason for the popularity of the topic in the scientific literature. On the one hand, the news is of global importance, on the other hand, in order to be attractive to the viewer, it must reflect the personal interests of citizens, reflect the characteristics of culture and mentality. Many foreign scientists give preference to the research of news sources and news selection technologies, while this area in Russian science has not been sufficiently studied.

News organizations have a responsibility to provide accurate and balanced news content to their audiences. They have an obligation to report the news honestly and objectively, without any manipulation, sensationalism or propaganda. News organizations also need to provide their readers, viewers and listeners with a variety of news from different perspectives so they can get a comprehensive view of the city, country and world. News content is also affected by market forces. News organizations are business must generate revenue to be able to continue operating. As a result, they may prioritize those stories that attract more audience. This can lead to a focus on stories that are more sensational or controversial rather than those that are important but less attention-grabbing. Let us consider what ethical duties of a journalist are recognized by the Code of Professional Ethics of a Russian Journalist (1994).

The basic moral duties of a media representative include the following provisions: the journalist respects the privacy of a person; coverage of trials by a journalist must be impartial to the accused; journalistic surveys of citizens should not be fabricated in order to obtain a predetermined result beneficial to one of the interested parties; the journalist is obliged to do everything possible to correct any disseminated information if it turns out that it does not correspond or partially corresponds to reality; a journalist does not have the right to intimidate an interlocutor who is a source of information for him, provoke him, offer bribes and involve other methods of influence in order to obtain information that is beneficial for himself and third parties.

As for international acts that fix moral and ethical standards for journalists, several international journalistic associations, which include 400 thousand media workers, in 1978-1983. united to develop a set of common professional rules. The manifesto was adopted in Paris on November 20, 1983. To date, two main documents are relevant and valid in journalistic practice: «International Declaration of Principles for the Conduct of Journalists» and «International principles of professional ethics of a journalist».

On the basis of the international manifestos mentioned above, Russian journalistic associations, the Union of Journalists of the USSR and the Congress of Journalists of Russia, have developed two sets of rules: The Code of Professional Ethics for a Journalist (1991) and the Code of Professional Ethics for a Russian Journalist (1994), described above. The last one is in effect today.

2.2 News content transformation: divergent journalism. In fact, social networks have long had more than just an entertainment function. Even the TikTok platform has begun to position itself as an "educational platform" as well. In 2023 and beyond, the trend for educational and near-educational content will increase. Today, in order to make the audience trust a channel/account, it is necessary to use various tools to demonstrate your expertise in specific areas of knowledge and provide practical benefits.

The short video format has spread from TikTok and Instagram to VK Clips, and Telegram allows you to shoot short videos and record live broadcasts, allowing you to produce and share content around the clock. Now short videos on the Vkontakte platform are gaining more than 717 million views per day, which indicates the high potential of the tool. Such coverage and speed of dissemination of information is unthinkable for traditional media, such as a printed newspaper or television.

The nature of the media is largely due to technological progress in the information and communication sphere. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 contributed to the transition of almost all types of media to online technologies for the rapid transmission of information products [2].

To describe the features of the development of modern mass media communications or the totality of their texts in the scientific literature, the term «syncrese» (from the Greek connection) is often used. It is this combination of several parts of the whole into a single system that is characterized by another concept, more familiar to scientific literature, convergent journalism or convergent media.

Convergent journalism is the process of merging, integrating information and communication technologies into a single information resource. Modern media are expanding the range of information and entertainment products, using completely new media product presentation formats. Some researchers believe that convergence is the result of a shift to a more modern media community, while others see the concept as denoting an actual process towards better management of the media value chain.

In fact, the concept of convergence is considered in conjunction with another concept, media divergence, because convergence is a continuous process of development of the media and the media industry, which depends on and constantly interacts with an opposite and complementary process. So, divergence in a broad sense is a concept that largely characterizes the state of modern society.

Web technologies have brought new characteristics to journalism: multimedia, interactivity and hyper textuality. These three concepts today can characterize the media text. Multimedia is understood as a system that includes information messages of different formats, for example: text, audio and video-visual messages. The multimedia phenomenon is a product of convergence, in other words, the blurring of boundaries between different communication channels. This is where the term «multi-variability» comes in, the essence of which is the creation of content that can subsequently be placed on various digital platforms without the need for significant adaptation [12].

Interactivity is, first of all, the ability not only to broadcast news content, but also to find out the reaction of the audience and take it into account. Another important characteristic of media text is hyper textuality. Hypertext is an informational message consisting of an infinite set of texts united by a system of hyperlinks. This allows not only to read it horizontally, but also to dive into the material with the help of internal and external links. All of the above changes have brought journalism into the Web 3.0 space, in which the media will have to adapt to modern realities, otherwise it will be "absorbed" by stronger competitors, because journalism is a business.

3. News content selection.

3.1 News content selection criteria for media platforms. In modern Russian journalism, the principle of news selection is influenced by various factors, including political, economic, social and cultural considerations. Some of the key determinants of news choice in Russia include:

1. State policy and priorities. The Russian media are closely controlled by the government, and many news outlets are either owned or controlled by the state. As a result, news that advances the government's agenda is given priority.

2. National Security Issues: Russia is a country that is often in conflict with other countries and has a long history of geopolitical tensions. Stories that concern national security and foreign policy take precedence in the news.

3. Economic interests. Many media outlets in Russia are owned by wealthy individuals or corporations and therefore favor material with economic implications.

4. Sensation. The Russian media often favors sensational stories that can attract more viewers or readers. This may lead to advertising of exaggerated or misleading stories.

5. Social and cultural issues. News related to social and cultural issues also occupy a priority place in the Russian media. This includes stories related to religion, ethnicity, and gender.

The main question to be explored in this part of the research work is: "Why does one event become news, and another does not?". To begin with, it is necessary to determine the criteria for selecting news. In scientific journalism, there are many works devoted to this issue. Foreign scientific authors also did not come to a common opinion about what criteria for selecting events for the news media field are in place. E. Fichtelius covered the criteria for selecting news in his writings. M. Mencher, K. Rich, Z. Weinshenberg, M. Reiter and others.

From the results of the study of identifying real criteria for selecting news agencies by A.V. Kolesnichenko (2018), the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. All the criteria studied and described above, one way or another, take part in the actual selection of events for news in news agencies and editorial offices.

2. All criteria can actually be divided into main (key) and secondary, because only 6 of the 15 criteria included in the research codifier are used primarily: relevance, presence of a celebrity, scale of the event, its negativity, involvement of the audience's personal interests and «topic on hearing».

3. Negative news is indeed four times more common in the news flow than positive news. The share of positive news is less than 10%.

4. More than 1/3 of all news content is devoted specifically to informing about celebrities.

5. Entertainment as a criterion for selecting events for news coverage prevails over importance. From this we can conclude that even large federal media are, first of all, sources of information for discussion within a small social group, rather than information that will somehow affect or be useful in a person's life.

The question of how the media content published by modern media on digital platforms and not only influences, has been studied in scientific journalism for a long time.

3.2 Media influence: media effects theory. Media effects are phenomena and processes that arise as a result of the direct or indirect influence of media on a person and groups of people, institutions and other social entities. In the field of communication studies, studies of media effects occupy a central position.

Before moving on to media effect models, it is important to understand the types of media effects themselves. So, at the individual level, the following types are distinguished (Potter, 2012): cognitive effects (the influence of media on the human psyche and / or their result). As a rule, this concerns the acquisition, analysis and memorization of information from media resources; effects relating to beliefs and beliefs (for example, associated with the belief in the existence of phenomena that go beyond personal experience, as well as their relationship with the presented attributes and properties); evaluative effects (the impact of media on the attitude to the subject, value judgments of a person); affective effects (the influence of media on the feelings, emotions and mood of a person consuming media content); physiological effects (rate, anxiety, etc.); behavioral effects (influence on behavior, human actions). To date, there is no generally accepted generalizing theory of media effects, but there are more than 200 separate theories.

Social learning theory (A. Bandura, 1969) is another media exposure model that suggests that people learn through observation and imitation. This theory suggests that the media can serve as a source of role models for people and influence their behavior by portraying desired and undesirable behavior.

Agenda-setting theory (or Agenda-setting theory) is a positivist theory according to which the media have a significant impact on the public through the content they cover. The modern study of agenda setting is based on the scientific contribution of G. Lasswell, who proposed a theoretical model of news information that can influence the audience (Lasswell, 1927). The results of Lasswell's analysis led to the conclusion that news not only informs citizens, but also perform propaganda functions, thus participating in the

formation of ideology. These ideas were supported by foreign scientists who determined the further development of Lasswell's theory (Tuchman, 1978; Abel, 1984; White, 1950 and others).

The «gatekeeper» theory has become widely known out of thousands of events, the «gatekeeper» selects dozens of those that will be published in the future, focusing on their own political convictions. As a result, the news passes through the hands of persons or structures called «gatekeepers» (Lasswell, 1948; White (1950). In addition, it must be understood that the news passes from the collection stage to processing, thus, as it were, passes through the gate, as a symbol. Hence the name of the theory: gate keeping theory. As a result, at each stage of this production, the news changes both form and content.

Agenda-setting theory received a major boost from the work of McCombs and Shaw (1974): the consumer of media content receives not only information about the event, but also an idea of how significant it is. Thus, the media force the audience to consider some events more or, conversely, less important than others, which may be contrary to reality. It turns out that they set their own agenda, performing the function of social construction of reality.

Following McCombs and Shaw, P. Bourdieu made his contribution to the development of the theory of setting the agenda with the thesis that certain news blocks or headings cannot be left unfilled (2002). So, in fact, he structured any television news release, which gave rise to and adapted all news media content on the Internet: politics, society, economics, culture, sports are the main news headings. It follows from this that if during the day there was no event worthy of the heading "politics" or "sports", these blocks will not remain empty one way or another. It's just that they will include that news that are of little or no significance in the life of society [4].

How is the theory of media effects related to the direct platform adaptation of news media content? Very simple. News is a product of intellectual activity. In order to create any product, you need to answer simple questions, which are essentially offered by Sherrington, founder of the Added Value consulting firm, whose 5W methodology is based on a simple marketing rule: every product has its own buyer. So, the Sherrington model suggests answering 5 questions in order to identify customer segments and, finally, create a successful product, even if the product is news:

o What? (What?) - determines the type of product that will be in demand by the consumer;

o Who? (Who?) - gives a key characteristic of the consumer: demographic parameters, geolocation, income level, education, political, value and worldview attitudes;

o Why? (Why?) - indicates the reason why the consumer is ready to use / purchase the product, why the audience of the media resource will read the news content of this source;

o When? (When?) - the time when the consumer is ready to use the product;

o Where? (Where?) - shows the points of contact with the client and determines the place / platform where the consumer is more likely to use the product;

Any media is, first of all, a business, and business in one way or another works according to the laws of marketing, so even news media content must take into account the characteristics of the audience and the platform through which this content will be distributed.

4. News content adaptation

4.1 News content adaptation to the technological platform. To ensure an effective presence on different digital platforms, one should take into account the specifics of each digital device with which the consumer of media content logs in and uses the resource [16].

As more and more people rely on their phones and tablets to access news content, Russian news outlets are having to adapt their content to fit these new platforms. This means creating shorter, visually appealing news stories that are easier to digest on mobile devices.

In addition to mobile platforms, social networks have also played a significant role in adapting Russian media content. Many news outlets have set up dedicated social media accounts that are used to share articles, videos, and other content with their followers. This helped increase the reach of these news outlets and also made it easier for people to keep up to date with the latest news and events.

The Rambler & Co portal studied user patterns of Internet media content consumption in 2022-2023. It turned out that in 2023, users prefer to read news during business hours from Monday to Friday, while mostly in the middle of the day. This is evidenced by the facts: in the period from 11.00 to 14.00 from the mobile and desktop versions, almost ¼ of the daily traffic is accounted for, which, of course, can be associated with a lunch break during working hours. This confirms the fact that users mainly use the mobile version and access news portals from their smartphones. Reading from mobile devices is leading mainly at lunchtime and in the evening, when many users are stuck in traffic and scroll through the news feed or, already at home, are distracted from work by news. During the period of significant world events at the end of February and the end of September 2022, reading from the mobile version was intensive throughout the working day.

In 2022, from the second half of Friday to Monday, users preferred to take a break from news on web resources. This trend continues to this day: visits to online media from the desktop version on the weekend are reduced by an average of 40%. Interestingly, consumption surges are observed late at night on weekends and only from mobile devices.

What conclusions can be drawn from these data? Mobile versions of social networks and messengers are at the peak of popularity, the session time is so short that it is becoming increasingly difficult to grab the attention of the consumer.

4.2 News content adaptation to the target audience. According to a study by the Modern Media Institute MOMRI (January 2018), Telegram in Russia is used by more men than women (57% vs. 43%, respectively). As for age groups, 45.1% of men using the Telegram messenger are 18-24 years old, 33.3% - 25-34 years old, 13.2% - 35-44 years old. For women, these figures are as follows: 25.1% - 18-24 years old, 26.5% - 25-34 years old, 11.5% - 35-44 years old.

In order to correctly analyze the data obtained by the Institute of Contemporary Media, it is necessary to make a reference to the theory of Digital Natives, which was first introduced by M. Prensky to refer to people born after the digital revolution and accustomed to receiving information through digital channels. People who were born before this period, Prensky called «Digital Immigrants» and people who never accepted the digital reality – «Natives of the pre-digital era» or «living witnesses of the pre-Internet era» (shortly, digital natives). Prensky made this conclusion looking at schoolchildren and students born in the 2000s. They live surrounded by computers, video games, camcorders, mobile smartphones and the Web. Prensky suggested calling such people «digital natives» - carriers of their native digital language.

According to Prensky's theory, «digital immigrants», no matter how hard they try, are left with something of an «accent» in the form of trying to combine the latest technologies with traditional ones. For example, this can be expressed in everyday life when a person acknowledges receipt of an e-mail by phone or edits a text by writing it down by hand on paper.

In his research, M. Prensky is based on the «generation theory» of N. Howe and W. Strauss (1991). American scientists have developed a classification of generations and schemes for their alternations. Some of the generations they identified were generation Y, gradually involved in digital technologies (1982-2004), generation Z, truly «digital people», involved in the digital sphere since childhood (2005 - present).

4.3 News content adaptation to the platform features. One important aspect of platform capabilities is their ability to shape user behavior. For example, the design of a social media platform may encourage

users to post and share content in a certain way, or a messaging application may encourage users to communicate with each other in a certain style. These platform capabilities can influence how users interact with each other and can even shape the types of content shared on the platform.

Another important aspect of platform capability is their ability to facilitate certain actions and interactions. For example, a video sharing platform may have features to make it easier for users to upload and share videos, and a trading platform may have features to make it easier for users to view and purchase products. These features can make the platform more user-friendly and can also affect the success of the platform as a whole.

Another important aspect of the platform adaptation was the use of multimedia content. Many Russian news outlets now include photos, videos, and audio clips in their articles, making them more engaging and memorable for readers, as well as solving the problem of incomplete coverage of news when text is reduced. This would help set their content apart from the competition and create a strong brand identity, as multimedia content, compared to textual content, allows for the introduction of visual identity attributes such as a logo, corporate colors, and more.

Methods. Two research methods were used: content analysis and in-depth interviews. Content analysis involves the analysis of news content published by major federal news media, RBC and Kommersant, on three digital platforms Vkontakte, Telegram and Instagram for a two-week period from May 1st to May 14th. Time limits were set: the collection of material for analysis was carried out strictly from 9 am to 11 am. This is due to the increased activity of the audience during this period of time within the day. Additional restrictions are the blocking of the Instagram platform, which is recognized as prohibited in the territory of the Russian Federation.

In the course of in-depth interviews, decision makers in the field of media promotion, employees of RBC and Kommersant were interviewed. As a rule, these are specialists in the field of public relations and marketing in social media and are responsible for in the field of published content.

The interviewees were asked the following questions: how are events selected that will be published as news content on your media platforms in social networks and instant messengers, what is the editorial policy in your media, how many selection levels does an event go through to be published in your media, what do you rely on when selecting events for publication, when did you decide on the presence of your media in social networks and messengers, how do you evaluate the effectiveness of the presence, compared to websites and print publications, do you have a strategy that you followed when adapting content for social networks and instant messengers and others.

Results. The results of the content analysis showed that the «politics» section in the Telegram is presented more often, and the volume of the text is longer. This is due to the fact that Telegram is currently the most popular media platform for consuming news content, which media content consumers visit. Interestingly, RBC is really trying to adapt its media content to different platforms. Analysis of RBC content on VKontakte and Telegram showed regular posting with a time interval of about 10 minutes in the morning, then the time interval was longer. RBC platforms have permanent headings that mean a morning roundup of news from different categories. Creating individual rubrics for a channel or account (rubricating) is a common tool for attracting a busier audience that misses other news. This section is usually published from 8 to 9 am.

As for the content published on Kommersant digital platforms, similar trends are observed. Media publishes more entertaining content using a predominantly audiovisual presentation format, accompanied by a thesis description of the event, which makes it easier for the content to be perceived by the Instagram audience, which is configured to consume entertainment content. Even the categories of published content are different: publications in Instagram more often related to the biography of famous personalities, cultural figures, facts from the field of visual art and cinema, and similar content is published on Telegram and VKontakte, more businesslike, the heading politics, business prevails.

Discussion and conclusion.

Based on the results of the study, it was possible to identify the features of the adaptation of news media content and editorial policy in the selection of events for various digital platforms, to develop our own methodology for empirical research based on qualitative and quantitative analysis. The result of the research work can be considered the developed practical recommendations for adapting media content for news media, which is of particular practical importance for journalists, news agencies and news content creators in social networks and instant messengers.

RQ1: How is the editorial policy in selecting news for different digital platforms? The answer to this question is fully revealed in the transcripts of in-depth interviews, however, summing up, we can say that editorial policy is a system of regulatory norms, at each level of which there is a so-called «gatekeeper», which filters incoming information, processes it in accordance with its own values and corporate values of the media, as well as historical and cultural traditions, mentality and other socio-cultural factors. That's not all. Further, the person who makes the decision for editing the material and publishing adapts the news to the format of the platform, which, among other things, affects how the consumer sees the news on their electronic media.

RQ2: How do gatekeeping theory and agenda setting theory relate to platform specifics? The essence of the theory of gatekeeping is partly revealed in the first research question. The news goes through all levels from selection to adaptation before being published. Since the adaptation of media content is a direct part of the process, which is commonly called editorial policy, it is undoubtedly related to the possibilities and tools for publishing content on a digital platform.

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