

## Recognizing the Role of Blogging as a Journalistic Practice in Kazakhstan

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The blogs are a fixture in today's media industry, growing in number and influence in mass media discourse. Its technical structure provides the possibility of a complete bringing into force of the right to communicate, including the right to report and the right to receive information. The literature review investigated the blog features, the way the blogs cooperate and oppose traditional media, how they are used by professional journalists. A survey was conducted among the journalists, editors, and bloggers of the Kazakhstani most-read online newspapers and most-watched TV channels. Findings demonstrate that Kazakhstani journalism gradually accepts the importance of blogging and implement blogs into professional journalistic practice. Journalists and editors realize that along with material in mainstream media blogs socially construct an agenda and increase readership. For professional journalism, there is a need to achieve a clearer understanding of the effect of exploiting blogs as a tool to reach and influence readers.

Keywords: Blogging, media industry, innovative media, Web 2.0, journalistic practice, bloggers

No one would argue that the Internet has originated a revolution in communication technologies, characterized by the spread of cosmic amounts of information and people's connection in unprecedented ways. Castells (2005) postulates that these days we live in a networked society whose key feature is the transformation of the communication sphere, its increased digitalization, and interactiveness. Indeed, digital space is progressively converted into the real world as Newman, Dutton & Blank (2012) claim, "the Internet is becoming an essential aspect of everyday life and work for an increasing proportion of users."

As the Internet evolves, its users and uses grow and diversify globally. According to Internet World Stats, in 1993 there were about 75,000 Internet users all over the world, while in 1995 the given figure approached 16 million (0.4% of the world's population), in 1999 – 248 million. In 2001, the number of active users of the global network exceeded half a billion – 513 million or 8.6% of the world's population. December 2005 Report indicated 1.02 billion users (15.7%). By the end of 2011, 1.97 billion world's population (28.8%) had come online. In 2015, 3.36 billion people (46.4%) had permanent access to the Internet; in 2017 this figure was equal to 4.16 billion. In other words, more than half of the world's population (54.4%) is active Internet users.

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The presented data confirm the idea that the World Wide Web crisscrossed each highly developed and moderately developed country and penetrated all spheres of human activity. Kochanovskiy (2016: 17) points out the Internet has a large-scale and growing impact on the industry, education, culture, economics, and policy, is a powerful stimulator of globalization processes. To put it another way, the Internet has made reality a “global village” predicted by Marshall McLuhan (2003) in the 1970s. However, as Castells (2001) notes, “Differences in Internet access between countries and regions in the planet at large are so considerable that they modify the meaning of the digital divide.”

Certainly, there are substantial differences in Internet use within countries. For instance, China has a relatively large number of Internet users, 802 million, which is 53.4% of the country’s population. Overall, the number of Internet users in China is significantly higher than India (462 million users), the United States (312 million), and Brazil (149 million users). Seventy-three (73%) of individuals in the UK use the Internet in one or more locations, but primarily from their households, while Africa probably has fewer email addresses allocated to it than the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (McTaggart, 2012). As for Kazakhstan, in October 2018, 64.1% of the country’s population is Kaznet active users, almost 7 out of 10 Kazakhstani users are men, 6 of 10 are under 30 years old, about two-thirds are single, and 88% has higher education. Statistics data manifest 15 to 24 and 25 to 44-year olds are the most active Internet users – 97.4% and 92% respectively (WEB Index Kazakhstan, 2018).

The millennium started a new epoch in the Internet era, called Web 2.0. According to Tim O’Reilly, founder, and CEO of O’Reilly Media, the bursting of the dot-com bubble in the autumn of 2001 can be viewed as a turning point for the web. Indeed, a lot of people deduced that the web was overhyped, though bubbles and shakeouts usually are key features of all technological revolutions (O’Reilly, 2009). The term “Web 2.0” was invented by Darcy DiNucci in 1999, but its concept dates back to a conference brainstorming session between T. O’Reilly and MediaLive International in 2004. In the year and a half since 9.5 million citations in Google contained the given term. Of course, it’s hard to determine precise date on which the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 occurred, as the change was progressive. But it provokes no debate that at the beginning of the century the web was close to collapsing to becoming more significant than ever.

As a technical term Web 2.0 depicts the upgraded, improved, and modernized Internet we are utilizing today. Notwithstanding Web 2.0 is a cultural trend, brought to life social networking and blogging. It is a clear shift towards a “user-generated” technoculture, where web sites revolve around openness, socialization, and collaboration, stimulating the individual to participate in enriching the content and in the growth of the web itself (Devedović & Gašević, 2009).

Funk (2009: 12) remarks on Web 2.0: “It is a landscape where users control their online experience and influence the experiences of others; where success comes from harnessing the power of social networks, computing networks, media, and opinion networks, and advertising networks.” Web 2.0 revolution made it possible for users to engage online and communicate emotionally and creatively with others. Web 2.0 services like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, and blogs allow people all over the world share their content and exploit the web as a platform. Rettberg (2012) specifies that the services mentioned above have become so valuable because they are frequently used by consumers. They supply relationship-building means contributing to establishing new contacts, connecting with old and new friends where everybody can share and discuss interests, passion, knowledge, information and, experiences.

Also, Web 2.0 has made it much easier for users to publish new content, share information or photos, to comment and respond on other individuals' content online without any effort and knowledge about the underlying technologies (Devedžić & Gašević, 2009). With Web 2.0 a person can modify websites while interacting with others, e.g., when he is posting comments and opinions, uploading and tagging photos, creating videos, and online conferencing (Funk, 2009). These facts manifest an undeniable communicational shift, as users have moved from passive receivers of information to its active senders and creators. In other words, the term "Web 2.0" does not mean a brand new web, but it refers to a change in the way the users contemplate and utilize the web (Funk, 2009).

The first personal web publishing phenomenon was the blog. A blog is a key element of the Web 2.0 landscape, because of the content published by bloggers, and for the connections and relationships, they establish as well. Blogs function as personal diaries, technical advice columns, sports chat, celebrity gossip, political commentary, or all of the above.

Nowadays the blogosphere is a rich source of diverse opinion, and is perhaps no field is that so great as blogs concerning public affairs, politics, government, and related news. No wonder blogs are considered as a new, innovative genre of journalism. However, the relationship between blogging and journalism is still an uneasy one. Bloggers, professional journalists, scholars keep on debating whether bloggers are or can be journalists, and vice versa. On the one hand, bloggers don't have the fundamental traits always associated with journalists, namely covering beats, reporting with objectivity, and double-checking information. On the other hand, they take the roles of observers, presenters, and analysts.

## Literature Review

Journalism plays a vital role in Kazakhstan, like in any other democratic society. However, these days journalism is at a crossroad (Chung, 2017), caused by the development the Internet and Web 2.0 and their opportunities to reach out and influence the audience in new, exciting and more effective ways. About three decades ago, the world's biggest mainstream news agencies laid the cornerstone of their websites. Now the majority of newspapers, radios, and TV channels have an online edition. "[Media] industry has experienced exponential growth of online publications with the adoption of the Internet as a strategic medium for news delivery" (Eunseong, Trammell, & Porter, 2007: 305).

Schultz and Sheffer (2009) comment on the reasons the traditional media invest in online formats. First, online technologies help media improve efficiency, potency, and effectiveness and enhance communication with audiences. Second, online formats drive more traffic to newspapers' websites. Third, online content is characterized by a non-monetary value which is a significant point while enhancing coverage and brand loyalty (Schultz & Sheffer, 2009: 30). Bucy strongly believes that online editions are a supplemental medium to build relationships with an existing audience "From a relationship-building standpoint, understanding the nature and extent of webpage features that facilitate user involvement – and return visits – thus becomes paramount" (Bucy, 2014: 103).

Nevertheless, Van der Wurff et al. (2015: 403) draw attention to the fact that "the development of online journalism and newspapers is still an unfinished experiment in innovation in the newspaper industry." As a consequence, both the journalistic profession and editorial production face new challenges. One of them is the necessary work across several media platforms. Franklin (2008) states that it requires journalists to write material

for both the print and online editions of their newspapers, as well as to shoot and edit small video clips, record podcasts or create blogs. Hence, blogs are becoming a permanent and edited part of online newspapers, which try to adapt to the changing up-to-date technological and socio-historical context.

Despite the significance of blogs to modern communication, there is no universal answer to the question of what a blog is. Baltatzis (2006: 6) considers a blog to be “a publishing innovation, a digital newswire that, due to the proliferation of the Internet, low production and distribution costs, ease of use and simple syndication (RSS), creates a new and powerful push-pull publishing concept.” A distinctive feature of the blog is its ability to change the power structures in journalism, providing yesterday’s readers with the chance to feel like today’s journalists and tomorrow’s news aggregators. At the same time blogs are goldmines for journalists doing professional and crafted work.

Mohammadian and Mohammadreza (2012) identify blogs as one of the various social media platforms. According to Herring et al. (2007), a blog is a frequently modified webpage, where dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence and often present links to related sites. Kahn and Keller (2004) stress that a blog is hypertextual weblogs which individuals utilize for new forms of journaling, self-publishing, and media/news critique. According to Yang (2011: 131), a blog is a frequently updated personal or collaborative webpage in the form of the diarized journal containing opinions, information and web links that reflect the interest and personality of the author(s).

Pihl and Sandström (2013) also define a blog as a personal webpage with content structured in reverse-chronological order. The authors state that nowadays blogging should be viewed as one of the most admired and commercial social media and networking tools. “In some industries, blogs have become popular and powerful intermediaries between firms and consumers, reaching more readers than regional newspapers” (Pihl & Sandström, 2013: 310). Mooney (2013) explains this phenomenon by the certain virtues that blogs possess: candor, a sense of humor, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness to different points of view.

Only fifteen years ago, 23 blogs existed on the Internet. Initially, computer programmers used blogs to notify others about innovations and to recommend applications and software to program users. But the emergence of blog hosts, online journals, and expression blogs obtained a much wider meaning and use (Oblak and Petriè, 2005: 11). Hsu and Lin (2008) state that at the beginning a blog was an online writing tool that assisted people keeping track of their online records, but in short time it transformed into a key part of online culture.

Today, the number is far more than a billion and counting. About 120,000 new blogs are posted every day, which corresponds to 1.4 blogs per second. Few technologies can boast such an accelerated rate of adoption or claim to have such a profound effect on interpersonal relations (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010).

Basically blogs have similar structure: a header with a banner and the name of the blog; a body containing text, photographs, video and audio clips, offered in reverse chronological order, which visitors can comment on. Also blogs have a side-bar to the left or right of the main part, where the blogger is personally identified, linked to achieved or sorted out texts (politics, culture, interests, sport, entertainment), hypertextual links to other websites and blogs. Besides, some blogs have advertising, provide search functions, offer surveys and the like.

The topics of blogs range widely. Some of them have a narrow focus (politics, economics, beauty industry, travel notes, etc.), while the others represent a mix of subjects.

In general, blogs can be categorized into four groups:

- *Personal online journals, aimed at presenting details from bloggers' personal lives, which to some extent are integrated into the events of the community;*
- *Informative and interpretive blogs, directed towards provision with information and opinions, knowledge enlargement or promotion of political participation;*
- *Public relations and advertising blogs, written by commercial, political and other agents to build either internal or external relations with the public. Such bloggers make attempts to exploit their blog to implement their own political, economic or other goals and interests;*
- *Other blogs, targeted at satisfying narrow and specific interests. For instance, some individuals intentionally publish inaccurate information to cast discord into the blogosphere (fake blogs or flogs). The blogs created by automated programs are used to earn from online advertising (spam blogs or splogs).*

Despite its type, a blog is an interactive, non-synchronous webpage whose host posts messages and invites discussion around a particular issue or theme (Gil de Zúñiga, 2009). In addition to their specific format and software tools, blogs have particular distinctive cultural and behavioral features. Personality (intimacy), and genuine style are major aspects of blogging. Therefore, a blog is not just a technical application, but a mix of socially determined habits. “Bloggers perceive themselves as part of a community that shares values, rituals and language” (Lowrey, 2006).

Being a form of communication the blog enters into journalistic practice. Though some professional journalists were quickly seduced by blogging, the issue of the relation of journalism to blogging is one of the urgent ones. For instance, Bowman and Willis (2003) emphasize, “Journalism’s hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by blogs.” Kawamoto (2003) and Salwen (2015) discuss the opportunities provided by blogging. As a result modern information and communication technologies of the development for journalism. During the 2008 presidential elections in the United States, certain bloggers received accreditation for covering the conventions of both of the main parties. It was the first case in the history of the USA when “blogging was recognized as an important new factor in public opinion formation” (McNair, 2016: 134). Robinson (2006) claims that blogs are a source of information for journalists not only for large-scale events and in extreme situations, but also smaller communities. Nowadays, bloggers strive for credibility and trustworthiness. Hence, they spend much time online searching for inspiration, information, and cross-checking their data and facts to create an authentic and reliable post. It means that “blogs represent reconstituted journalism – both renegade and legitimate reporting and writing – and have become part of the fabric sewn by the press” (Robinson, 2006: 88).

Despite apparent similarity between blogging and modern journalism, Scoble and Israel (2006) speak about six key differences between them:

- Publishable: everyone can create a blog. Blogging is rather cost-efficient. Furthermore, posting is possible whenever a person has time; each post is available worldwide;
- Findable: Search engines allow a person to locate diverse blogs by subject, author, or both. No doubt, one of the most convincing strategic arguments for posting blogs is the interrelationship with Bing, Google, Yandex, and other search engines.

Baye et al. (2015) focus on the fact that a high ranking on Google is incredibly valuable to a person or company. When surfing the net for information people always pay attention to the rank of the website. The higher one is ranked, the more likely is the opportunity the searcher will visit this particular website. Blogging is one of the best ways to obtain a high Google ranking. Since bloggers often update their post to remain relevant and interesting for the followers, blogs receive more search engine attention. Hence, it is easy to discover;

- Social: the blogosphere is one big conversation. Overt connections among blogs comprise hyperlinks from one blog to another, mentions of other blogs and bloggers in entries posted to blogs, and comments posted in response to other bloggers' entries (Herring et al., 2005: 1);
- Viral: information spreads much faster via blogs than through traditional media services;
- Syndicate: a great number of people visit blogs by using their web browser. However, the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) gives an opportunity to subscribe to plenty of blogs and the RSS readers will notify the follower when new posts appear (Rettberg, 2012);
- linkable: every blogger has access to millions of other bloggers and posts due to the links connected the blogs (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

Domingo and Heinonen (2008: 7) specify citizen blogs, media blogs, audience blogs, and journalist blogs. In their opinion, each type of blog has certain strengths and weaknesses compared to the traditional standards of the journalistic profession.

The popularity of blogs has led to some studies. However, the debate over whether the blog is media or a web genre has not yet concluded, indicating that further discussion is required.

## Methodology

Academic research has no clear idea if blogging should be introduced into a journalistic practice. This paper intends to fill the gap by analyzing the role of blogging in journalistic activities. The research is directed at Kazakhstani online mass media. Therefore it reflects a tendency in this country only. The focus is on national and regional newspapers and TV channels, covering the most important issues. The study examines data collected through phone interviews with 63 journalists, editors, and editors-in-chief. The interviews were conducted from 15 April to 17 October 2018.

We didn't use standard demographic control variables, like sex, age, income, ethnicity, level of education. The main attention was paid to the reasons why journalists and editors started to include blogs in various ways on their websites. Based on the goal of the paper, the following research questions are proposed:

- RQ1.** Is there an unrealized online potential of the continuation of journalistic activities in traditional mass media?
- RQ2.** What are the ways to exploit blogs in Kazakhstani journalistic practice?
- RQ3.** Should blogs be written by professional journalists, bloggers, or whoever has a writing talent?

## Results and Discussion

The technical development of the Internet and mobile phones led to exclusively new forms of communication relations and processes in media (Pinter, 2005: 182-3). It's hard not to agree with Oblak (2002: 19) that it contributes to the formation of diverse bonds between institutions and individuals, between engaged and more random participants, between those of similar mind, and so on. The very concept that a person can create a website about a specific issue to discuss it with others gives grounds to the broader discussion (Gauntlett, 2000: 17), for instance, to a discussion about including blogs in journalistic practice.

Blogs in journalistic practice can be exploited in two ways. First, they can be applied as a source of information for both online and traditional media. When a significant number of elite blogs focus on a particular breaking or underreported story, it can pique the interest of mainstream media outlets (Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 17). Still, it is worth noting that journalists do not always correctly use blog materials. Scoble and Israel (2006: 106) call it a stolen interview method: some journalists just track blogs, collect quotes from them, and then write own materials like they interviewed a person whom they had never contacted.

Second, blogs can be used as a form of communication that is embedded in online journalistic practice. In this regard, Singer (2005: 173, 195) speaks about the normalizing of the blog. It means that the blog turns out to be a component and an enhancement of traditional journalistic norms and practices and that journalists strive for remaining gatekeepers in this incredibly interactive and participatory format. The study pays attention to the second way of using blogs in journalistic routine.

The most-visited online resource in Kazakhstan is *Khabar 24*, the first and the only 24-hour news channel in the country, initiated by the President Nursultan Nazarbayev. In 2018 it broadcasted 54 information and thematic programs, including Bloggers 2.0. The given program presents a series of short videos, revealing diverse topics, like social and cultural life, psychology, sport, beauty and fashion industry, lifehack tips, etc. For example, Affordable Housing and "Bolashak" (November, 5 018), Why do We Want Others to Like Us? (September 19, 2018), Smart Card Payment System in Astana Public Transport (August 30, 2018), Helping Stray Animals (August 7, 2018). The Bloggers 2.0 anchorperson said "Initially it was intended to include on the channel some video blogs, where celebrities and renowned journalists could publish. But we put this idea aside, and now we are seeking interactivity anywhere. With the help of modern mobile phones and advanced Internet technologies we consider ourselves citizen journalists".

The conducted analysis of *Khabar 24* web-page made us conclude that there is the third way online mass media can use the potential of the blogosphere. Each material demonstrated on *Khabar 24* has a link to the HTML-code, so one can share it in the most popular social networking services like Facebook, VKontakte, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, Moy Mir, WhatsApp, Telegram, thus contributing to its further promotion.

*Today.kz* is also a 24-hour news portal. Its editors constantly follow events in Kazakhstan and the world to be the first to report the details to their readers. They started under the advertising slogans "We do not limit ourselves to stating facts and 24/7 look for and find an original approach to the news" and "Remember: who owns the information, he owns the world." The Blog section is extremely popular section of the portal, which has 21 in-house bloggers, who cover such topics as political, social and economic issues, traveling, latest auto and techno industry news, culinary recipes, cinema and theater reviews, family relations, etc. : Some Words about Parental Love by Asem Abraeva (November 27, 2017),

How to Increase the Trust of Kazakhstani Citizens in Akimats by Bakyzkhan Bazarbek (June 20, 2018), George without Jungles by Karim Adyrbaev (April 16, 2018), Kurnik – Russian Festive Chicken Pie by Maksim Grinevich (November 25, 2018).

“The original idea was that the blogs must be written by professional journalists. Later on, we changed our mind. Our blogs are written by both journalists and experts in their fields, like tourist manager, English teacher, land use and zoning attorney, businessman, financial consultant, yet all of them are full of ideas, popular, good with words and has public credibility. I believe a blog senses that it is written by people who can explain the background and depict the subtle details that cannot be published in the print edition, because of some reasons”, states the Today.kz editor.

All posts in Today.kz are monitored by moderators who also take care of the forum and remove all insulting comments or instances of hate speech. The registered users can comment on and evaluate the blogs.

Reputable national news portal NUR.KZ gets between 300,000 and 400,000 views every day. Blog section there is called Special Projects, where common people, well-known experts, bloggers, companies’ marketers share their opinions, give useful tips, comment on urgent home and foreign affairs, observe their experience. Now it is host to approximately seven hundred blogs — besides, NUR.KZ is playing with various ideas for introducing interactivity. We came across the following interactive mechanisms there: opinion polls, voting for the best, quizzes, getting discounts from Lufthansa, possibility to send video thanks to doctors, possibility to send resume to G-Time Corporation and Forte Bank.

“Of course, we follow the trends of modern European and American online newspapers. The concept of the blog is extremely popular today. There are already too many blogs in Kazakhstan about everything. Even children have their YouTube channels. So those who want to shoot or write a blog have already done so. That’s why we began Special Projects. These projects are not blogs; they are generators of ideas and opinions of people who have something interesting to say and don’t call themselves “bloggers,” says NUR.KZ editor.

However, not only national broadcasters admit that blog is one of the most widespread forms of Internet use these days. The Noviy Vestnik, the online newspaper of the Karaganda region has Blogs section as well. All the blogs are arranged in reverse chronological order, to which registered visitors can react with comments. Also, the readers can navigate blogs by using a search engine and other search mechanisms, for instance, to reach the most-visited and commented-upon blogs. “Though we are a regional newspaper we pay close attention to what is going on in other countries. So the editor-in-chief decided to offer our readers blogs as an excellent form of communication and expression to increase the portion of contents created by them”, comments the Noviy Vestnik observer.

Nowadays blogging is a gigantic word-of-mouth engine. As contrasted with an ordinary one that can be dumped on the back seat, it is efficient, powerful and incredibly fast to drive the entire car (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Hence, more and more online versions of printed media, online radios and TV channels in Kazakhstan and other countries over the globe introduce blogging into journalistic practice. There are some reasons for this: material incentives, personal network ties, expertise, and speed (Drezner & Farell, 2004: 15).

A wide array of media divides their online content into free and paid materials to enlarge subscription revenues. Simultaneously they expand free content to keep the web traffic on the same level. The free content is usually presented in the form of a blog.

Close social and professional relations between journalists and bloggers are easy to explain. The first waves of bloggers were journalists, who didn’t break ties with



mainstream media outlets. Parks (2013) comments on the early history of blogs. She points out that at the end of XX century blogs were called «me-zines,» embodying a certain desire to express oneself, and communicate with other people who share similar interests (Parks, 2013: 15). The original idea behind «me-zines» was to draw readers' attention, to serve as online ads for journalists' reports. Nowadays the debate about whether these ties are of significance has changed its tune. The ties between journalist-bloggers and those in the traditional media were extremely crucial to establishing trust in the new medium (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008: 3). Owing to personal and professional ties to journalists and editors mainstream media outlets deemed early bloggers as reliable sources for information and opinion (Smolkin, 2004).

However, in Kazakhstan early bloggers were just amateurs (with no regard to journalism), so the majority of Kazakhstani editors and journalists have a prejudice against bloggers. A lot of journalists connect the increasing number of bloggers to the current post-industrial society and crisis it faces. "All bloggers have too much free time. It is obvious evidence they are not busy with intense, all-consuming work", says editor-in-chief of Astana online newspaper, wished to remain anonymous. Also, Kazakhstani bloggers always try to be opposed to mainstream media. For instance, famous Almaty blogger Yerzhan Rashev calls himself "a cultural provocateur," whose primary goal is to disturb, to instigate and to provoke. He also adds that contemporary blogging is the most aggressive, outrageous, radical and anarchic thing ever existed on the Kazakhstani Internet.

The third reason for the increase in density between the media and blogosphere is the expertise provided by bloggers on significant and relevant issues. Rosenberg (2002) proves that media usually experience a deficit of detailed knowledge about this or that event. He states that blogs can be exploited as repositories of "local knowledge." Over time, the journalist can appeal to the given blogs in case the issue in question emerges as a news topic again. It is reasonable to assume such blogs written by experts in their fields, will greatly reduce the search costs for journalists in acquiring necessary information. Bloggers that promote their posts on salient topics have the potential to become in-demand experts.

Finally, bloggers possess first-mover advantages in formulating opinions. Speed distinguishes blogs from other forms of online publishing (Domingo & Heinonen). Immediately following an event – a presidential debate, an adopted law, a national festival, technogenic disaster, etc. – bloggers can post their on-the-spot reactions before the response of other forms of media. Beyond initial reactions, bloggers can also reply to other bloggers' reactions before the mainstream media has time to react. Indeed "the virtue of speed isn't simply, or even primarily, that you can scoop the competition. It's that you can post something and provoke a quick response and counter-response, as well as research by readers. The collective brain works faster, firing with more synapses theory. "Faster" can mean "fast enough to have real-world consequences" that print journalism or even edited Web journalism can't have" (Kaus, 2003). Besides, commenting on posts is an essential type of information exchange nowadays. Although it means that discussions can have the features of an echo-chamber – bloggers comments on bloggers commenting on bloggers – it greatly contributes to the information promotion, agenda setting, and framing effects.

Moreover, speed helps bloggers overcome such a serious problem, as inaccuracies. Most bloggers, when noticed a factual error in their post, make corrections quickly, reducing the negative externalities of such mistakes. "The editorial process of the blogs takes place between and among bloggers, in public, in real time, with fully annotated cross-links" (Rosenberg, 2002). Another undoubted advantage of blogs is their low cost of real-time publication. Bloggers don't need much money to post something – no payment for gathering information activities, fees for editorial office – just mobile phone and Internet access.

Speaking about the reasons to introduce blogging into journalistic practice, we consider, papers' head-to-head battle for readers should be added to the list as well. The Business 2.0 editor-in-chief Josh Quittner says, "My worst competitor is not another magazine. It is the readers' attention and time" (cited Baltatzis, 2006: 5). To retain a pivotal role in online social media must create new values to maintain readerships. The best way is to approach and empower readers and build deeper relationships with them. From the perspective of journalism, blogging is a promising concept and a new channel of communication.

Each society needs relevant and reliable information. The up-to-date technologies provide a lot of opportunities to get such information: traditional and innovative media, social networks, blogs, etc. Of course, these days media are becoming obsolete. First, "newspaper has become a cumbersome and inefficient distribution mechanism. If you want fast delivery of news, the paper is a stagecoach competing with jet planes" (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Second, traditional printing is an expensive process, both in metropolitan cities and small rural areas. That's why more and more journalists all over the world, including Kazakhstan, bring in blogging into their practice. The key differences between traditional media and blogs are that the latter is extremely 'open' to their audiences, letting readers take an active part in making stories, and, in some cases, letting readers publish their own stories.

Blogging is also a way of applying journalists' talents more effectively. All relevant information, which does not fit into the paper, can be channeled through blogs, allowing the readers to choose what to read or not. It enables a dialogue, a sense of ownership and participation that is essential in the day-by-day battle for readers. Therefore, we may conclude blogging contributes to the expansion of audience and attraction of new readers, as it adds a new dimension to traditional publishing.

## **Conclusion**

Presently media industry experiences plenty of new opportunities, as well as new challenges. Facing the given challenges, traditional should resort to advanced communication technologies to elevate the transformation and upgrading, the profound integration with social media and finally search out the modes suit for itself.

Some news agencies don't take serious bloggers' impact, though blogs have a particularly notable effect on the media. There are several reasons for this. Blogs connect new readers to a publication and keep old readers loyal. By democratizing media in this way, readers get an opportunity to comment and vote on issues relevant and urgent to them. In this regard, we can conclude that blogs serve their democratic legacy better. Speaking about innovation journalism, blogs act as an excellent tool for analyzing current events much faster by conducting fruitful and synchronous conversations with the community. In other words, using blogs means to be in the loop to have authority over a pivotal point in society. Thus, no wonder, the blog as a form of communication is constantly developing.

The research concerning the relationship between journalism and blogs demonstrates that journalism has not overcome its ambivalent attitude to the blog yet. On the one hand, some online editions of printed newspapers, radio, and TV channels introduce blogs as a form of communication into their journalistic practice and encourage their journalists and editors to write blogs. Such blogs contain portraying of the event, its background, and consequences in a more detailed manner. On the other hand, the editors

of online newspapers see blogging as a threat to professional journalism. They insist on continuing to follow the existing model of reporting.

The conducted analysis of Kazakhstani online newspapers and TV channels, along with interviews with editors and journalists, manifests that blogs are gradually becoming an inherent part of the mass media. Some online editions assume the importance of blog-like communication and let their reader transform into bloggers. They invite them to form and fill in an alternative space of publicly written words. The others provide blogs to selected bloggers, among whom are reputable journalists, editors, and experts. By introducing blogs, online newspapers hope to attract visitors and ritualize the visiting of their website. Through the integration of the blog, Kazakhstani online newspapers normalize the blog in journalistic practice and surpass the ambivalence in journalism's relation to the blog.

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