

THE PHENOMENON OF INTERACTIVITY IN THE MEDIA AND INTERACTIVE JOURNALISM

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Abstract: This article analyzes the phenomenon of interactivity in journalism, highlighting the commonalities and unique aspects of interactive journalism. It examines interactivity as a method to ensure audience participation in information production, presenting it as a way for the audience to express their opinions, attitudes, and approaches toward reality. Additionally, the article substantiates that the emergence of information technologies and the internet has enabled active audience participation in information production, leading to the contemporary form of media known as interactive journalism, which has become a subject of study for researchers.

Key words: information, interactivity, communication, multimedia, audience, press

In today's rapidly developing information technology environment, interactive-communicative processes unfold through various forms of interactions, shaping the content of social life. Their nature, characteristics, forms, developmental traits, societal impact, and significance are recognized in various social domains, presenting challenges to the field of journalism. Particularly, the advent of the Internet has transformed the nature of journalism, necessitating scholarly analysis of the interactive-communicative features within public communication processes. Understanding the relationship between interactivity and communicativeness is crucial in every context. However, while interactivity and the communicative aspects of interactive journalism share commonalities, they do not always convey the same meaning. It should be emphasized that there are two distinct perspectives among specialists regarding the convergence of interactivity and communicativeness in media. Some researchers (Gasnov and others, 2017) connect this phenomenon with the advent of electronic information technologies in the field of journalism, while others (Zueva and others, 2004) attribute it to conditions where information technologies were not yet prevalent, even before the widespread development of the Internet. Both perspectives have their basis. Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to this divergence defines the main purpose of this article. In modern mass media systems, the term “interactive journalism” has been widely utilized in recent years. It has also become a significant focus of research in journalism. This is not unwarranted, certainly. The advancement of technologies has not only provided journalists with new opportunities for delivering information but has also enabled substantial engagement from the audience. Consequently, the audience has become an

DOI:

[https://doi.org/
10.62499/ijmcc.vi6.47](https://doi.org/10.62499/ijmcc.vi6.47)

Citation:

Toshpulatova, Nazira. 2024.
The phenomenon of
interactivity in the media and
interactive journalism.
International Journal of Media
and Communications in Central
Asia. Tashkent. UzJOKU.
Special issue. 25-29.

active participant in the process of information consumption. Therefore, in many cases, when referring to interactivity in media, it is primarily understood as the equal involvement of the audience in information consumption processes. Such perceptions are more closely related to interactive journalism. In this context, let's clarify the distinction between these two concepts from the perspective of interactivity. According to S.I. Ozhegov's "Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language", the term "interactivity" is relatively new, where "inter-" implies "interconnection" or "interaction", and "-activity" denotes "activity" or "activity." (Ozhegov, 1992) Until recently, the term "interactive journalism" has been widely used in modern mass media systems. It has even become a significant focus of research in journalism. This is not without reason. The advancement of technologies has not only provided journalists with new opportunities for delivering information but has also enabled substantial engagement from the audience. As a result, the audience has become an active participant in the process of consuming information. Therefore, in many cases, when referring to interactivity in media, it is primarily understood as the active involvement of the audience in information consumption processes. Such perceptions are more closely related to interactive journalism. In this regard, it is essential to clarify what is meant by interactivity. According to various media, it involves engaging with the audience in unique ways. In newspapers and magazines, this engagement may manifest through letters to the editor and phone calls. Later, connecting through email became common, and television and radio enabled live broadcasts through phone-ins. Nowadays, participation in various quizzes, TV news programs, talk shows, and even voting can be facilitated via phone. In the 1990s, the emergence of internet websites did not initially envision direct feedback from readers or viewers, as traditional media channels facilitated feedback through letters to the editor. (Kachkaeva, 2010) In the context of modern media theory, the concept of interactivity revolves around the direct engagement of the audience representatives (readers, listeners, viewers, users) through channels like letters to the editor and content contributions (comments, discussions) in online media. These letters and comments are read and acknowledged by journalists, initiating interaction with the audience. Through familiarity with these letters, journalists establish a connection with the audience. When a reader submits a query through a letter, it is responded to by a journalist or an expert in the relevant field. The exchange of letters and their responses collectively forms journalistic material that conveys a complete narrative. Through such letters, journalists not only establish communication



between the organization and the audience but also engage in a dialogue that may not be immediately visible. In this process, interactivity sharpens the mutual distance between the audience and journalists. Consequently, interactivity in media significantly contributes to collaborative influence on public perception. Technological advancement has enabled the general public, including readers, listeners, viewers, or users, to engage more actively with mainstream media outlets. In this regard, today the concept of “interactivity” is being understood not only in terms of “audience feedback and discussion” but also through its other significant attributes. Specifically, interactivity allows the audience to directly engage with both the author of the material and the content itself, facilitating a sense of connection akin to the journalist becoming a facilitator. This fosters active participation from the audience (Kalmikov). An intriguing headline is considered the first indicator of interactivity (Kalmikov). Through it, media products capture the audience’s attention. Especially, through provocative or controversial headlines, not only does the content draw attention to itself, but it also alerts users to issues discussed therein. Furthermore, interactivity serves the purpose of adapting editorial policies based on the audience’s perceptions and needs, enhancing the effectiveness of editorial decisions using the information and input received. This not only retains existing audiences but also facilitates the attraction of new users, making it a convenient method for engagement. Interestingly, interactivity serves a purposeful role in modern media structures by effectively dividing roles between the intentional user and its collaborator during a specific period (Kunaeva, 2013). Through interactivity, actions such as gathering information, mutual learning, teaching, communicating, and engaging with each other are implemented. From a scholarly perspective, engaging in communication involves social and personal interactions that result in the exchange, communication, and achievement of social and personal interactions based on experiences, abilities, knowledge, and skills, as well as essential and general conditions of societal and personal development. It is important to emphasize that in traditional (print and electronic) media, the audience does not actively participate in mutual relationships. This is because engaging with media requires sending letters to the editor, making phone calls, and waiting for responses, which consumes additional time and effort. In such situations, discussions and communications may be delayed, and the significance of the message may even diminish. Therefore, audience participation highlights interactivity. In this way, interactivity refers to the audience’s involvement with information, which expresses perspectives, discussions,

communications, and broader social impacts. Interactive journalism today represents a modern manifestation of media that integrates multimedia-related processes. In this way, the meanings of interactivity denote the interaction, perspective, discussion, communication, and broader social impact of the audience. Interactive journalism is the contemporary manifestation of the media, integrating multimedia-related processes into its operations. Russian media researcher A.G. Kachkaeva states: "Interactive media engages audiences in continuous activities and interactions based on proposals and observations. In this process, multimedia language is fundamental and distinctly different from other media languages, shaping how audiences utilize provided comprehensive information" (Kachkaeva, 2010). Interactive journalism provides users with the opportunity to actively engage with media content. From this, users can monitor what they are learning, choose stories that interest them, send unnecessary information, or opt for deeper engagement into credibility. Interactive journalism introduces new approaches to presenting events, analysis, and scholarly information to users. They participate based on their interests and engagement with media content. This helps in exploring new methods for selecting topics and establishing connections with users and their preferences. Given that the structure, content, and collaboration are quite traditional in journalism, choosing to interact with each other is crucial (Guzman). In modern media, various influential tools facilitate the dissemination of information through evolving processes. Nonetheless, the nature of these processes manifests as real events that account for the outcomes of active journalism, considering experience, capabilities, global context, knowledge, and skills, as well as essential and general conditions of society and individual development. From the above ideas, it can be said that the media's existence relates closely to the audience and the information consumer. Without an audience, newspapers would not be printed, and magazines would not be published. In this regard, journalism itself is the most significant interactive event. The advancement of information technologies, particularly the emergence of the internet, has actualized this event, laying the groundwork for the rise of interactive journalism. In the context of modern media development, researching new interactive methods and assessing their presence are of crucial importance. This is because both interactivity in media and the existence of interactive media are intertwined with the audience. In this sense, technological advancement has significantly brought interactive journalism closer to its audience (reader, listener, viewer, user), leading to its emergence and development.



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