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**LEGAL ASPECT OF A MODERN RUSSIAN JOURNALIST'S  
PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC IDENTITY**

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***Abstract***

New media practices and problems of globalization influence on the formation of professional and civic identity of modern Russian journalists are studied. At the same time, the authors focus on the legal aspect as one of the most relevant for social practice. The aim of the work, based on the empirical base of sociological research, was to identify and describe the contradictions of the digital age. These contradictions are due both to the political and legal aspects of the media, as well as to the individual and personal characteristics of the subjects representing them. In a broad sense, they impede the formation and development of Russian society as an informational and truly legal one, and in the narrow sense the formation of the professional culture of journalists, supported by concrete examples of media practice.

The authors concluded that in accordance with the analysis of journalist's civic and professional identity the criteria of evaluation of effectiveness methods' formation should specify the cognitive component; affective-evaluative; and an activity component (a real participation in a group and social types of activity, due to both social and technological transformations of Russian society and in the media sphere). But the actual legal status of these subjects of professional and civic identity will be a dominant one of employees' effective creative activity in mass media, and something that characterizes the subject of improving the techniques and methods of information security using electronic computer technologies in the process of systematization, formatting and distribution of information products.

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## 1. Introduction

It is difficult to understand new media practices and the impact of globalization processes on representatives of various Russian societies cannot be done without identifying and describing the problematic components and contradictions that characterize the information space of Russia as a whole or its individual regions. At the same time, we are convinced that this can serve, on the one hand, the development of scientific knowledge, and on the other, the development and effective implementation of professional standards in the information sphere, which have become mandatory since 2016. Researchers, before discussing the very idea of introducing these amendments to the Labor Code of the Russian Federation, actively advocated a similar approach, which is typical for most Western countries (Gatov, 2016; Oleshko, 2012). After all it allows to identify journalism as a profession by specific indicators and qualitative characteristics of effective influence on the processes of democratization of society and to clear it of everything that does not belong to journalism. But has it been possible in practice for two years to successfully implement this approach? The question is rhetorical. In the article the legal aspect of professional and civic identity of journalists as the most relevant for the newest social practice is highlighted. The methodological basis for the analysis of this problem was formed by the prevailing world theory of the humanistic role of mass media in public relations in the context of universal digitalization of the content (Athique, 2013; Kiriya & Novikova, 2017; Lindgren, 2017; Mosco, 2017) and ethics - the legal basis for organizing the activities of professional journalists (Frolova, 2014; Pankeev & Timofeev, 2018). And the basis of systemic conclusions is typical judgments and statements about the topic from representatives of various media communities, including those that are a result of a sociological survey.

## 2. Problem Statement

The area of modern mass media is unique because on the one hand, the number of its subjects - not only professionals, but also bloggers, citizen journalists, users of social networks - is expanding simultaneously with an increasing number of technologies and methods of creating and broadcasting content in the digital era, and on the other hand, in these conditions the media are obliged to compete for the attention and recognition of the mass audience. And since only creative discoveries and creative technologies used to create high-quality texts are not enough for this, in some cases techniques and methods are used that can be identified as outside the legal area of journalism. Consequently, the legal aspect of journalistic identity allows us to describe the negative trends, including social and technological changes in recent years, and also outline ways to overcome them.

## 3. Research Questions

Journalism as a social institution is an object and a subject of the legal culture of Russian society. That is, the legal discourse of mass media is formed on the legal culture as the subjects of information activity and mass audience representatives who perceive legal reality in the way they had understood. And since the basis of any culture is the worldview and moral principles of its carriers, it is therefore legitimate to say that the legal aspect of identity is caused by the society legal culture influence with the professional culture of journalists. Having identified and systematized the main dominants of the real information agenda of the Russian media for six years, specifically the mass media of the Ural region (Oleshko, 2016),

the important theoretical conclusion was made. It determined the main directions of further research: products of information activities, presented to a mass audience in various formats and on various media (in the form of text, sound, visual images or combining multimedia data), ensure their perception and interiorization not only in the “function space”, but also in the social system self-reflection context as a whole. But at the same time, including predictive characteristics, it was important to determine: what factors today have influence on not only the formation and development of the legal area of journalism, which has become universally convergent, but also on the formation in the era of professional and civic identity of a journalist?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to systematize the contradictions in the development of convergent capabilities of modern journalism in the legal and information space. They are due to the political legal aspects and the individual personal and professional characteristics of the media representing subjects. Also one of the tasks is to find ways and to overcome those of them that in the broad sense hindering the formation and development of Russian society as informational and truly legal, and in the narrow sense the formation of the professional culture of journalists as the synthesis of mental and instrumental components.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The results of studies carried out by authors or working groups under their leadership were an empirical basis. The Russian experience of media activities for two periods (from 2011 to 2013 and from 2014 to 2016) served as a source of empirical data along with the results of mass media functioning of the macroregion Greater Urals up to 2018. In total, the objects of analysis were 24 print media (newspapers of different typological groups, including their sites) and 12 online publications. The basis for the comparative analysis was the results of the survey “Convergent journalism in the perceptions of regional media employees”, the purpose of which was to study the attitude of mass media employees to convergent journalism as a form of creative and professional self-realization. The task was to find out how the canons of professional culture change in the conditions of the convergent journalism development. As a method of data collection, a semi-formalized interview was chosen. It was an interview with a guidebook, in which the topics of the conversation were identified, as well as open and closed questions were present within some of the topics. Moreover, respondents could offer their own options and thematic areas of commenting on the changes taking place in their region due to the development of convergent journalism. 261 respondents were selected.

#### **6. Findings**

The following trend as a result of the study was identified: the transformation of the media economic foundations was crucial for changing the many components that characterize the legal field of journalism in general and convergent, in particular. A number of circumstances contributed to the instability of the domestic media system that has emerged so far: direct or indirect political and commercial pressure that prevails over professional standards; lack of clear ethical standards shared by the majority of representatives of the media industry; the failure to form the reputational components of the assessment of media activities

in general, so characteristic of Western journalism; as well as the active promotion of consumer values by the media of recreational content and the advertising market, influencing the entire spectrum of public relations.” The survey of respondents testified that the strict observance of laws and regulations in professional activities, as well as the level of legal awareness, a reliance on a set of specific rights and professional duties, are an important component of daily work. At the same time, almost one in five stated: “The journalist is dependent and today he has only duties.” And only a few at the same time noted that legal culture as an indispensable component of the professional identity formation is correlated with the general culture of the individual.

What are the main reasons for the development of these trends? Firstly, it should be noted that the Russian Law on Mass Media, adopted more than two decades ago, ingores many modern political and economic realities and technological innovations characteristic of the information sphere. Secondly, in the conditions of intensive development of the media industry, the state made an attempt to regulate this sphere through the implementation of licensing activities. Thus, significant changes were made to the Law on Mass Media. Among them, it is particularly necessary to highlight those that expanded the very concept of “media”, including a network publication, a TV channel, a radio channel, and giving them legal definitions. But at the same time, the legal framework also laid down the legal conditions for a serious restriction on the freedom of broadcasting. Undoubtedly, these and other legislative initiatives were necessary to improve legal relations in the media, as evidenced by systemic sociological studies of the Russian media industry (Vartanova, Vyrkovsky, Makeyenko & Smirnov, 2017; Lukina, 2011). After all, the realization of convergent opportunities often led to conflicts between registered mass media and those who often called themselves “free subjects” of information activities. However, representatives of many mass media were afraid that any unwanted media could be closed if there were signs of extremism not even in journalistic materials, but in the comments of readers to the notes on the site. In due time, the legal initiative of the State Duma deputies to equate the foreign-funded media to foreign agents caused many disputes and public discussions. Later, precisely on the wave of these and similar discussions about determining the degree of loyalty to the authorities, dividing the subjects of information activities into “own” and “foreign”, the so-called Law on bloggers was adopted. This law includes the norms that changed the views about what freedom of information is through the global network. And it’s not easy to form legal relations with bloggers today primarily at registered mass media. And if, 5-10 years ago, contradictions arising over copyright compliance were judicial instances (in conditions of unequivocal support by public opinion of any form of creativity of civilian journalists) in the overwhelming majority of cases resolved in their favor, the latest practice indicates a more balanced approach. The statement “the observance of the norms of legal culture as an integral part of informational relations applies to all without exceptions” was approved.

The precedents of modern media practice, called the Streisand Effect, are completely unknown today when certain carefully hidden facts become public knowledge just because carefully hidden. For example, shortly after the mass media actively discussed the problem of the availability of erotic, pornographic and other asocial content on the Internet. Since most Russians found out that there were specific sites, their owners demanded a denial of these allegations through the courts, and the media diligently covered these processes. And any other facts of blocking information in the era of social networks as one of the main

sources of information leads to the fact that they immediately raise the ratings of those whom society condemns.

In addition, today one more contradiction is becoming more and more apparent in the Russian regions. The process of mass media commercialization puts quality media in the first place in the most difficult situation. Thus, the Ministry of Finance of Russia pledged expenditures on the item “Mass media” in the budget of the Russian Federation in 2017 by 8.5% less than the previous year. The reduction of funds for these purposes will continue in 2018 and 2019, follows from the draft budget published on the federal project portal legal acts. Thus, in 2018, the expenditures on the mass media item were laid down in the amount of 67.968 billion rubles, in 2019 - only 66.317 billion rubles (Seliverstova, 2016).

The decline in traditional media’s advertising revenues and the orientation only to short-term economic gains lead to the destruction of not just informing, but above of all educational and cultural activities of “branded” publications operating within a clearly defined legal area (Dugin, 2017). During the analyzed period, in the Urals Federal District, many regional and all youth newspapers disappeared as a typological group. Media policy as an aggregate of political measures is primarily expressed in the equal representation of the mass media of various typological groups. The uncertainty of the prospects for professional development, coupled with a significant increase in the volume of workload in the conditions of media’s transition to convergence, was also a decisive factor in leaving the profession. Convergence makes journalists create materials not only for different platforms, but also almost around the clock, as the number of editorial boards is minimized. Moreover, legal nihilism of media managers was often one of the main arguments for colleagues to make this decision. The economic crisis leads to increased pressure on journalists and professional burnout. But low personal self-esteem is just one of the criteria for assessing the formation of a journalist’s professional identity. Since civic identity is also realized through the acquisition of civic competence, the formation of moral self-esteem and moral feelings (including such as a sense of pride in the profession), the result may be a general decline in the prestige of the journalistic profession in Russia.

## **7. Conclusion**

Finally, in accordance with the analysis of the structures of the civil and professional identity of journalists, the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of methods for their formation should specify the cognitive component (the knowledge of belonging to a social institution that largely determines the country’s status characteristics, its history, state and political and legal device); the affective-evaluative component (a characteristic of a professional group, with which the subject not only identifies himself, but also regards his attitude to membership in it as a significant factor); and the activity component (a real participation in group and social types of activity, due to both social and technological transformations of Russian society and the media sphere). But the actual legal status of these subjects of professional and civic identity will then dominate the effective creative activity of employees in the digital age, when it is closely linked to the economic, financial levers of media management, as well as those that characterize the subject of improving the techniques and methods of information security when using electronic computer technologies in the process of systematization, formatting and distribution of information products.

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