

The role of media influence and journalistic image in increasing the impact of journalism

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Abstract: This article analyzes the impact of the image of a journalist and a media outlet on the development of journalism. The study shows that the professional authority of a journalist and the institutional authority of a media outlet are key factors in uniting the audience, gaining public trust, and establishing a strong position in the public consciousness. It also emphasizes that Uzbekistan's failure to achieve sufficient results in international ratings on freedom of speech reinforces the need for systematic attention to this issue at the state level. The author highlights the role of legal, economic, and institutional support mechanisms in the development of journalism and their importance in shaping a positive international image of the country.

Keywords: journalistic image, media outlet reputation, freedom of speech, public trust, international ratings, journalism development, state support, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the media plays an important role not only in covering events, but also in shaping the mood of the world's thinking public. The speed of information flow, the widespread use of online publications, and the ability of the audience to access various sources have created fierce competition in the media arena. In this process, the personal image, professional authority, and credibility of the journalist with the audience are gaining importance as one of the main factors determining the impact of information. In modern society, journalism performs functions such as not only delivering news, but also revealing social problems, shaping public opinion, and exercising social control. As researchers have noted, the effectiveness of the media is determined by two main factors: the institutional authority of the media outlet and the personal image of the journalists working in it (McQuail, 2010; Couldry, 2012). The image of a journalist is often formed through his or her ability to cover current issues, conduct journalistic investigations, propose solutions to social problems, and freely ask questions to officials. These aspects not only enhance the journalist's personal reputation, but also strengthen the overall credibility and influence of the media in which he or she works. Therefore, the formation of a journalist's image should be viewed not only as a personal, but also as an institutional process. This article scientifically analyzes the impact of journalistic image and media influence on influence, as well as existing problems and proposals in the conditions of Uzbekistan.

Methodology

This article was developed based on a theoretical-analytical approach. The following sources were used in the study: International scientific articles and

Impact factor 9

theoretical models (Hovland & Weiss, McCombs & Shaw, Khan et al., Steindl et al.). Existing scientific studies on the media space of Uzbekistan (Kudratkhoja, 2024; Makhmudova, 2025). Practical reports and surveys (USAID, 2022; Freedom House, 2023). Content analysis (based on scientific articles), a comparative approach (comparison of international and national media practices) were used as methods.

Literature Review

The issue of media credibility has been studied by many scholars. Khan et al. (2022) in their systematic review on “Information credibility on social media” found that the credibility of the information source is a decisive factor in the acceptance of the message by users. Steindl, Obermaier, Fawzi, and Lauerer (2024) found that journalists' personal reputation and work styles determine the level of media trust. Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) also explains the role of the media in setting the social agenda through topic selection. Pierre Bourdieu (1998) – social capital theory: the image of a journalist is considered a social resource, and this resource increases the overall authority of the media. Walter Lippmann (1922) – public perception: how society perceives issues is formed through the activities of journalists. David Aaker (1996) – brand capital concept: a journalist's personal brand is combined with the institutional brand of the media, increasing its competitiveness. These theories scientifically substantiate the importance of the journalist's image and the authority of the publication in the minds of the audience. In the context of Uzbekistan, Sherzodkhon Kudratkhodja (2024) emphasizes that the population is not sensitive to false information due to low media literacy. USAID (2022) surveys indicate that Uzbeks have high trust in television and state publications, but low trust in independent online publications.

Results

The analysis shows that: First, the image of a journalist and media authority increase the audience's trust. The news of a reputable journalist and a reliable publication attracts more readers/viewers and evokes a wide social resonance. Second, there are few reputable online publications in Uzbekistan. Although some sites operate, they are not recognized globally and rank low in international rankings. Third, audience trust is focused on state-owned media, but the independent media space is weak. This limits the diversity of news and the development of professional journalism. Fourth, the image of TV presenters is also seen as an important factor. Their speech, appearance, and attitude towards the audience determine the level of credibility. Because the recognition and image of a journalist help him establish a trusting relationship with the audience. According to source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), if the audience considers the source to be reliable, then they will also accept the news. So, the reputation of a journalist increases the influence of the media outlet he works for. But “fame” is not always personal popularity. The recognition of a journalist should be measured by his professional qualifications, independent opinion, and truthfulness. Chasing fame alone can sometimes be contrary to professional ethics. Therefore, the reputation of the journalist and the outlet should be in balance. The journalist must serve the brand and principles of the organization in which he works. The analysis shows that qualified

Impact factor 9

journalists are a guarantee of strong content. Well-trained journalists, through their analytical, investigative and independently researched materials, increase the authority of the media and strengthen it as a reliable source in the public. For this, the media organization must provide financial and intellectual support to journalists. To ensure that journalists do not move to other companies, and to ensure their professional loyalty and creative freedom, it is necessary to organize appropriate financial incentives, foreign advanced training courses, and special training.

Discussion

The image of a journalist is a “key factor” of media influence, determining not only personal image, but also the social capital of the entire publication. International experience shows that reputable publications (for example, BBC, The New York Times, Reuters) develop the image of their journalists as a strategic resource. In Uzbekistan, some TV channels also use the image of journalists to attract the attention of a large audience of their programs. For example, Zo'r TV has attracted Iroda Nosirova, Sirojiddin O'sarov, Laylo Rustamova to the news program "Bu Kun", "Sevimli" TV channel has attracted Dildora Rustamova, Jahongir Olimov, Dilnoza Saidova to the information program "Zamon", "My5" TV channel has attracted journalists and presenters who have made their name known, such as the hosts of the Central Studio Amirkhon Umarov and Sarvar Bahodirov, and in the morning program - Anvar Azimov, Nozima Vohidova. This approach has had an effective effect, and these programs are recording positive results in terms of ratings and popularity compared to other competing TV channels. However, the personal brand of journalists working in online media outlets in many cases has not surpassed the brand of the publication. Rather, the publication itself (for example, UzA, "Kun.uz", "Gazeta.uz") has been formed as a symbol of trust. Therefore, here the collective reputation of the publication is more important than the personal popularity of the journalist. In the global media space, Practice shows that journalists such as Anderson Cooper (CNN), Christiane Amanpour (CNN, BBC) in the US, or Vladimir Pozner in Russia have become popular as personal brands. In some cases, their authority is considered higher than that of a particular organization. Theoretically, if a journalist's personal authority is higher than that of the organization, then trust is built not in the organization, but in the individual. This can weaken the institutional influence of the organization. For example, large brands (BBC, Reuters) always present journalists as symbols of the organization. Because if a famous journalist moves to another publication, readers may also follow the individual. This weakens the identity of the organization. For this reason, many international media companies brand journalists, but constantly associate them with the image of the organization.

In the process of forming a journalist's image, special emphasis should be placed on three main areas:

- 1) Personal reputation - is formed by the journalist's independent activity, coverage of current topics or deep knowledge in a specialized field.
- 2) Institutional support - a media organization should be interested in developing a journalist's image and create conditions for financial stability, training, and the absorption of foreign experience.

Impact factor 9

3) Social trust - the presence of well-known journalists determines the level of openness and transparency in society, and shows the media as a responsible institution.

In addition, the image of a journalist serves to form a culture of social discussion in society. The activities of prominent journalists create an opportunity for open discussion of problems without hiding them and are an impetus for the development of civil society. Thus, the image of a journalist and the authority of a media outlet, in harmony with each other, play a decisive role in increasing social trust in society, developing critical thinking, and ensuring transparency of information.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The image of journalists and the authority of publications are particularly important for increasing their influence in the media sector. The lack of sufficiently well-known and reliable online publications in Uzbekistan limits the influence of the media.

Recommendations:

1. Improving the skills of journalists and TV presenters - international trainings, ethical journalism courses should be organized.
2. Publications should introduce a policy of transparency - the practice of indicating sources and openly admitting mistakes should be established.
3. Supporting independent online publications - creating equal opportunities in the grant and advertising market.
4. Developing media literacy - introducing media literacy programs in schools and universities
5. Strengthening fact-checking centers - special editorial units should be established to prevent false information.

A journalist's image is an important factor in increasing the impact of journalism, and it is closely related to the institutional authority of the media outlet. A journalist builds personal authority by covering current issues, conducting investigations, and engaging openly with officials, which in turn expands the level of influence of the outlet.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the fact that journalists and media outlets are recognized in an authoritative and broad social space expands their communicative capabilities, ensures the ability to consolidate the public around them, and forms a capital of social trust. On the contrary, the absence of such a resource slows down the development of journalism and weakens its position as a decisive social institution in society. In the case of Uzbekistan, insufficient results in international ratings on freedom of speech and the press (Press-freedom, 2025) indicate the seriousness of this problem. This, on the one hand, limits the independent creative activity of journalists, and on the other hand, reduces the opportunities for media outlets to form a reputable image. As a result, the level of trust in information sources in society is likely to decrease. Therefore, the introduction of systematic and institutional support mechanisms by the state for the development of journalism is of

Impact factor 9

great importance. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen the legal guarantees of journalists, ensure their economic freedom, support the institutional independence of media outlets, and develop professional development programs. Such measures will serve not only to increase the social trust of journalists and media outlets, but also to form a positive image of Uzbekistan in the international information arena.

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