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## **THE ISSUES OF INFORMATION TRUSTWORTHINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The article analyzes the changes observed in the modern media environment, their specific features, achievements and shortcuts, and especially, during the pandemic. It discusses the role of mass media in an ongoing emergency around the world. In the modern information society, any socially important processes that also affect the safety and health of citizens are accompanied by a flow of false information. The more participants in the process and the more complex the subject area, the wider the space for manipulation and dissemination of disinformation. Such misinformation can be more dangerous than the phenomenon that generated the threat.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Pandemic, Mass media, Fakes, Fact-checking, Social media.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the modern information society, any socially important processes that also affect the safety and health of citizens are accompanied by a flow of false information. The more participants in the process and the more complex the subject area, the wider the space for manipulation and dissemination of disinformation. Such misinformation can be more dangerous than the phenomenon that generated the threat.

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**MAIN PART**

The global emergency in 2020 changed the way people react to information. First of all, the global news space was quickly occupied by "pandemic" content. In the analysis provided by Facebook Analytics alone, we can clearly see that these percentages have risen by 50% in one week<sup>1</sup>. It has become difficult to find non-pandemic news on websites, social networks, and print media. However, it is safe to say that the pandemic has somewhat changed the values of information in Uzbekistan:

1. First of all, the process of mediation in society is significantly advanced. Since the announcement of the pandemic, the number of Internet and social network users has grown steadily. The telegram channels of well-known news sites were able to gather an audience in just two months that they had not been able to gather for years. The audience's need for information has simply shifted from a "need" to a "civic duty." That is, each person has a responsibility to be aware of the latest changes, first to himself, then to his family, and then to society. This has led to the formation of a serious attitude of citizens to the exchange of information in society.
2. The Uzbek authorities are beginning to realize the importance of fair and uninterrupted transmission of information in an emergency, and how to actually work with information. The purpose of accelerating communication with the public, the uninterrupted delivery of information has naturally improved the work of press services. That is, officials who once viewed disclosure as a "headache" have now realized that it is beneficial and responsible, and have taken responsibility. (For example, the Namangan governor's revelation about a woman buried without any relatives did not provoke public outcry, but served as a good incentive to stay at home. 'resonated with Uzbekistan.)
3. The state of emergency has drawn a clear line between professional journalism and blogging: Journalism has bravely taken on its social responsibility and risked its life to "take to the streets", informing the audience as much as possible about developments, explained, propagated, warned, taught. Live broadcasts (all news programs, "International Press Club", "Relationships", etc.) did not stop, they were engaged in informing the population, propaganda of safety from Covid-19. Television, of course, technically can't create content with 3-4 people, and it took a lot of heroism from the anchors to the lighting masters. The content on the sites has not been interrupted, the print media has not stopped, and some of them have been revived.

Blogging, on the other hand, was mainly about promoting official statements

relied solely on citizen journalism. The bots shared (mostly video) material coming from different people. The role of professional journalism has become even more prominent: telegram channels with an audience of 20-50 thousand people and more provided the information without facts, without checking them, in the pursuit of sensations, disseminated misinformation, misrepresented. At the same time, journalism served as a filter for information.

In short, journalism and the media have benefited from this situation. The media literacy of the population has also increased, partly infoetics has been formed, pragmatism, skepticism about any information has increased, and this process is still going on.

However, all this is due to the growth of organized lies or incompetences, misinformation, manipulation, fakes, propaganda, artificial hype in Uzbekistan, as observed in the global media.

The fight against the infiltration of the Internet, which is based on clickbytes, also requires serious attention from the state.

A small example is the Kazakhstani website [www.tengrinews.kz](http://www.tengrinews.kz), where Central Asian news outlets, particularly Uzbek online publications, often refer for translation, say, "A new deadly threat. For the first time in China, deaths due to xantavirus have been reported" (the title was later changed)<sup>2</sup>, the news was also spread on the most visited information sites in Uzbekistan<sup>3</sup>, and the news was sent 473 thousand times in a single telegram channel. seen. Xantavirus has been known to science for 70 years, and there is even a vaccine against it, and although the deaths have not occurred for the first time in human history, the editor publishes an article under that headline. The choice of words and the way of conveying the facts in such a mysterious disease message have influenced the feelings of the audience, which has already become sensitive to the information on the background of the coronavirus pandemic, causing discussions on social networks and messengers. First of all, it aroused strong protests against the Chinese people and culture, not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Central Asia, and secondly, it caused inappropriate panic. There are many such examples.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Public consciousness is a product of conscious understanding by people of the the same social conditions, their social life and assimilation and conception of information and knowledge obtained from the media information and social, political communication. It is proved that in modern society, with the active influence of the mass media on the development of the humanitarian component of the information society, the rapid formation of the information sphere, a new type of social relations is being formed - information and a specific type of public consciousness "informational" that is adequate to them. Its formation is accompanied by the processes of transformation, deformation, modernization of the structure of public consciousness, the emergence of new dominant levels<sup>4</sup>.

"Misinformation costs lives. Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, immunization campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive", said in a statement issued on pandemic that was discussed by the participants in the meeting, which was attended by representatives of various UN agencies and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. They urged states, civil society, the media and other "players" to stop the dissemination of false information.<sup>5</sup>

"As soon as the virus spread across the globe, inaccurate and even dangerous messages proliferated wildly over social media, leaving people confused, misled and ill-advised"<sup>6</sup>, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a video message to the meeting participants, and the head of WHO Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus said that "erroneous or deliberately distorted information threatens the health and lives of people and undermines the credibility of science, government institutions and health authorities."

They also recalled that the UN launched the "Verified" campaign aimed at opposing rumors and disinformation with scientifically substantiated facts and verified and reliable information, which he called "an antidote to" infodemic". This step really show the very need to the fact-checking

strategies, as this problem is becoming more acute as the world moves closer to the development of a vaccine for COVID-19.

As it is clear from all these, for journalists, the most attractive in rumors is the relevance, which presupposes a keen interest of the audience to this topic, relative anonymity or lack of verification of information, which deontologically predetermine the professional intervention of a journalist, visual verification of events. In addition, working with rumors is an effective way to accentuate content, attract attention, and establish contact with the audience. E. V. Osetrova attributes the following to the media functions of rumors: “sensationalism allows satisfying the informational interest of the audience; relevance leads to the satisfaction of information needs; lack of verification of information makes it necessary to assess its reliability; anonymity allows the editorial board to relieve itself of responsibility for the disseminated information and to disguise its source”<sup>7</sup>.

Civil journalism is an event closely linked to the news community. Today's democracies of the world, which have reached the level of development based on a post-industrial society, are currently aiming to build an information society and create global information infrastructure in this area. Information technology, in particular, digital technologies and Internet technologies, is a decisive factor in this. Naturally, this society has its own political, economic, social and cultural problems. Issues of international media regulation and national information security, free flow of information, its priorities and contradictions, which are specific to our topic, are on the agenda. These peculiarities are characterized by the economic, political and other conditions and opportunities of the state society.

The people who make the most noise on the air today and bombard the Internet with false claims about Covid-19 (offering fake treatments, downplaying the effects of the disease, and ignoring those most affected by the virus) are reminiscent of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. This epidemic taught us a lesson: disinformation is lethal. But it also showed us how strong the medical and scientific community can be when it stands as a united front and demands attention and action to overcome a crisis.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, if in peacetime the ethics of journalism and the neglect of social responsibility have not led to much negative consequences, human life in emergencies will literally depend on the information being disseminated. There are two ways to prevent such a serious threat: to keep the information process under constant control, and to increase public media literacy.

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