

THE ROLE OF DATA JOURNALISM IN CENTRAL ASIAN MEDIA COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

Data journalism is a new field that has been developing in Central Asian media countries for the past few years. This article stresses the role and use of data journalism in the media of Central Asia countries. Also, the best data materials published in the media of each country are analyzed.

Keywords: Data, infographics, fact, statistics, diagram, illustration.

Introduction

Today, the role of data journalism in the international media is very high. Because in the era of globalization, as the source of information increases, people's need for short and accurate information is also increasing. Recently, data journalism has become popular in the mass media of Central Asian countries. Several organizations have organized projects on data journalism in order to develop and popularize it in the media.

Although this direction has already become popular in Western journalism, it has been used recently in Central Asia. The reason for this is the lack of sources of information. However, in 2015, three countries in our region - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - were ranked in the Global Open Data Index. In the list of 122 other countries, Kyrgyzstan showed the best result and took 34th place, Kazakhstan - 50th and Tajikistan - 83rd places. Uzbekistan has never been included in this ranking, but one day ago in Tashkent they announced that they will definitely reach it in 2020. [1]

Currently, several projects are being implemented in Central Asia for the development of data journalism. For example, Cabar. Asia course and educational seminars were organized by the international organization "Internews", which improves the qualifications of journalists and supports electronic media. In these projects, various students are learning about data journalism and applying it in practice. If we talk about the role of data journalism in the media of each country, we can start with Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan not only showing great results in preparation of interesting data materials, but also in training data journalists. Currently, several data journalists are working in the country to popularize this direction.

For example, Altinay Mambetova, Savia Khasanova and Cholpon Uzakbaeva. These are currently contributing to the development of data journalism not only for Kyrgyz journalists, but also in the media of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.



Altinay Mambetova is the founder of the public fund "Data School" in Kyrgyzstan, which promotes data science knowledge in the region. She is a data journalist, mentor and author of courses on data journalism and gender data communication. It promotes data-driven initiatives in the Central Asian region.

She is also the initiator of a service based on COVID-19 data for researchers, journalists and policymakers (opendatacovid.kg). She collected open databases on COVID-19, prepared 15+ publications on pandemic statistics, 10+ research papers on pandemic impact. She was a mentor in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan on journalism and open information. [2] She has also been a mentor at the "Data school" which is organized annually by the Center for the Development of Modern Journalism in Uzbekistan. According to her, her interest in this field started from reading articles in the genre of data journalism published in American and British publications. "It was journalistic research based on data. The work was inspiring: I had not seen anything like this in Kyrgyzstan. No one had done it. I began to study more deeply, and then I invited mentors to organize trainings for journalists in Kyrgyzstan." - says the journalist. [3]

At the same time, Savia Khasanova is one of the strong data journalists. For example, her "I would have killed him anyway" was prepared together with Anna Kapushenko. If we analyze Klop's material which is called "the study on the death of women in Kyrgyzstan" [4]. The creation of this article was a great innovation in Kyrgyz journalism. Because this article won the International Sigma Award for data journalists in 2021. At first, one of the main things that will catch the eyes of readers in the article are illustrations. In it, the designer gave brief information about the events through illustrations. Preparation of data material takes a long time and requires a lot of work.

In addition to the two data journalists mentioned above, five more Alina Pechenkina, Edil Bayizbekov, Almir Almambetov, Kairat Zamirbekov and Aziza Raimberdieva participated in the creation of this material. It means seven journalists conducted research on this topic for more than half a year.

In the material, they initially tried to explain the feminist topic. For that, they read different published scientific research on this topic in Georgia, Spain, and Latin America, and presented general concepts. They collected data of crime from mass media of Kyrgyzstan. Their number has exceeded 54,000. Then they filtered the number of messages and reduced them to 3000 messages. At the next stage, out of 3,000 messages, 300 messages related to crimes related to women were deleted. By putting the collected messages into Excel or Google Sheet, the time and place of each crime, the type of crime and its sources were divided. According to official sources, 8 out of 10 women who die in Kyrgyzstan die at the hands of men.

Also, in the article, cases of violence against women were given as examples of several women's marriages. At the end of September 2019, 51-year-old Adil killed his wife Ayzada with an ax while she was sleeping. Two months before the murder, Adil bought the ax for 400 sum and hid it in the barn. According to Adil, he killed his wife because she "disturbed him while she was watching TV", he said at the court session. Similar examples can be found in several places in the article.



She also made a number of diagrams in the material based on official sources. Their colors are also well chosen for the theme. Another good thing is that the colors of the illustrations and diagrams in the article that are very close to each other. Also, there is used Bar chart, Line chart and Column chart methods without using the same type of diagram. In general, it can be seen that journalists worked a lot on this data material. The reason for this is that such information can only be known by investigating. Because such information is not openly presented. Also, analysis of Kloop.kg data: Journalists are constantly beaten, harassed and tried in Kyrgyzstan. [5]

Let's look at the article with the title. The material talks about the harassment and violence against journalists, and then the materials of five years are analyzed. But not everything is included in the statistics of law enforcement agencies. Kloop's data unit collected news reports of attacks, threats, pressure and obstruction of journalists and found at least 75 such incidents. In addition, it is written that according to the information of the Kyrgyz Prosecutor's Office, 42 cases of illegal actions against journalists were recorded for five and a half years - from January 2015 to July 2021. By 2021, only five of them had reached the court, and 28 cases were closed mainly because the investigation did not find any criminal elements. [6]

The material tries to provide detailed information about these cases. When using diagrams, he used Column chat and Bar chart methods. In Kyrgyz media, there are too many articles to show as an example of data journalism. But we have presented you with the best ones. In general, the development of data journalism in Kyrgyzstan is the cause of development in the media of other countries.

Data journalism is one of the fields that are gaining popularity in the media of Kazakhstan. Its development dates back to the beginning of the 21st century. There are several resources for working as a data journalist in the Republic. For example, the website of the responsible official of the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of State Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the state portal "Open Data". But this site can only be accessed with an API key. In 2017, the state program "Digital Kazakhstan" was launched in the country. Since 2013, data.egov has had data from the kz system, which contains information collected from the country's official bodies. Later, this "eGov" works as a part of the open government component. Nationalbank.kz, National Bank, kgd.gov.kz Open data of the Ministry of Finance can be obtained from the websites of the State Revenue Committee, qamqor.gov.kz and the Legal Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan. [7,113]

Currently, data materials are becoming popular in the internet journalism of most state media, but they are also published in print publications in Kazakh journalism. Although this field is developing in internet journalism due to the recent development of this field, it is also used in print publications in Kazakh media in newspapers such as "EgemenKazakhstan", "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda", "JasAlash", "AnaTili".

Today, the use of Internet websites is popular. Factcheck.kz is one of the most important sources of information journalism in Kazakhstan. Almost every material published on this site contains projects created in the genre of data journalism. Officials in Central Asia love to spin



incredible numbers that can be verified within hours without leaving the newsroom. That's what Kazakh fact-checkers do. [8] It is actively used on the sites "Bnews.kz", "Tengrinews.kz".

Currently, we can share materials on this topic on Zakon.kz, Nur.kz, and Informburo.kz sites. In the television sphere, it is used in the programs of "Atameken business", which is considered the only business channel of Kazakhstan. The channel specializes in education, science, economics, business and finance. The channel mainly provides banking industry news with infographics. Internet media - 39%, TV channels - 33%, news agencies - 23%, press - 5% use infographics among mass media of Kazakhstan. [9]

Currently, several actions are being carried out to develop data journalism in the Kazakh media. For example, a free online course was organized on "Data Journalism" at the corporate fund "Media Development Fund". In this course, students will be taught everything from data collection to visualization.

Al-Farabi Kazakh State University has a faculty of data journalism in the master's degree. An analysis center named "Talap" has also been established. It is an independent and non-profit research center established to support the sustainable development of Kazakhstan.

Currently, we can mention several data journalists who are prominent in the preparation of data materials. One of them is Jamila Maricheva. She is the founder of the PROTENGE project. She also received the US State Department's 2021 Anti-Corruption Champion Award. - Working with documents in Kazakhstan is very pleasant. Most of our numbers and data are in the public domain. The only thing is that, unfortunately, we do not have a universal declaration law like in Russia. But everything else is there! There are many great databases, they are like Everest, - she says.

She started covering data journalistic articles not only in Internet publications, but also on Instagram.

Data journalism is gaining its popularity step by step in the Uzbek mass media. Currently, there are several Internet publications that prepare data materials and information in the form of infographics.

"Gazeta.uz" is one of the largest information portals in Uzbekistan. It publishes many data materials about interesting topics for the Republic. The news on the site begins to present interactive graphics, tables, and charts that help students better understand complex topics. "Podrobno.uz" - This information resource also widely uses elements of data journalism in presenting news. They analyze data and create visualizations on various topics such as economy, politics, social problems, etc.

Anhor.uz - one of the top publications in preparation data materials on various topics in the republic. Mainly, data materials that have not been published in any mass media are prepared and published. Currently, there are journalists who are working as data journalists on the site. You can also find similar materials in Kun.uz, Repost.uz, and Daryo.uz websites. Xabar.uz site has a individual infographic section in where news which is related to Uzbekistan is published. In the field of television, it can be seen in the "Analysis" program of Uzbekiston24 TV channel. "Data School" seminar is organized by "Development of Modern Journalism" center to popularize data journalism in Uzbek media. In it, journalists learn how to collect,



analyze and visualize data. In the republic, information can be mainly obtained from the Statistical Agency under the President and the Open Data Portal. There are several journalists who are prominent in the preparation of data materials in the republic. One of them is Nodirbek Norturaev. He worked as a data journalist in such publications like Bugun.uz, Gazeta.uz, Daryo.uz, Respost.uz. Now he runs his personal "Gazna" telegram channel. It mainly conducts inquiries about public procurement.

Data journalism is not very well developed in the mass media of Karakalpakstan. There are very few journalists who prepare material in this field.

First, infographics about Karakalpakstan were published in several internet websides in the Republic. For example, in 2022, infographics were regularly published in the Internet publication Kruz.uz. Diagrams based on statistical data were also prepared in Makan.uz internet website. The information was obtained from the materials inspection of the State Services Agency of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

Previously, data journalistic materials in the Republic were mainly published on the Karinform website. He used a lot of infographics to give information. "Historical statistical analysis of names given to children born in Karakalpakstan in the last 30 years"[10] published on Karinform's website.

If we analyze the data material with the title. In preparing this article, the journalist studied and processed 1,206,603 articles. The information was prepared based on the materials of the State Services Agency of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. In it, the journalist first collects statistical data on the most common names given to boys and girls born in 1991-2020 and creates a TOP-10 of them. In order to clearly explain them, he prepares an infographic in the form of a video.

After that, the names of children born in the month of Ramadan will be announced in the form of an infographic. At the end of the article, information about children named after the heads of state is presented. Also, several data materials are prepared on Kar24.uz website. For example, Until this time at the article with the title "Karakalpak language" searched 3111 times on Google.[11] This material was prepared by Google Trends. In the article, it was known that the word "Karakalpak Language" was searched 3111 times around the world through the Google searching system between 2011 and 2021. Including, 2011 was searched 104 times, and 543 times in 2021. That's why, in the period from 2011 to 2021, it was known that the word "Karakalpak language" was searched 3111 times worldwide through the Google searching system. Including, it was searched 104 times in 2011, and 543 times in 2021. Also, sometimes information in the form of infographics can be found in the news program of Karakalpakstan television. Also, in recent years, we can also find data journalistic materials in the media of Tajikistan. They are also working to develop this area in their media. For example, last year, the editorial office of "Asia-Plus" added its own information department.

"Asia-Plus" is a news agency of Tajikistan and mass media of the same name: an online edition, a printed newspaper and a radio station belonging to the "Asia-Plus" company. It employs several people who hope to develop this format in Tajikistan. Also, with the support of Internews, in January 2023, a two-stage "Data Storytelling School" was launched, in which 15



journalists from local publications will participate. Media professionals themselves are skeptical of the development of data journalism. The fact is that it is difficult to get information in the republic - state agencies hardly share information with society. Currently, Bakhmaniyor Nodirov is the head of the new department in the editorial office of "Aziya-Plus". He has been interested in data journalism for a long time. However, he noted that he could not always work in this format because he could not get the necessary information. There are very few journalists who work with large numbers - big data - in Tajikistan today. And there are almost no researchers who helped journalists collect and process this information. In addition to the lack of information in Tajikistan, journalists have another problem - lack of experience.[12]

- he emphasizes. Of course, the largest owner of the data is the state, the authorities should place the data as public domain on the websites of statistical bodies or portals. For example, the largest national open database in Tajikistan is the stat.tj website of the Statistical Agency under the President of Tajikistan, - says data journalist Altinay Mambetova. [13]

During the research, Tajikistan was published in the Internet publications "Dushanbe or Khojand: Where is the air more polluted?", "From ore and gold to electricity and cotton. TOP-10 products exported by Tajikistan", "Tajikistan is in the last place. I managed to find data materials such as "Comparison of Internet prices and speeds in Central Asian countries", "Calculator: how many years will it take to maintain an apartment in Dushanbe".

"Tajikistan was among the five countries with the most polluted air in 2021" published on the "Your.tj" portal. [14]

They mainly presented the report on global air quality for 2021 by the Swiss company IQAir. Accordingly, the material was prepared and information was collected. When you read the article, you see that most of it consists only of information.

But they only used the infographics provided by IQAir when using the charts. Also, the worse the economy, the more grants. Why did the government of Tajikistan start receiving more aid, and non-governmental organizations less?[15]

If we analyze the article with the title. International financial institutions began to allocate more grants to the government of Tajikistan. At the same time, in the last seven years, financing of non-governmental organizations of Tajikistan has decreased 17 times. We collected data on grants and analyzed what has changed and why increasing donor support is a bad sign for the government.

In addition, diagrams were prepared with titles such as the government of Tajikistan received a record amount of grants in 2020, non-governmental organizations in Tajikistan receive fewer grants every year, non-governmental non-profit organizations in Tajikistan received 1.5 times more grants from the government in 2013.

In general, the role of data journalism in the media of Central Asia is very high. In this article, we have covered the data of journalism in each country.

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