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Social media in the professional work of Polish, Russian and Swedish journalists

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Abstract

Professional journalistic culture is a complex mix of journalistic values, practices, norms and media products. On the one hand it tends to be unified across the globe, but on the other hand it varies according to cultural diversities. Technological development leads to a media convergence, which increases interactivity and offers many opportunities for individualisation of media content. This, in turn, influences the demands of the audience and challenges the traditional routines of journalists' work – as well as affecting professional practices and even undermining the traditional role of a journalist in society.

Nowadays the audience is more interested in participating in, rather than just consuming, media content. Social media creates new conditions for both actors: readers/viewers/listeners and for media professionals who use it as a tool for media work. Journalists in the different countries, however, do not use social media for professional purposes equally. This paper discusses differences and similarities in the patterns of social media use by Polish, Russian and Swedish journalists. The research is based on a survey of 500 journalists in each country.

Key words: professional journalistic culture, social media platforms, user generated content, media, gatekeeping, participatory culture.

This article is the product of research conducted within the project “Journalism in Change: Professional Journalistic Cultures in Poland, Russia and Sweden (2011-2013)” <http://www.journalismchange.com/>.

Introduction

The important point of departure in this case study is the concept of professional journalistic culture also known as news culture, newspaper culture or the culture of news production. The term journalistic culture usually includes the cultural diversity of journalistic values, practices and media products.

One can generally speak of culture as a set of ideas (values, attitudes, and beliefs), practices (of cultural production), and artefacts (cultural products, texts). Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their

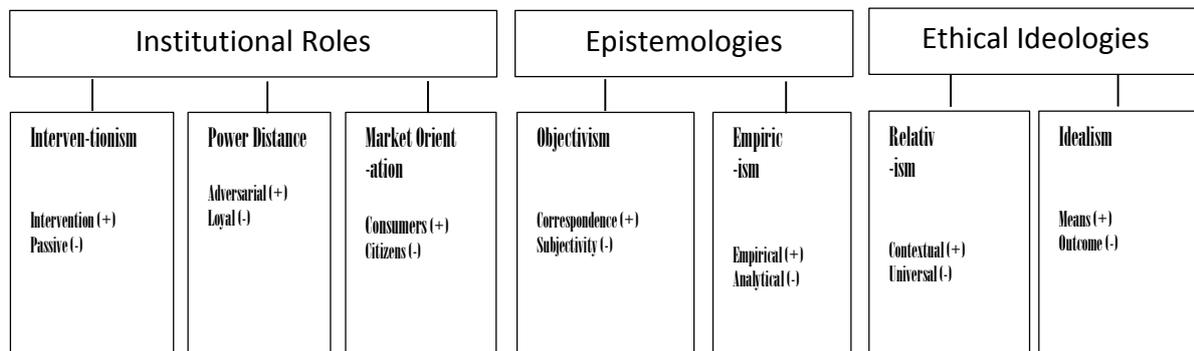
work meaningful for themselves and others.

Hanitzsch, 2007

On the one hand, similarities of journalistic work in the globalised world can make journalistic practices, ideas and values similar across the globe. On the other hand some substantial differences between national journalistic cultures always persist. Hanitzsch (2007) proposes a conceptualisation model of journalism culture that consists of three basic elements: institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies (Figure 1) and totally divided into seven principal dimensions: interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empiricism, relativism, and idealism.

Figure 1

The constituents and principal dimensions of journalism culture



Source: Hanitzsch (2007)

Hanitzsch et al (2011) develop this approach by cross-national research in 18 countries. According to their conclusions several similar and different patterns across journalistic cultures emerged from comparative study. The similarities in the shared values and beliefs tell us about a universal professional journalistic identity. However, some aspects much less universally supported by the journalist can highlight the existence of different patterns in the journalistic cultures which are not classifiable along cultural and political dimensions. The main clusters of countries in this research can be referred to as “western journalism cultures”, “peripheral western” similar to the first one and a third group of developing countries, transitional democracies which tend to be rather non-democratic.

Journalistic cultures look to be more alike when observed in a cultural context than shown by previous research. There are still differences between westernised democratic countries and more totalitarian systems but more often than not it is enough to compare countries in the same systems to find these differences.

Technological changes in the media and communication sphere, caused by digitalisation, affected media in all countries in one form or another. Liberalisation and deregulation in the media sector finally led to the reconfiguration of media markets. Since the 1980s media has become an industry - more exactly a global industry; new market rules challenged media companies and drastically changed media professionals’ working routines. Being faced by a declining interest toward traditional media and the flourishing of new media, journalists were constrained to accommodate the new reality.

Journalistic professions became much affected by media convergence, defined as a multilateral process and characterised by implementation of digital communication

technologies and also by the affect on technological, business organisation, editorial and professional aspects of the media. Media convergence stimulated the integration of previously separated tools, working methods and languages that enable journalists to effectively produce content that fits different distributive platforms (Infotendencias Group, 2012).

As a result of media convergence the traditional logic of daily media production has lost ground, while the merging of editorial teams, multi-skilling and multi-publishing - resulting in less time and pressed deadlines - become features of modern media work. Professional convergence tends not only to focus on the changes in the traditional organisational structures of media companies and new requirements of content production and distribution, but also on professional practices and norms. The latter are also significantly influenced by new audience demands, an audience that now has extensive opportunities for interactivity and personification (customisation) of media content.

Changed professional journalistic culture

Since the middle of the first decade of the 21st century the traditional or “old” and “new” or online media have faced a competitor: social media, often defined as “a big group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Blogs and social networking platforms have penetrated into media work and are now a helpful and even irreplaceable tool in the production of journalism, both on an organisational level (media outlets represented in social media) and the level of the individual journalists.

Media institutions and news organisations use social media first of all to extend and enhance their reporting, distribution of content, building brand loyalty and so on (Hermida, 2012). The degree of incorporation of social media into editorial policies however can vary between media institutions depending on the *convergent media model*.

García-Avilés et al. (2013) identify three *convergent media models*, based on five essential areas: market situation; newsroom organisation, workflows and content; change management; skills and training and finally audience participation in decreasing order: the *Full integration model*, the *Cross-media model* and the *Coordination model*. Audience participation becomes one of the key strategic questions in the analysis of all the models. The authors examine through one lens: the use of social media platforms for professional purposes.

The authors assert that more convergent media organisations hold a stronger and more organised strategy toward the use of social media by their staff. They develop guidelines for the handling of social media in the newsrooms; encourage individual journalists to use social media in a professional context to spread his/her stories and discussions among the audience and so on. On the contrary, in the less integrated (convergent) media organisations, journalists are not encouraged to use social media and usually do it on an individual basis.

Individual journalists can use social media with different intensity. Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) identify three groups of journalists that use social media: “the sceptical shunners” who avoid having anything to do with social media, “the pragmatic conformists” - who regularly use social media, being forced by industry trends and professional requirements but who are selective and judicious in their usage and “the enthusiastic activists” usually younger journalists who lead a life online, being almost permanently connected, tweeting or blogging regularly.

The ways of using social media and online social networking platforms for professional

journalistic needs can be different. First of all it might be everything that is linked with information: searching (e.g. new topics), gathering and propagating news, checking facts (Pew Research Center 2011), conveying stories – as “a reporting tool” (Reed, 2011). Secondly social media is an important means of communication: for feedback and dialogue with readers/viewers and sources, (Hermida, 2010) for professional discussions with colleagues and so on. Some journalists use social media and especially their individual blogs as a compensatory means for overcoming editorial restrictions like format of the media or editorial policy which can be a display of censorship/self-censorship (Johansson, 2013).

Having a connective and collaborative nature, social media make a strong impact on the evolution of new practices of journalism. They affect professional journalistic culture, first of all in terms of the professional role and actual functions of journalism in society. Traditionally journalists were in some way chosen gatekeepers with a clear mission of acting as “a fourth estate” but also as leading observers and reporters of society as a whole (Singer, 2010; Lewis, 2012). Their job has been to “gather, filter, edit and publish the news” (Hermida 2011). Today everyone with a computer has the same possibilities as the journalist and the way of retaining control demands some sort of cooperation with the participating audience.

Traditional media in the old model of interaction had a top down monopoly on what information got spread to the public. Today’s model presupposes that social media platforms gather people and allow them to promote their opinions and updates of what is going on in their world even without professional journalists (Sveningsson, 2013). Participatory journalism as a way of collaboration and interaction arises from the phenomenon of *participatory culture*. Jenkins (2006) describes a *participatory culture* as an effect of a converged media system where the public have gone from consumers of media content to contributors and producers, as the technological possibilities for this have emerged:

The term, participatory culture, contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understand.

(Jenkins, 2006)

Extending his definition, Jenkins et al (2009) assert that the development of new media technologies enables ordinary people “to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways”.

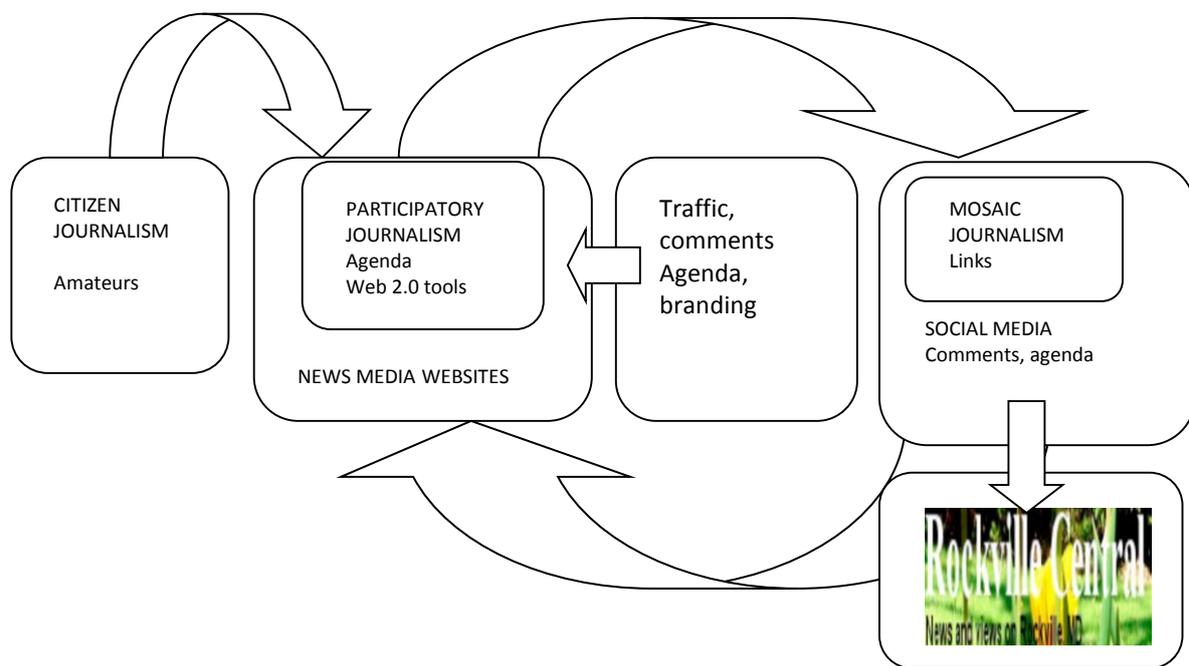
As regards changes in old journalistic practices – from the days when producing media content was mostly a one-way process, controlled by an editorial board – there are now two major approaches toward the *participatory culture* phenomenon currently in existence. Hermida (2011) identifies two groups of modern journalists: the defenders of traditional journalistic methods and the “Web 2.0 evangelists”. The first group tends to be reserved for user participation and less interested in letting the audience be a part of the journalistic process. The second group is more positive, willing to let the user generated content complement the professional content. There are a lot of factors why a journalist falls into either of these categories, but age, way of publication and different national cultures are some of the key factors.

Along with a *participatory culture* comes an enormous amount of content from these participatory agents (users of social media, first of all Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Wikipedia etc.); this content is largely defined as *user generated content*, or *UGC* (Singer and Ashman 2009). *UGC* has helped establish the term *citizen journalism*. How to deal with this content and with the users who create this is one of the biggest questions the journalist online today has to deal with, regarding its own profession.

The users producing content that could have journalistic value, or is read as traditional journalistic material, become *citizen* journalists when they are being read by their own unique audience (readers of their blog or Twitter followers etc.) or when their content gets picked up by professional journalists for example (Allan and Thorsen 2009).

Due to the digital technologies and media convergence, audience interaction becomes embedded and even interwoven with the traditional media content and the role of social media cannot be overestimated. García de Torres et al (2011) suggest the following scheme of modern relationships between journalists and audience/citizens, which they call “symbiotic” (Figure 2):

Figure 2
New model of interaction between journalists and citizens



Source: García de Torres et al (2011)

Thus, being challenged by the effects of *participatory culture* journalists find themselves at a crossroads, puzzled how to invite the audience into the process of media content production without losing control (Lewis, 2012). In the social media era they try to keep their gatekeeping role but more resources are put into the filtering part of the process. Journalists are becoming managers of conversations, highlighting what is seen as good information instead of trying to edit out what is seen as bad (Hermida, 2010).

Singer (2005) in her analysis on journalists’ blogging found that most journalists kept their gate keeping role not inviting the audience to any larger extent than they had in an offline media culture, maintaining the traditional work process, and that the linking made in the blogs mainly led the reader back to the j-bloggers’ (journalists that write blogs) original news site, also a way of “normalising” behaviour, going from one medium to the other, not really changing the work process or audience interaction.

Lasorsa et al (2011) did the first big data analysis on journalists’ use of Twitter. They found that journalists tended to move over quite easily to this, at the time, new platform “normalising” it to fit the traditional norms and practices of journalism, just like Singer (2005)

did looking at journalists' blogging back in 2005. In other words, nothing really shifted in the journalists' work process, only where the actual work took place. They also found that the journalists in their sample adapted to the medium and its norms and practices, such as being more frequent in expressing opinions (Lasorsa et al., 2011) but not to the extent that one could talk of a completely new behaviour.

Research questions

From this background this article will show, and discuss, the implementation of social media in the work process in three different countries (media systems) regarding these research questions:

RQ1: To what purposes do Polish, Russian and Swedish journalists incorporate social media in the work process?

RQ2: How are differences in professional journalistic cultures affecting the use of social media in the work process?

RQ3: What similarities or differences are there in attitudes towards social media and audience interaction between the three countries?

These answers will give valid ground for a discussion of why this might be and what this might say about professional ideals in the three different countries.

Sampling and methodology

This article focuses on the use of social media platforms by journalists in the work process in three countries - Poland, Russia and Sweden. The data is collected from the research project "Journalism in change - professional journalistic cultures in Poland, Russia and Sweden"¹.

The countries selected build on what Hanitzsch et al. (2011) found on differences and similarities between journalistic cultures. In this project a sample of 18 countries were analysed and one of the conclusions was that traditional cultural and political distinctions did not suffice in making any clear definitions on particular systems. What the authors could see was that the countries clustered together under three different headings, namely the: "broadly understood 'western journalism culture'", the "peripheral western" journalism cultures and a group consisting of developing countries and transitional democracies.

Sweden could be found in the first group with strong democratic traditions and clear western journalistic values, Poland in the second as a country similar to but not quite as clear in its values and democratic system as the western group and finally Russia in the third group as a transitional democracy with, for example, limited freedom of the press. A more detailed description is presented in Table 1.

¹Project official website: <http://www.journalisminchange.com/>

Table 1

Description of media systems and journalism in Poland, Russia and Sweden

Country/ Cluster	Poland Western periphery	Russia Developing/non-democratic	Sweden Western
Heritage	Literature-centric roots, Soviet past: the freest journalism in the Soviet bloc, commercialised and liberal broadcast media (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012).	A long historical tradition of journalism as service to the state (Trakhtenberg, 2007). Strong links with literature (Mirsky, 1999). Soviet past: journalists as propagandists (Pasti, 2005) and “missioners” (Roudakova, 2009).	Freedom of information has been in the Swedish constitution since 1766 (Hultén 2004). Ranks frequently at the top of the press freedom index ² . Has had a strong autonomous Public Service since the 1950’s (Hultén 2004)
Media model	Polish media model is placed near the middle of the axis that separates polarised pluralist and liberal models (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012).	Eurasian hybrid system or a Statist Commercial model: adopted elements from Western market economy are combined along with non-market goals defined by political elites (Vartanova, 2012).	Democratic corporatist model; strong development of mass media, political parallelism, professionalism of journalists, state intervention but with protection for press freedom (Hallin and Macini, 2004).
State of media	The attributes of modern Polish media system: strong commercialisation and tabloidisation, partial control of political elites (mainly public service media), no party press, but public media are controlled by politically-affiliated bodies (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2013a; 2011).	In the traditional paternal character of the media – state relationship the media still “...play the role of an innocent and obedient child” Vartanova (2012) 3 types of state supervision of media: direct control – state media property (TV), indirect control over state-owned companies and indirect control through pressure on the owners, often based on personal relationships between government officials and media owners (Kiriya and Degtereva, 2010).	The autonomous Public Service is challenged by the competition stemming from the effects of commercialisation and new media platforms (Nord and Grusell 2012). The newspaper market struggles with owner concentrations and smaller income from advertisements resulting in a higher dependence on subsidies from the state in order to survive (Wadbring 2012).

² Reporters without borders: <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013.1054.html>, 12/20/13

State of journalism	<p>“The economic account, profit and loss, became the most important for media owners instead of contacts with politicians...” (Dobek-Ostrowska, et al., 2013b); journalists are more market-oriented and economic pressure became the dominant factor. “The major part of respondents’ claims, that they are the most responsible before the audience, and their opinion is very important” (Glowacki, 2013). As the consequence of market-orientation, Polish journalists find audience opinion as a key in increasing economic indicators.</p>	<p>Lack of press freedom³ and double pressure: both political and commercial (Nygren and Degtereva, 2012) “...the most favourable attitude towards providing analysis...”; journalists perceive themselves more in a cooperative and supportive role in their relationship to the government and official policy (Hanitzsch et al 2011); revived function of journalism as a mission (Vartanova and Azhgikhina, 2011)</p>	<p>Journalist unions have lost members the last 10-15 years and there are tendencies to a de-professionalisation of journalism that could be traced to higher commercial pressure and audience demands (Nygren and Degtereva 2012).</p>
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The biggest part of the project circles around a survey conducted during the spring and summer of 2012⁴. The survey was distributed via mail and e-mail to journalists in the three countries with the goal of getting 500 answers from journalists within a similar sample and types of media in each country.

The similarities were based on the kind of medium used; its range and accessibility, such as: television, radio, newspapers, online media, local and national range. Each survey and each interview consisted of questions regarding interactivity and use of social media in their daily working routine. Surveyed journalists were divided into three age groups, corresponding to three generations of journalists. When the total number of 1,500 answers was achieved, the sample was regarded as filled.

There are significant distinctions between the generations of journalists. Pasti (2007) claims, that the journalistic profession is divided between two main generations: ‘Soviet generation’ and ‘Post-soviet generation’. They have got different perspectives on journalistic profession, different education and processes of socialisation. The Soviet-generation perceive the journalistic profession as “a natural collaboration with power” while the younger generation appears to be more market-oriented and treat their work as “a type of PR, working for the interests of influential groups and persons in politics and business”.

In terms of social media use in their daily routine, it’s necessary to distinguish three age groups since the social media phenomenon is relatively new. The respondents were split-up as follows: up to 35 years old (the youngest generation, born in the age of the dynamic technological development), 36-51 years old (transition generation, which may still remember soviet times) and from 51 years old up (Soviet generation). The partition of journalists in respect of their Soviet experience is obviously relevant only in Poland and Russia, although we may observe similar differences in social media use in Sweden as well. The process of adaptation to the new technological environment is universal in every country. The main goal of the project “Journalism in change - professional journalistic cultures in Poland, Russia and Sweden” is to observe and diagnose changes in the journalistic profession. Adapting to increased interactivity due to technological changes was one of them.

³ See http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page_16.

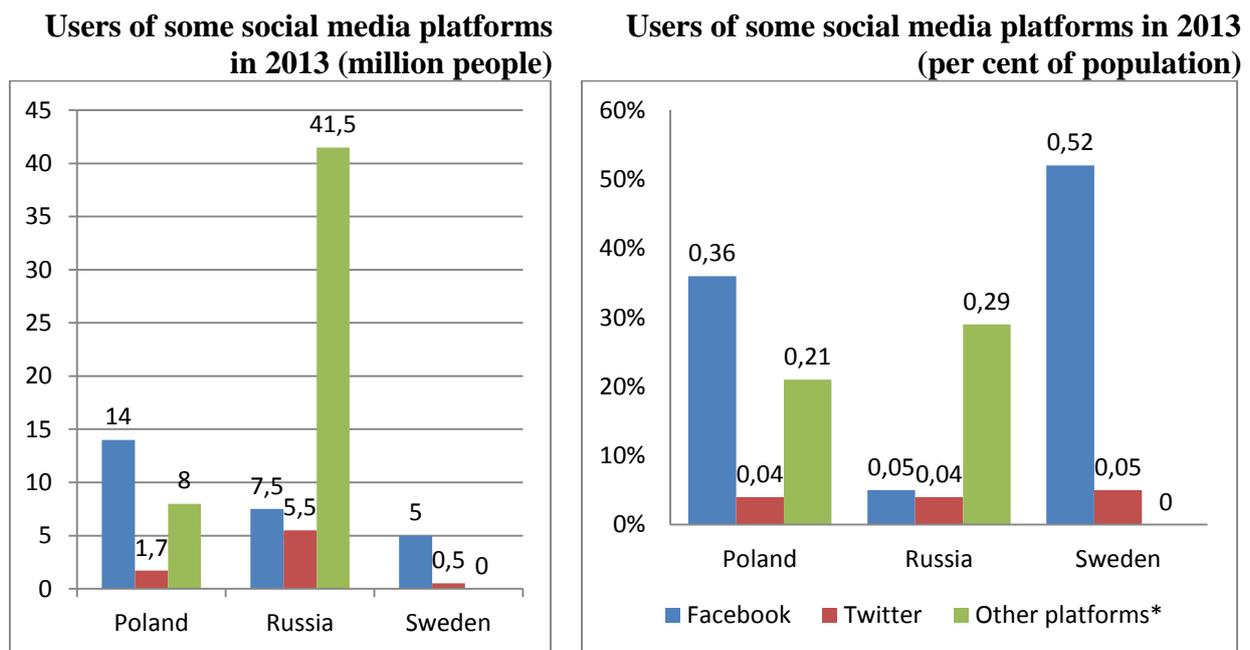
⁴ Survey: <http://www.journalisminchance.com/Files/content/Survey-2012.pdf>

Twitter and Facebook were selected for this case study because those services are considered as the main and the most important and often used platforms by e.g. journalists “because of their potential for conversation, attributed impact on news reporting ... and presence in all the markets being studied” (García de Torres et al., 2011). The importance of journalists’ blogging was also taken into account because of the specifics of the Russian public sphere which is split into the “official” and “alternative” (Gorny, 2007) or “main” and “parallel” (Kiriya, 2012).

Findings

Starting with an overview on the social media market, in Poland - with a population of about 38 million people - Facebook was much more popular than Twitter in the beginning of 2013. In the same year in Sweden- with a population of 9 million people - the popularity of Facebook was higher than Twitter (Figure 3). The population of Russia is 140 million people; the most popular social networking platform in Russia is the local-language VKontakte (vk.com).

Figure 3



* Other platforms: local-language nk.pl in Poland and vk.com in Russia

Sources:

1. <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/facebook-z-rekordem-i-przed-youtube-onet-wp%20-i-o2%20-w-dol> 2013-05-30
2. <http://antyweb.pl/dlaczego-gg-nk-i-polskie-portale-przegraly-z-facebookiem/> 2013-10-03
3. <http://www.digitalintheround.com/social-media-russia-facebook-vkontakte/> 2013-08-16
4. <http://www.tns-global.ru/rus/index.wbp> 05-2013
5. <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-overview-statistics/> 2013-05-23
6. <http://twittercensus.se/twittercensus2013/> / 2013-05-23

If we take into consideration the percentage of users in each country, the data shows that Sweden is the most active country on social media with more than 50 per cent of Facebook users. Poland is the second country, where Facebook popularity dominates among other social media services, with the result of 36 per cent. The Russian phenomenon of local social media services shall be broadly described later on.

Sweden does not have any popular Swedish-language social networking sites, while in Poland local-language social media are at the top. For example, profile-driven social networking site nk.pl is still among the most popular services in Poland. Founded in Poland by students from the University of Wroclaw, profile-driven social networking site nasza-klasa.pl (now nk.pl) has been, since its launch, the most visited Polish social media platform (Dobek-Ostrowska, et al., 2013).

In 2010 it was clearly visible that Facebook would need to overcome nk.pl, and it finally happened in late 2011. The biggest world-wide social networking service is constantly consolidating its leading position in Poland, but nk.pl is still at the top of the ranks. Another Polish-founded social network service is blip.pl, which is the “national answer” to Twitter. This Polish micro-blogging platform has got around 0.13 million real-users⁵ but the number is decreasing, leaving nk.pl as the only Polish social networking service which could be considered as successful.

Russia is quite similar to Poland in this case. However, Russian-language social networking services, such as vk.ru (45 million users) and odnoklassniki.ru (around 30 million users)⁶ have seized the market leaving behind Facebook and Twitter. Such high usage of local social media can be explained by strong cultural roots, the numerous features they offer or by the fact that they give their users the opportunity to share multimedia content without suffering any copyright violations⁷.

Hazeeva (2012) points out that the tendency of local-language social networking sites to flourish is usual for Post-Soviet (and some Islamic countries). Without any doubt local language platforms are the leaders of the Russian social media market with no equivalent in Poland or Sweden.

New and old ways of contacting the audience

We can see clear differences in intensity and the choice of channels through which audience contact is made – both between the three countries and between different age groups. Surveyed journalists still prefer traditional ways of contacting the audience: in all cases the leading tool is e-mail and telephone is the second best (Table 2). Websites of media outlets where people can leave comments and social media platforms are less popular ways of interaction.

Direct meetings are the most unpopular - with the exception of the Polish, middle-aged generation of journalists who still are positive towards meeting people. Swedish journalists

⁵ <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/gg-network-zamyka-blip-pl-jest-niszowy-wymaga-inwestycji-i-ma-silna-konkurencje> 2013-10-23

⁶ <http://www.digitalintheround.com/social-media-russia-facebook-vkontakte/> 2013-08-16

⁷ <http://www.ewdn.com/2012/02/22/vkontakte-ru-too-passive-with-copyright-infringement-says-arbitration-court/> 2013-09-20

appear to be the most uncommunicative in the entire sample. Generally they have a lower level of contact with the audience looking at all different methods.

When looking at generations - in all countries we can observe a downward trend when it comes to computer-mediated methods, such as social media and comments on the web. The older group prefers the telephone but even the younger group has more contact through telephone than through e-mail and social media.

To summarise the results, a majority of journalists in all three countries use social media to interact with the audience. Russia is in the slight lead, as a result of the large group of young journalists which is also more frequent users than the young journalists in the two other countries. Journalists of all ages use social media, but the usage is slightly higher among the younger generation - “the enthusiastic activists” (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre, 2013). The only group that is not using social media is the small group of older Russian journalists.

Table 2

How do you communicate with your readers/viewers/listeners? (Per cent in the countries using the form of communication each day or many times a day)

Country	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	-35	36-50	51+	-35	36-50	51+	-35	36-50	51+
Telephone	28	34	43	25	22	25	20	21	35
Total telephone users	33			24			26		
Direct meetings	16	15	13	12	11	14	7	5	11
Total meetings users	15			12			8		
E-Mail	31	42	49	34	31	25	27	26	38
Total e-mail users	39			32			31		
Comments on the web	21	28	20	25	21	8	12	7	4
Total web users	24			23			7		
Social media	28	30	21	30	22	22	17	13	8
Total social media users	28			27			12		
Number of answers	435-448			499-500			445-462		

Source: Project data <http://www.journalismchange.com/>

What social media platforms do the journalists prefer?

At first, the basic question for journalists was: do they use social media for professional purposes? In the case of Poland a positive answer was given by 68 per cent of the sample, in Russia 76 per cent and 67 per cent in Sweden. Further analysis also shows that there is no correlation between the type of media that you work in and the use of social media.

Facebook turned out to be absolute leader in terms of daily usage in all analysed countries (Table 3). Twitter is less popular, especially in Poland. If compared with data on the social media market in Poland, it seems quite coherent: a local-language competitor micro-blogging platform blip.pl is among the favourite social media platforms used in Poland.

Blogs are extremely popular among Russian journalists, especially for writing. Such a high popularity of blogging can be explained first of all by the specifics of the Russian public sphere, where Internet plays a role as a substitute (Gorny, 2004). According to conclusions of research from the Beckman Center, the core of public discourse in Russia exists in the blogosphere and, first of all, on the LiveJournal blog platform (Etling et al., 2010).

Secondly, Russian journalism is traditionally literature-centric (Mirsky, 1999; Vartanova, 2012), thus Russian journalists are used to writing long texts suitable for an online diary format. This is also why new genres, like writing on the media company blog, are also the most popular in Russia. According to the survey 18% of Russian journalists do so, in comparison to 8% of Polish and 9% of Swedish journalists.

If we take a closer look at using other kinds of communities in the journalistic work process, we may observe a domination of that factor in Poland and Russia. As is mentioned above, it can be explained by a high popularity of local-founded and local-language social networking services which are still highly popular in Poland and Russia.

No correlations are found between age and social media platforms. It is remarkable that the eldest generation of Russian journalists (51+) use Facebook and blogs more often than their younger colleagues in the middle age group. A similar difference, putting under question the statement of “more technologically advanced youth”, can be observed in Poland: the middle generation of Polish journalists uses Twitter more often than the youngest one.

Table 3
Frequency of social media use for professional work
(Per cent of the journalists using social media for professional purposes)

Country	Poland			Russia			Sweden		
	-35	36-50	51+	-35	36-50	51+	-35	36-50	51+
Read blogs daily	30	35	31	61	52	57	40	25	21
Total read blogs	33			59			29		
Write personal blog at least weekly	12	13	10	44	27	36	11	12	8
Total write blogs	12			40			11		
Use Facebook daily	84	62	60	75	61	72	75	61	46
Total use Facebook	72			72			61		
Use Twitter daily	18	26	5	35	17	7	45	35	17
Total use Twitter	19			30			33		
Use other kinds of communities	33	29	34	35	15	21	21	12	7
Total use other communities	32			30			14		
Number of answers	266-319			376-383			285-314		

Source: Project data <http://www.journalisminchange.com/>

For what purposes do the journalists use social media platforms?

Surveyed journalists use social media for professional purposes mostly of own free will. Only about one third of the respondents in Russia stated that an editor motivates them. For other countries this value is even lower.

The purpose of using social media in the journalistic workflow varies with social media platform and country where it is used. However, a certain general trend presents itself: the most important goals are to get ideas, to search information (including research and

investigation), to have a dialogue with the audience and to keep in contact with colleagues (Table 4). This is true for a majority of the journalists in the sample and for all the chosen social media services. None of the platforms are used to any significant extent to make money by advertisement or PR.

There are specifics in utilising Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Generally blogs and Facebook are more applicable for informational components of the professional work (searching of facts, investigation and so on). Facebook also adds a communicative component. This is an irreplaceable tool for keeping a dialogue with the audience and for keeping in contact with colleagues.

Blogs are also useful for journalistic investigation, mainly for Russian and Swedish journalists, who are using them mainly for that purpose. Facebook is undisputedly the leader as a platform used to maintain a dialogue with the audience and self-promotion. It also ties in with discussing the social and political questions in general – these discussions can be conducted on Facebook in the most convenient way.

When putting the countries together we can see that Russian journalists use every platform more frequently but especially to maintain different kinds of discussions: professional and socio-political. This is not surprising because of the previously mentioned Russian public sphere that is split into “main” and “parallel” (Kiriya, 2012) and social media plays a crucial role in the development of different forms of discourse.

Surveyed journalists show high results in publishing of content outside the regular work. Because Russian media are directly or indirectly under state supervision (Kiriya and Degtereva, 2010) it could be explained by the lack of press freedom that results in, among other things, the flourishing of censorship and self-censorship.

In comparison to Russian journalists, Swedes and Poles rarely perform any discussion on any social media platform. Swedish and Polish journalists are close to each other in patterns – blogs are mostly used to get ideas and for research as a part of the ordinary work process.

Table 4
Purpose of social media use (in per cent)
(Per cent of the users of each type of social media)

Media platform	Facebook			Twitter			Blogs		
	Pol	Rus	Swe	Pol	Rus	Swe	Pol	Rus	Swe
Purposes									
To get ideas	52	81	61	34	60	73	64	73	86
In research/investigation (to find information)	63	71	45	70	66	52	62	78	60
To have a dialogue with audience	68	76	56	28	53	55	15	41	18
To keep in contact with colleagues	84	82	83	22	48	54	5	33	12
To publish content besides my regular work	18	63	27	8	40	23	21	51	17
To get more readers/viewers, self-promotion	49	69	49	24	51	58	14	40	22
To strengthen the trademark of my media company	51	60	42	22	45	52	13	25	17
For professional discussions	46	64	36	32	32	50	23	37	14
For making money by advertisement or PR	11	21	2	1	14	0	9	15	1
To discuss social and political questions in general	41	68	37	28	40	36	20	40	16
Number of answers	309	367	292	99	248	202	189	344	242

Source: Project data <http://www.journalisminchange.com/>

Thus we can see clear patterns in using social media and these patterns are unique for each country.

Conclusions and discussion

The survey shows that a clear majority of journalists in all three countries use social media platforms for professional use, from 67 % in Sweden to 76 % in Russia. The most common platform in all three is Facebook, but there are also clear differences when it comes to other kinds of platforms:

- In Russia blogs are very important for journalists, both to read and to write themselves. About 40 % of all Russian journalists using social media are writing in a personal blog at least weekly.
- In Sweden and Russia, Twitter is used by one third of the journalists using social media. The figure in Poland is much lower; they instead use national based platforms.

This shows that practices of social media use are rather a nationally (and culturally)-determined matter than a result of a technological development. The use of blogs among Russian journalists fits very well into their literature-centric journalism with a strong emphasis on opinions. With strong political pressure and a decreasing level of press freedom, the blogosphere becomes an important public space for discussions and the publishing of journalistic content. This is not the case in Sweden and Poland, which do not have the same political pressure, where blogs instead play a minor role for journalists.

The age of the journalists plays some role in the frequency of using social media for professional work, but this role is not crucial. In some cases in Russia, the older generation is sometimes more active in using some social media platforms than the middle generation, 35-50 years old. The differences in ages are generally low in Poland and Russia, but much clearer in Sweden where the use of social media is much more common among young journalists. This also shows that the use of social media generally is more culturally determined, than by age.

The survey shows that the use of social media among journalists to a large extent is “normalised” into the old journalistic processes. Social media is used for getting ideas and to make research, to reach new audiences and to strengthen the trademark of the media. These functions fit very well into the professional culture of journalists, and make social media new tools for carrying out traditional tasks. Dialogue is also important, but the highest figures are for maintaining contact with colleagues in the profession. Over 80 % of the Facebook users among journalists use it to keep in contact with colleagues. The number that also has a dialogue with the audience on Facebook is large too, about 60-70 %. But generally old means like telephone and e-mail are more important in keeping in contact with the audience.

What does this mean for theories about participatory culture and journalism? Probably one conclusion can be that the professional culture of journalists is sluggish; the use of social media is largely incorporated in the different professional cultures in the three countries but it is not mainly used to spur a better dialogue, in the classical meaning of communication, with the audience. However, a dialogue in participatory cultures does not need to be direct. Our research

shows that some of the main purposes why journalists use social media are to get ideas and to do research. In other words, these platforms are in a way monitored for the purpose of following ongoing discussions and trend spotting. What the users talk about and spread to one another is more visible online and has therefore a greater chance to impact, in this case, journalists. This is completely in line with the theory of a participatory culture, challenging the traditional role of the journalist when the audience bypasses them leaving them to monitor rather than to gatekeeper the societal discussion (Hermida 2010).

The technological development is the same in all three countries, and access to the social media platforms is the same. But the results show clear differences when this new technology meets the old professional cultures. The diffusion of social media-use is not a simple process. It can only be understood in relation to the professional cultures and how these differ in different countries. This confirms earlier results in research on journalistic professional cultures (Hanitzsch 2011). The question still remaining to be answered is whether these new technologies will bring the professional cultures in different countries closer to each other or not.

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