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TRENDS OF TABLOID JOURNALISM IN KAZAKHSTAN

The purpose of this paper is to study the evolution and social role of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan. The process of tabloidization involves destruction of traditional ideals, as well as raising social questions previously considered as “taboo”. The history of formation, the forecast for future development of tabloid journalism in a single country with modern media technologies is a very rare topic for the Central Asian region. The scientific and practical significance of the study lies in its novelty and the lack of similar works. To investigate the current place of tabloid journalism in the media space of Kazakhstan, a number of well-known Kazakhstan-based journalists, editors, opinion makers and bloggers were interviewed. The survey involved 100 people.

Questionnaire results were analysed manually. According to the results, a possible reason of load development is the mentality that does not allow local journalists to write about the personal lives of public figures. At the same time, it is obvious that there is a new perspective for tabloid journalism in relation to the public sphere. The practical value of the study is lies in identification the main problems in this area. Many Kazakhstani media that, according to the criteria, could be considered tabloids, do not declared themselves as such, because of the possible fall in the image. It is also interesting to consider Kazakhstani tabloid trends, which are influenced to a significant degree by economic, rather than political, factors. Thus, it appears that the development of characteristics of tabloid journalism is at the forefront of market-driven journalism. So, knowing the main problems of the media sector, it will be easier to show the prospects for its development.

Key words: Kazakhstan, tabloid media, journalism, democracy.

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Қазақстандағы таблоидтық журналистиканың бағыттары

Бұл мақаланың мақсаты Қазақстандағы таблоидтық журналистиканың эволюциясы мен әлеуметтік рөлін зерттеу болып табылады. Медиалық таблоидтау процесі дәстүрлі идеалдарды жоюды қамтиды, сонымен қатар бұрын «тыйым» деп саналған әлеуметтік тақырыптарды көтереді. Заманауи медиа-технологиялары бар елде таблоидтық журналистиканың қалыптасуы мен даму тарихы – тұтастай алғанда Орталық Азия аймағы, оның ішінде Қазақстан үшін өте сирек кездесетін тақырып. Зерттеудің ғылыми және практикалық маңыздылығы оның жаңашылдығымен және осы тақырыптағы зерттеулердің сиректігіне байланысты. Қазақстан Республикасының бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарындағы таблоидтық журналистиканың қазіргі жағдайын айқындау үшін бірқатар танымал қазақстандық журналистермен, редакторлармен және блоггерлермен сұхбат өткізілді. Сауалнамаға 100 адам қатысты. Сауалнама нәтижелері қолмен талданды.

Зерттеудің практикалық құндылығы – медиа саланың негізгі проблемаларын анықтау. Алынған мәліметтерге сәйкес, таблоидтардың баяу дамуының себебі – жергілікті журналистерге саясаткерлердің, танымал адамдар мен қоғам қайраткерлерінің жеке өмірі (соның ішінде меншік) туралы ашық жазуға мүмкіндік бермейтін менталитеттің болуы. Белгілері бойынша таблоидқа жатқызылатын көптеген қазақстандық БАҚ имиджінің түсіп кетуінен қауіптеніп, өздерін бұл санатқа жатқызбайды. Бүгінде таблоидтық журналистикаға демократия дамуына ықпал ету мүмкіндігін қоса, қоғамдық салада үлкен перспективалар пайда болғаны анық. Таблоидтық журналистиканың ерекшелігі немесе қазақстандық тренді – оған саяси факторлар емес, экономикалық және психологиялық факторлар көбірек ықпал етеді.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, таблоид, журналистика, демократия.

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Тренды таблоидной журналистики в Казахстане

Целью данного исследования является изучение эволюции и социальной роли таблоидной журналистики в Казахстане. Процесс таблоидизации медиа включает в себя разрушение традиционных идеалов, а также поднимает социальные темы, ранее считавшиеся «табу». История становления и развития таблоидной журналистики в стране с современными медиатехнологиями – весьма редкая тема для центральноазиатского региона, и для Казахстана, в частности. Научная и практическая значимость исследования заключается в его новизне и отсутствии предшествующих работ по данной тематике. Для освещения современного положения таблоидной журналистики в медиапространстве РК были проведены интервью с известными казахстанскими журналистами, редакторами и блогерами. В опросе приняли участие 100 человек. Результаты анкетирования проанализированы вручную.

Практическая ценность исследования заключается в выявлении основных проблем медиасектора. Согласно полученным данным, возможной причиной замедленного развития таблоидов является менталитет, который не позволяет местным журналистам открыто писать о частной жизни (в т.ч. об имуществе) политиков, селебрити и общественных деятелей. Многие казахстанские СМИ, которые в соответствии с критериями могут быть причислены к таблоидам, боятся признавать себя таковыми из-за возможного падения имиджа. В то же время очевидно, что для таблоидной журналистики сейчас появляются колоссальные перспективы в общественной сфере, в том числе в способности оказывать влияние на развитие демократии. Особенностью или казахстанским трендом таблоидной журналистики является тот факт, что на нее в большей степени влияют экономические и психологические, а не политические факторы.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, таблоид, журналистика, демократия.

Introduction

Whatever media technology may be applied, tabloid journalism seems to have become a persistent cultural phenomenon of modern society (Gossel, 2014). The rise and development of tabloid journalism, in combination with wider processes shaping the media, has moreover led to a debate about “tabloidization,” involving ideas about shifting priorities in journalism and the media landscape as a whole (Johansson, 2020). Apart from this, the history of formation, the forecast for future development of tabloid journalism in a single country is a very rare topic for the Central Asian region for several reasons.

The rise of tabloid journalism is largely associated in developed Western society with the improvement in social and economic conditions of the population leading to an increasing demand for sensational news above basic needs (Popović, 2014). In recent years marked by steady globalization, tabloidization as a phenomenon has moved beyond its conventional borders: geographically, politically and economically.

Kazakhstan, a former Soviet Union republic, which has been moving towards world democratic standards over the past years, represents an interesting model of a developing country for the study of the wider role of tabloid media in society

as well as its evolution. At the same time, there have been a limited number of studies devoted to the development of media in Kazakhstan, most notable ones focusing on inter-ethnic issues and the political system specifics (Schatz, 2009; Tussupova, 2010).

Since the country gained independence in 1991, modern journalism in Kazakhstan has experienced turbulent development. Following the initial rise of pluralism in early 1990s, the state has gained significant control of the range of topics covered by mass media (Richter, 2008). As a result, the country experienced a slump in the freedom of press rankings (Becker, 2007), a trend which was somewhat reversed in recent years as the country adopted a more open approach to the development of the civil society, based on the OECD principles (OECD, 2015). Still, there exists an unwritten ‘taboo’ in raising certain topics by the mainstream local media, relating, for example, to the country’s political system or cultural norms. The latter are arguably very closely related in terms of emotional associations leading to such topics being avoided by the mainstream media, as evidenced by our study, results of which are presented below. Introduction of additional legal frameworks for the quality and content of journalistic articles may further reduce both their scope and impact on the development of civil society in Kazakhstan (Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Information and Communications, 2018).

Before we will start talking about the problems of this sector, first of all, it is necessary to give a basic definition of the main concepts, which we will rely on: tabloid – a type of newspaper that has smaller pages, many pictures, and short reports (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). The tabloids often attract readers with sensational headlines. Some newspapers will choose to be tabloids and cover crime, scandal, disaster, and soft news. The tabloids, it seems, are not associated with mobilization, but then nor are they associated with much political malaise either (Cambridge English Corpus, 2019). A very similar definition can be found in other explanatory dictionaries: tabloid - a newspaper that is about half the page size of an ordinary newspaper and that contains news in condensed form and much photographic matter (Webster Dictionary, 2019). According to the interpretation of the term taken from domestic encyclopedia “Journalism of Kazakhstan”: tabloid is a small-format newspaper with concise text and catchy announcements, photographs, and flashy headlines (Kozybaev, et.al., 2006).

The origins of the term “tabloid” are disputed. According to the most-plausible explanation, the name derives from tablet, the product of compressed pharmaceuticals. Tabloid – a combination of tablet and alkaloid – was a trademark for tablets introduced by Burroughs, Wellcome & Co. in 1884. Within a couple of years, the connotation of being compressed was transferred to other entities and activities, including a new kind of reporting that condensed stories into a simplified, concentrated style (Gossel, 2014).

Alfred Harmsworth’s conception of a tabloid, however, referred not to the reduced size of the newspaper but to the economical use of printing space, which he filled with short stories, short paragraphs, and simple sentences.

There are many more vocabulary definitions of the term in question, but all of them give similar characteristics in one way or another. With such consistency in the definition of the tabloid itself, there is a significant difference in the approach to tabloid journalism.

According to D. Gossel, tabloid journalism is a type of popular, largely sensationalistic journalism that takes its name from the format of a small newspaper. Tabloid journalism is not, however, found only in newspapers, and not every newspaper that is printed in tabloid format is a tabloid in content and style (Gossel, 2014). So, even from this definition it follows that the concepts of tabloid and tabloid journalism are different. And these concepts are often confused among themselves in Kazakhstan.

For example, the newspaper is classified as a tabloid in content, although by technical characteristics it is not. And vice versa.

On the other hand, many Kazakhstani media that, according to afore-cited criteria, could be considered tabloids, do not consider themselves as such, because of the possible fall in image.

Let’s move on to another aspect of the issue. If we will speak about the history of the tabloid, we will get the fact, that the history of tabloid’s development in Kazakhstan and in the world is different.

In the early 21st century several traditional British broadsheet newspapers, such as “The Independent”, “The Times”, and “The Scotsman”, changed to the smaller size, preferring, however, to call it “compact” format. On the other hand, one of the most-popular tabloids in Europe, the German “Bild-Zeitung”, was long printed as a broadsheet before shifting, as did many German newspapers, to a format that was smaller than a broadsheet but bigger than the standard tabloid (Salas, 2018).

In the initial stages of the formation of the own media, as such, pure tabloids in Kazakhstan did not exist at all; ranked among them all the first commercial publications that were not distributed by subscription through mail or government organizations, but were sold. The term tabloid itself was also practically not used. The situation has changed dramatically in recent years.

There are appeared such media that officially declare that they adhere to the tabloid format. For example, the “Bolshaya Gazeta”, which has now ceased to exist, was described in the Internet space as follows: “Bolshaya Gazeta” is a tabloid with information about the most important events in the country and in the world, in the field of politics, economy, culture, sports, secular life. It has a very wide readership, mainly people with wealth and good purchasing power, most of them men and women aged 25-44, with higher education, and senior and middle managers. “Bolshaya Gazeta” helps to easily navigate in event-saturated space, and also always allows to know about world trends and news (Hh.kz, 2014). “Bolshaya Gazeta” became a kind of initiator among the media. It proved that you can openly call yourself a tabloid and at the same time not lose, but, on the contrary, build up your audience and bring financial profit to founders. Over time, many Russian mass media “came” to Kazakhstan, including one of the most successful and long-lived tabloids “Life for the whole week. Kazakhstan”. According to the data for 2021, the circulation of this media today is 93,000 copies.

Literature review

So far there have been very few studies of the state of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan. This paper focuses on uncovering the role of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan, as a country undergoing transition towards world democratic standards being influenced by local mentality and cultural norms.

As it was said before, modern scientific and even non-scientific literature containing information on Kazakhstan's tabloids either is absent or contains very little information. As a rule, a personal subjective assessment is given to one or another tabloid media.

For example, famous traveler T. Johnson describes his acquaintance with the first tabloid of independent Kazakhstan in such way: My guess is that if you spoke to 100 people on the street at random you would discover that about 80% are carrying a small supply of a sunflower seeds... They will purchase a single glass measure of seeds that will be wrapped up in a page from last week's "Caravan" newspaper that has been specially rolled into a cone shape for this purpose... "Caravan" newspaper was a popular hardcopy tabloid newspaper in the 1990s and beyond. You always knew when a new edition had come off the press because it was immediately hawked at street intersections by men and woman standing perilously close to passing vehicles, sometimes in between lanes (Johnson, 2015).

In the publication of the encyclopedic format "Cultures of the world. Kazakhstan", the author P. Guek-Cheng, describing Kazakhstani media, calls the tabloid the newspaper "Caravan" (Guek-Cheng, 2001). That, perhaps, is the whole spectrum of information that can be found about Kazakhstani tabloids in the public domain on the Internet.

Here we can ever argue with the authors, since the first issues of "Caravan" newspaper cannot be attributed to the tabloids according to its content and format. Changes in the format and content of the newspaper are also described in other sources. "Caravan" is the first commercial weekly newspaper of Kazakhstan. It was created in 1991 by B. Hiller The media changed its owners several times, changing its direction ... Interesting articles, interviews, analytics, news (about politics, sports, culture, business, etc.) are published on the newspaper's pages (Wikipedia.org, 2019).

Perhaps the majority classifies this mass media as a tabloid even in the early years of its existence because of the great popularity, which is evidenced by high print runs. They are explained by domestic researchers of the journalism's history as follows: from the very beginning, the "Caravan" took

orientation to all segments of the population - from pensioners who profess orthodox communist views, to a market-oriented intellectual elite. Perhaps this is precisely why the newspaper began to not only be called the «people's newspaper», but also to rapidly gain circulation... Also in the first year of existence, «Caravan» organized its own retail network. Another reason for the rapid increase in circulation and popularity among readers is the use of a technique not previously seen in the Soviet press - the publication of free private ads (Kozybaev, et.al., 2006).

Since the staff of the newspaper repeatedly raised political issues, and the newspaper in the early years of its existence was a political force that could influence on the audience's opinion. The key materials of the media are described in detail in the article "The direction of the "Caravan" changed every time with a change of ownership" (Azattyq.org, 2011).

Although the newspaper's modern issues clearly appear in tabloid format, there is still no information on the official website that the media considers or positions itself as such.

The current circulation of the newspaper is more than 250 thousand copies in all cities of Kazakhstani and the official website of the newspaper, as well as its pages on social networks, are among the most popular in the Republic.

So, after a review of the literature, we can already conclude that the world opinion about Kazakhstani tabloids has not yet been formed. Moreover, in the wide scientific space there is no factual material on this topic. There are no scientific publications in which a distinction would be given which Kazakhstani newspapers can be attributed to tabloids and which not.

Another trend that can be deduced from the available literature is neglect of tabloids.

Surely, hearing the word "tabloid", many people have a similar associative series: tabloid press - scandals - rumors - gossip - dubious information - frivolous publications - yellow press (Sokolova, 2008). All this associative series is linked with low-base information.

Also, regarding the live of tabloids in the Republic, Deputy of the Mazhilis D. Nazarbayeva spoke out: the rapid modernization and digitalization of the media has brought problems. Simplified access to the Internet opened the way not only for talented people who want to express themselves, but also to adventurers, criminals, propagandists of all stripes, theorists and practitioners of terrorism, sowers of hostility and hatred. The so-called trolls,

the invisible fighters of information wars, as well as the producers of fake-news, became a real disaster. Against this background, the tabloids look pretty decent (Kursiv.kz, 2018). As can be seen from the above quote, tabloids in Kazakhstani society continue to be associated with negative phenomena, although not the most urgent ones.

Methods & methodology

To investigate the current place of tabloid journalism in the media space of Kazakhstan, a number of well-known Kazakhstan-based journalists, editors, opinion makers and bloggers were interviewed. The survey involved 100 people (women and men over 25). We believe that the data obtained from a given number of people can be objective, since the total number of constantly working journalists in the Republic of Kazakhstan is not so large. The survey was conducted in the territory of Kazakhstan. Questionnaire results were analyzed manually, without using computer programs, which significantly reduces the risk of incorrect interpretation of the answers. Duration of the study: from May 2018 to October 2019. Since the editorial offices of all the major media outlets are located in Almaty, and there are branches of the capital's media, this city was chosen as the place of the research.

The survey languages were Kazakh and Russian, but most of the interviewees (80%) represented the affluent Russian-speaking members of the press. The interviewees represented various media sources, including "Forbes Kazakhstan" magazine, "Caravan" and "Kapital" newspapers, "365info.com", "Ratel.kz" and "Nur.kz" news portals, as well as independent social media bloggers. This paper aims at uncovering the general trends and views as suggested by the obtained responses. It must be noted that less than 50% of original interviewees responded to the questions in full.

The questionnaire included questions about characteristics of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan in the last ten years, its impact on the society, negative and positive aspects, influence on the quality of journalism, as well as the forecast of the future of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan. Below we list the questions and make provide details on the answers.

Characterize the evolution of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan over the recent years.

Is there a benefit in tabloid journalism for the wider society?

What are the negative aspects of tabloid journalism?

What is your forecast on the development of tabloid journalism in Kazakhstan?

Does tabloid journalism have an influence on the quality of press, in general?

Each participant in the survey could give a detailed answer without any length restrictions.

Research & results

1. In their answers to the first question the media specialists of Kazakhstan demonstrated certain nostalgia for the past time, mentioning that the tabloid journalism of the past in Kazakhstan had been more entertaining and easy-going. One editor emphasized that tabloid journalism has grown significantly over the past ten years as a business, i.e. it learnt a lot about its target audience and feeding it with "hot" content. Several respondents suggested that tabloid journalism in its classical format does not exist in Kazakhstan even at the present time. Scandals occurring in the social media are transferred to newspapers and news websites. Journalists do not hunt for tabloid news, do not search for newsmakers, and there are no paparazzis, because editors are not ready to pay "big money" for exclusive content. It is worth noting that the general opinion among the interviewees was that tabloidization of press plays a central role in the declining standards of journalism. Another intriguing opinion, which could not be ignored, was that, in some respect, all media in Kazakhstan had tabloid characteristics. In some cases, even serious media outlets would be willing to publish tabloid material, including gossips, and the borderline between facts and "fake news" was very thin.

2. Surprisingly, when asked if tabloid journalism brought benefits to the society, all respondents answered positively. Specifically, it was claimed to be important as a source of entertainment, as a distraction and a recreation tool, especially during struggling economic times. In this respect, the impact of tabloid media was compared to social media.

In their answers Kazakhstani opinion makers described tabloid journalism as a channel to transfer any type of information, both trustworthy and controversial, between its sources and consumers. It was also suggested that the wide coverage generated by the tabloid media played an important role in uncovering wrongdoings, including criminal activities of people with power, including corrupt officials and wealthy business people.

Tabloid media was described as more 'rebellious' than mainstream sources, as it was willing to raise a range of questions previously considered 'taboo' in Kazakhstan's wider society, such as interracial and interethnic marriages, teenage pregnancy, etc. Thus, it contributed towards higher transpar-

ency and accountability among the members of the society.

One of the significant aspects mentioned by the respondents was that journalists in the tabloid realm of the business have independence to choose and report on a wide range of issues, which is commonly restricted in mainstream news media. However, this impartiality and freedom acted as an essential element of popular journalism.

Among the threats of tabloid journalism to the society the following were mentioned most frequently: contribution towards intellectual regression of the society, circulation of unfounded information and gossips, generation of 'fake' ideals for the younger audience, infringement into people's private matters.

3. Regarding the negative characteristics of Kazakhstani tabloid press, the respondents gave such description: superficial; spoof; fake; lacking ethical norms; in pursuit of sensations; provocative; on the edge of violating intellectual property rights. Arguably, this raises a question of tabloid journalism acting as an economic tool to enhance profitability of media companies. The respondents mentioned also addictiveness as one of the negative aspects. In terms of the nature of interaction with the consumers, tabloid press was seen as focused on simplified delivery of information. The readers of tabloid press were expected to consume material without much critical thinking and analysis. This resulted in misleading of the public opinion and diverting its attention from serious problems in the society.

4. The respondents stated that with the current government and political regime in the country, tabloid journalism would only get more prominent in the foreseeable future. Many journalists expressed an idea that the tabloid media would develop even faster than before, because of the deteriorating economic conditions, as more people would be willing to turn towards the alternative reality of gossip, scandal and the life of celebrities and rich people.

Kazakhstani bloggers stated that it was clear that tabloid journalism would not disappear. But with the adoption of the new mass media law the accents in the coverage would change. They expressed hope that the quality and trustworthiness of the tabloid media would improve in the future, and there would be less fake news and misinformation, both for the benefit of individual companies or people and for the country, as a whole. Some editors also mentioned that they preferred the Kazakh tabloid journalism to follow modern international standards of storytelling, with stronger accent towards structured delivery of information.

5. Many Kazakhstani journalists agreed that the influence of tabloid journalism on quality press was demonstrated in a number of different aspects. Thus, tabloid media was described as very popular among the readers, it set media trends and had more followers than ever before.

At the same time, tabloid media created competition and an alternative view for the readers, encouraging mainstream media to fight for its audience. Some bloggers added that due to its obvious popularity and, consequently, high media traffic the tabloid media had a very strong influence both on the general public and on the quality of press. This influence could be considered as both positive and negative, as by following the tabloid trends some media sources could enhance their audience and attract advertisers, but this could be achieved at the expense of the quality of journalism.

Despite the difference in answers to specific questions, the respondents agreed on the role of tabloid media in society. Also, the majority of respondents (90%) pointed to possible reasons for the weak development of purely domestic (not borrowed) content: firstly, the editor's unwillingness to pay large sums for photos or videos from the paparazzi; secondly, the poorly developed system of investigative journalism in the country; thirdly, it is a mentality according to which it is considered unacceptable to write about the personal life of other people without their knowledge.

Conclusion

Now, it should be noted, that the trends of tabloid journalism are really firmly included in Kazakhstani realities. A vivid confirmation of this is the official statement to change the format of the country's main newspaper. Starting from January 12, 2018, the Friday issue of the "Kazhstanskaya Pravda" republican newspaper will be published in tabloid format every week. Now, when submitting materials in "Kazhstanskaya Pravda", the emphasis is on satisfying the interests of various population groups: the newspaper contains everything from official information to comics. The new trend of the publication is infographics. According to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper A. Sagimbekov, first of all, changes were made in layout and style for the Friday issue, which should be easier and less official, it will be a kind of "Kazpravda Light". And it will fully correspond to the mood of the weekend, when the reader wants to read interesting and informative materials. Gradually, the changes will affect the remaining numbers (Kazpravda.kz, 2018).

Here is how the tabloid is characterized on the pages of this media: a tabloid is a certain type of layout, which involves: printing in A3 format, which makes it possible to read a newspaper in transport, turn pages, and so on; a significant number of illustrations, often «irregular» (not quadrangular), crawling onto the text, etc. small volume of articles (often up to 1000 symbols), allowing the reader to read the article in a short time; catchy headlines made by a very large font; active using of color, including for highlighting text (Kazpravda.kz, 2018). The new model of the Kazakh tabloid, which the official media will strive for, will look something like this.

Experts consider the tendency of the transition to a tabloid format to be inevitable; the popularity of tabloids is growing all over the world. That this is not an indicator of a decline in the intellectual level of people is evidenced by the fact that a concept “business tabloid” appeared a few years ago. And now many newspapers are seriously thinking about switching to a tabloid format - more convenient and appropriate to the needs of readers (Sokolova, 2008).

If we will talk about the future development of tabloid journalism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, then, for now, television content should be excluded; and in comparison with neighboring Russia, the development and dissemination are not so noticeable, and are not supported by facts.

For example, even a School of tabloid journalism is opened in Russia.

In the new educational institution, students will be taught the basics of tabloid, sports and secular journalism. The head of the “News Media”, A. Gabrelyanov, said that the school would not have a license. According to him, classes will be organized more like continuing education courses.

According to the head of the “News Media”, the decision to create such an institution was made due to a lack of workforce. Soon, the publishing house, which publishes the newspaper “Zhizn” and “Tvoy den” (popular Russian tabloids, which are distributed in Kazakhstan as well – auth.), plans to

launch the “Lifenews.ru” information portal and the “Zhara” stars life magazine ... Students of the school will have the opportunity to take an internship in the British newspaper “The Sun” (one of the most popular tabloid on the world – auth.), which is a partner of the “News Media”, and in other projects of the publishing house (Tengrinews.kz, 2009).

A possible reason of load development is the mentality that does not allow local journalists to write about the personal lives of public figures, or the so-called celebrities.

Tabloidization as a phenomenon has become, arguably, a tool for raising ‘taboo’ questions and challenging deep lying economic and political issues. This situation is particularly relevant in Kazakhstan, a country with both economy and social life in transition. It could be argued that tabloid journalism, in contemporary Kazakhstani media practices, is moving in the direction of money-making and there are a range of significant factors that are involved in this process.

At first, there is an increasing motivation by mainstream media to switch to tabloid format, change style and news content in order to increase their readership to enhance profitability and ensure economic viability.

At the same time, it is obvious that there is a new perspective for tabloid journalism in relation to the public sphere, as the democratic function of journalism seems to take on a new interpretation through the prism of ‘tabloidization’.

This study of Kazakhstani editors, journalists, opinion-makers and bloggers appears to tell us tabloid journalism may act as a tool both for democratisation of the society and for raising ‘taboo’ questions, which have previously been neglected or avoided.

It is also interesting to consider Kazakhstani tabloid trends, which are influenced to a significant degree by economic, rather than political, factors. Thus, it appears that the development of characteristics of tabloid journalism is at the forefront of market-driven journalism.

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