

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA LANDSCAPE*Jahonova Malika Ibodullo qizi**Uzbekistan University of Journalism and Mass Communications,**Master's Degree Student (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)*malikahodiyeva08@gmail.com

Abstract: Investigative journalism plays a crucial role in the contemporary media landscape by uncovering hidden truths, ensuring accountability, and strengthening democratic institutions. Unlike routine news reporting, investigative journalism relies on in-depth research, data analysis, and cross-verification of sources. This article explores the significance of investigative journalism in the digital age, focusing on its contribution to transparency, public trust, and media credibility. The paper also highlights methodological approaches and ethical standards necessary for conducting effective investigative reporting in the context of global media transformation.

Keywords: Investigative journalism, media landscape, transparency, accountability, democracy, digital age

Аннотация: Расследовательская журналистика играет ключевую роль в современном медиaprостранстве, раскрывая скрытые факты, обеспечивая подотчётность и укрепляя демократические институты. В отличие от традиционного новостного освещения, расследовательская журналистика основывается на глубоком исследовании, анализе данных и перекрёстной проверке источников. В статье рассматривается значение расследовательской журналистики в цифровую эпоху, её вклад в повышение прозрачности, доверия общества и медиадостоверности. Также подчеркиваются методологические подходы и этические стандарты, необходимые для проведения эффективных журналистских расследований в условиях глобальной трансформации СМИ.

Ключевые слова: расследовательская журналистика, медиаландшафт, прозрачность, подотчётность, демократия, цифровая эпоха

Annotatsiya: Tergov jurnalistikasi zamonaviy media landshaftida yashirin haqiqatlarni ochib berish, hisobdorlikni ta'minlash va demokratik institutlarni mustahkamlashda muhim o'rin tutadi. Oddiy yangiliklardan farqli o'laroq, tergov jurnalistikasi chuqur tadqiqot, ma'lumotlarni tahlil qilish va manbalarni o'zaro tekshirishga tayanadi. Ushbu maqolada raqamli davrda tergov jurnalistikasining ahamiyati, shuningdek uning shaffoflik, jamoatchilik ishonchi va OAV ishonchliligini mustahkamlashdagi o'rnini tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, samarali tergov surishtiruvlarini amalga oshirishda zarur bo'lgan metodologik yondashuvlar va axloqiy me'yorlarga ham e'tibor qaratiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: tergov jurnalistikasi, media landshafti, shaffoflik, hisobdorlik, demokratiya, raqamli davr.

Introduction. In the modern media landscape, the speed of news distribution, the influence of internet platforms and social networks have fundamentally changed journalism. At a time when every citizen has become a creator and distributor of information via smartphone, the most important task of journalism - verifying and clarifying the truth - is becoming even more important. In this regard, investigative journalism differs from other genres: it focuses not on superficial events, but on exposing deeply hidden social problems, financial crimes, and illegal activities of the authorities. The transformation of the media landscape in the digital age has

reshaped the role of journalism in society. While news is produced and disseminated at unprecedented speed, investigative journalism remains a cornerstone of democratic societies, ensuring accountability and transparency. Its primary function is to expose corruption, misuse of power, and societal injustices, thereby providing citizens with verified information to make informed decisions. Scholars argue that investigative journalism not only informs but also empowers society by reinforcing the watchdog role of the press (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

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Looking at world experience, major international investigations such as the Watergate scandal (USA, 1970s), the Panama Papers (2016), and the Pandora Papers (2021) have fundamentally demonstrated the place of journalism in society. As a result, not only individuals, but also entire political systems were held accountable. Therefore, investigative journalism is of immense importance in strengthening democratic values and ensuring openness between the state and society.

In Uzbekistan, investigative journalism has been taking shape in recent years, following the rise of blogging, citizen journalism, and independent media. This is evidence that journalism is reaching a new level in the digital era.

Methods. The study applies a qualitative research approach, reviewing academic literature, UNESCO guidelines, and case studies of investigative journalism practices in both global and Uzbek contexts. A comparative method was used to analyze differences between traditional journalism and investigative reporting, highlighting unique methodologies such as source triangulation, data journalism techniques, and the use of digital forensic tools (Maras, 2020).

Several scientific and methodological approaches were used in the study of investigative journalism:

1. Literature analysis – Kovach and Rosenstiel’s “The Elements of Journalism”, UNESCO’s “Journalists’ Safety Indicators”, and CPJ’s annual reports were studied as the main theoretical sources. These sources were important in highlighting the global standards and risks of investigative journalism.
2. Comparative analysis – The methodology of traditional journalism (brief news, reportage, interview) and investigative journalism was compared. For example, while a simple news story answers the questions “who, where, when”, investigative journalism seeks answers to complex questions such as “why” and “what consequences”.
3. Case study (analysis of practical cases) – investigative inquiries conducted in international and Uzbek media were analyzed. For example, the activities of bloggers and journalists in covering international corruption investigations conducted by OCCRP and certain environmental issues in Uzbekistan (the Sardoba Dam incident, illegal logging incidents) were studied.

4. Use of information technologies - in the digital era, methods such as OSINT (open source intelligence), artificial intelligence-based image analysis, geolocation verification, and database analysis are being used for investigative journalism.

Results. The conducted analyses allowed for a deeper understanding of the place of investigative journalism in the modern media landscape. The results were reflected in the following main areas:

1. Enhancing transparency.

Investigative journalism increases citizens' trust in public administration by openly showing the activities of state bodies and large corporations. For example, as a result of international investigations (Panama Papers, Pandora Papers), the illegal financial activities of many politicians and businessmen were exposed, which caused widespread public discussion.

2. Public control and accountability.

Investigative inquiries conducted by the media force state bodies, officials and business structures to be more responsible in their activities. In this regard, investigative journalism ensures a balance between civil society and the government.

3. Social justice and protection of rights.

Investigative journalism is an effective tool for exposing issues such as human rights violations, corruption, and social inequality. For example, in some countries, there are cases where investigative bodies have been forced to open cases as a result of investigative materials.

4. Media reputation and credibility.

At a time when fake news and manipulative content are increasing in the information space, investigative journalism is one of the most important genres that increases public trust. Independent verification of each fact and drawing conclusions based on the intersection of sources strengthens the social capital of the media.

5. Effective use of digital tools.

In the era of digital media, investigative journalists are widely using OSINT, data journalism, geolocation analysis, and artificial intelligence-based programs. This allows for more reliable, faster, and more in-depth investigations.

6. Strengthening local and international cooperation.

Large-scale investigations, such as those conducted by OCCRP, are often carried out in collaboration with journalists from different countries. This trend is shaping new professional standards in exposing global issues.

Overall, the results show that investigative journalism is not only the product of the work of individual journalists or editorial staff, but is also closely related to the aspirations of society as a whole for democracy, civic engagement, and an open information space.

Discussion. Despite its vital role, investigative journalism faces serious challenges, including censorship, financial constraints, digital threats, and risks to journalists' safety. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2023), dozens of investigative reporters face harassment or imprisonment annually. In Uzbekistan, legal reforms and digital transformations have created new opportunities, but issues of journalist protection and editorial independence remain pressing.

Thus, balancing technological opportunities with ethical standards is essential for the sustainable development of investigative journalism.

Investigative journalism is not only an important source of information, but also a mechanism of social control. However, a number of problems arise in its implementation:

1. Security issues. According to CPJ (2023), dozens of investigative journalists are imprisoned every year, some of whom are physically threatened. This restricts their free activity.
2. Financial difficulties. Investigative journalism requires a lot of time, money and resources. This is a big problem for independent media.
3. Digital threats. Online surveillance, cyberattacks, disclosure of personal information are a new type of risk for investigative journalists.
4. Ethical issues. A journalist must balance personal privacy, human rights and the interests of society when disclosing any information.

Nevertheless, investigative journalism is necessary for society. Its results can influence public policy, especially in socially important areas such as corruption, ecology, healthcare, and education.

Conclusion. Investigative journalism is indispensable in the contemporary media landscape as it ensures accountability, strengthens democracy, and reinforces public trust. To maintain its relevance in the digital era, journalists must adopt innovative methods while adhering to strict ethical guidelines. Governments, media organizations, and civil society must support investigative reporting through legal protections, training, and sustainable funding models.

Based on the above, the role of investigative journalism in the modern media landscape is manifested in the following:

- increasing accountability and transparency in society,
- strengthening democratic values,
- enhancing the reputation and credibility of the media,
- maintaining relevance through the use of innovative methods.

Also, for the development of investigative journalism, it is necessary to strengthen the legal protection system at the state level, provide financial support to editorial offices, and organize special training for young journalists. Only then can investigative journalism truly serve as a “fourth power” for society.

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