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**ANALYSIS OF REPUBLICAN MASS MEDIA IN KAZAKHSTAN
(BASED ON THE INTERNET PORTAL «NUR.KZ»)**

***Abstract.** This research paper presents a detailed study of republican media in Kazakhstan, based on the materials of the most visited Internet portal of Kazakhstan «Nur.kz», including various projects belonging to it. The following paper was elaborated and structured owing to such aspect as the historical process of «Nur.kz»'s development and formation, using the method of content analysis.*

***Key words:** mass media, Internet influence, social media, editor office, audience*

Introduction

Nowadays, printed publications comprise 86% of all Mass Media in Kazakhstan, whereas only 11% are registered as a digital Mass Media. Basically, Internet Journalism is becoming a larger area of mass media owing to the fact that we live in the digital era, where one has to analyze an enormous amount of data via computer networks. «Nur.Kz» was chosen as an object of the analysis since not only is it the biggest republican mass media, but also it primarily represents itself as an IT-company, owning projects based on variety of themes. This Internet portal is widely known among Kazakhstani citizens, interested in politics, breaking news, showbiz along with all news, concerning the country.

Main part

History and development along with the expansion of the information agency «Nur.Kz» have started from 4 March in 2009. It was the former Internet-project, named as a «portal», which provided 20 categorized sections and services. All content has been publishing solely in Russian language. The owner is the Open Company «Internet Portal Nur». In 2009 whereas editor office consisted of only 8 people, «Nur.kz» was considered to be the very first Kazakh publication which adopted the standard format of internet-journalism, distinguished from the newspaper publications' cliché approach of composing the articles [1].

The portal has been highlighting the main political, social as well as economic news related to Kazakhstan, furthermore became self-supporting in 2010.

Kazakh language was integrated in the publication in 2011. In the same year, according to Alexa.com and Zero.kz statistics, it became the most visited Kazakhstani Internet Mass Media website with monthly audience reach of 3.5 million guests. Besides, the partnership with LG and Weborama companies was established. During 2013, editor office of “Nur.kz” also started a cooperation with Facebook and VK platforms; consequently, it has appeared in these social media. In addition, not only has the audience expanded, but also the editor office included 34 workers by 2014.

Between 2011 and 2014 released such project as «Rabota.nur.kz». In turn, «Rabota.nur.kz», aimed to facilitate the effective employment process, reached 600.000 users by 2014. Talking of existing projects, it is evident that all of them have a crucial success among the public and the feedback is impressive. For instance, specialists' database of «Rabota.nur.kz» contains of 2.222.609 application forms by the current time. Additionally, there is a “NurTv.kz” project, engaged in the production, aggregation and distribution of information and entertainment content [1].

During the period from 2015 to 2019, the editor office focused on the development mainly in social media, improving the staff members from 50, to 94 in 4 years. Currently, the main representatives of the company are Pavel Pritchyn, taking the position of the editor – in chief, Bahridinov Kuat (CEO), Abduvali Gulnaz, who is the chief editor of the Kazakh language editorial office and Leyla Temirkhanova, who is, in turn, the chief editor of the editorial office in Russian [2].

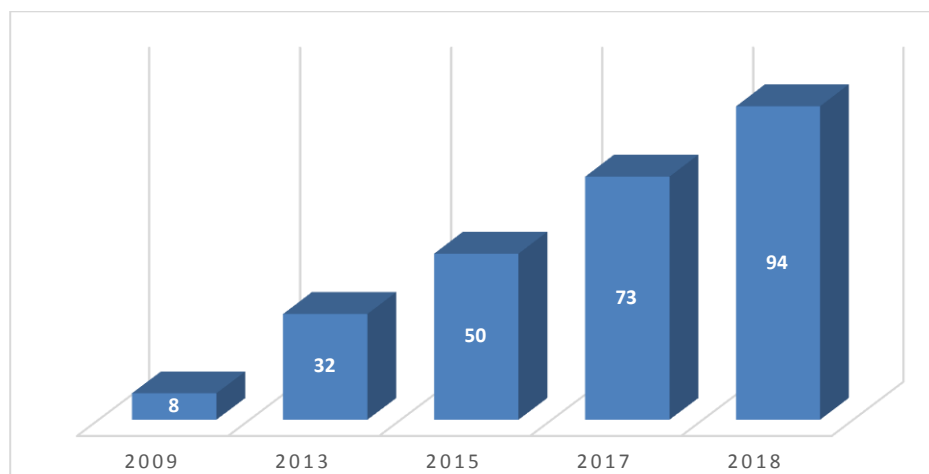


Figure 1 - Growth dynamics of «Nur.kz» editor office`s employees

The portal was offered to prepare a special project regarding the first president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. The article is narrating about all worth noticing achievements in the political life of Kazakhstan, which were contributed by Nazarbayev. It fully emphasizes all valuable activities of Kazakh ex-president.

«Nur.kz» is a news agitator, writing about a wide range of thematic. It announces political, economic news of Kazakhstan as well as the worldwide news. Website is structured conveniently, since it has six sections, dedicated for particular theme: politics, world and showbiz together with the section Nurfin, sponsored by «Alpari», society, job, referenced to the belonging project «rabota.nur.kz». In the case of politic section, the division into subsections is observed in order to improve the visitor`s ability to organize the information via choosing the needed subject. Publishers write manifold articles in the subsection «Authority» concerning the actions of the governing bodies. Subsections «Opinions» as well as «appointments» represent the data on all regional and district elections across the country, along with all citizens` opinions and judgements. Journalists who work on «Nurfin» also highlight the financial and economic challenges, by advising the readers how to make, invest and multiply money. Its monthly viewership grew over 450 000 unique people, with the monthly views exceeding three million.

«Nur.kz» is especially attentive to quality of the materials to preserve a leading role in Kazakh Mass Media. Each month an editorial office produces and distributes a huge amount of an appropriate information through social media and digital channels. There is a 61% to 64% percent proportion of the unique content, the rest of which is rewritten according to different outlets, both from Kazakhstan and foreign sources- in order to satisfy the audience's needs. In addition, the periodicity is around the clock. «Nur.kz» positions itself as the most progressive Mass Media in Kazakhstan, having a CMS (content measurement system), which is rarely found among Kazakh Mass Media. According to CEO of Nur.kz, the existing app on Android and iOS is considered as a priority [3]. More than 3 million users installed the app and it engages almost a million active readers every day, providing them the relevant information.

On the other hand, this portal was accused of copywriting several times. Furthermore, some sources consider the portal as the «yellow» press; however, it was disproved by the CEO Bahridinov Kuat [4]. The portal cooperates with Google and Facebook, which, consequently, neither of these companies would permit to promote «yellow» news. In that case, the website traffic would be uncompetitive along with a visible downward trend. All content, published on the website, resonates with a huge audience. This aspect encourages editors to maintain its diversity.

Such giant companies as Samsung, Food Master, Kazakhfilm, Nazarbayev University, Astana Motors, Alpari, Santo, TengriBank, Kaspi.kz, Bazis-A, Coca-Cola, Bi-Group are the clients of the portal.

The gradual increase in advertisement campaigns is observed. The website provides a separate section, devoted for the advertisement. There are various types of commercials: banners, native and mobile advertising, branding and creating special projects together with video formats. Nevertheless, «Special Projects» is the most common approach of advertising. According to the interview of Azamat Shadat, who is the head of active sales Department, the company's services are in high demand in the market due to the fact that the number of page views exceeds 90 million only on news pages, excluding other projects [5]. The most high-rated project in 2019 was the «American and European holidays» released for the German airline company Lufthansa with 117.464 views. Around 250 clients are serviced annually. In 5 months, sales growth has moved upward by 46% compared to last year for the same period [6].

The resource takes 36th place in the rating of the largest Internet-Companies in Kazakhstan [7]. In addition, the editor office has received an international award in the nomination «The most engaging Mass Media» 11 times [8].

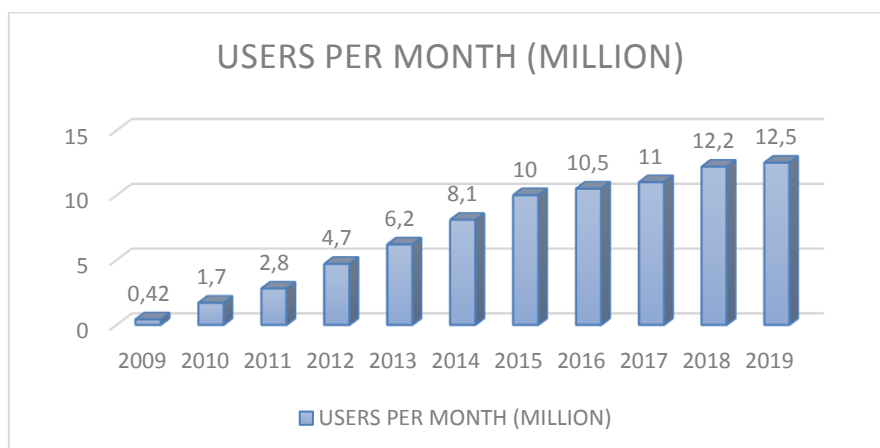


Figure 2 - Growth of «Nur.kz»'s audience over the period from 2009 to 2019

Over the period from 2009 to 2019, the audience of the site has dramatically increased by 29 times, starting from 420.000 visitors per month in 2009. In Global internet traffic and engagement, «Nur.kz» ranks as #903 over the past 90 days, according to Alexa.com. Kazakhstan audience dominates, comprising 62% of the total geographical position statistics. 38% of all visits in the past 30 days were done from the neighboring countries, interested in «Nur.kz» site: 34% of Russian visitors together with the rest 4% from Ukraine [9].

Moreover, «Nuz.kz» sustainably prosper in social media: it has launched an Instant Articles in Facebook; became the official partner with YouTube platform, verified as a multi-channel network. In total, the audience in social media composed more than two million people. Meanwhile YouTube channel is the least popular source of Nur.kz with 30.000 subscribers. Here journalists provide the most recent news via video format. Official page in «VKontakte» has 582.414 followers, while

Facebook reaches 314.121 subscribers. There are over 36 000 000 users, viewing pages on the website per month, which is about 12.000.000 new visits per day [2]. The representation of the materials is distinct and attracts a wide range of people. The articles are being read for over 100.000 time. Instant and offline content consumption is important for the viewer. Facebook Instant Article firstly included «Nur.kz» news website and now Google Accelerated Mobile Pages are being tested for mobile devices, which provides the most immediate loading of information. «Nur.kz» has over 43% coverage of the entire Kazakhstan network, becoming the largest information and entertainment portal [3].

Since Instagram became the most popular social media not only among youth, but also is in demand among a paying audience, total number of people comprises over 1 million, where «Kaznews» account dedicated for the Russian content has 831.000 followers. While audience of Kazakh account numbers are 287.000 followers.

Conducted research on their Instagram accounts reveals that the amount of post’s likes as well as views significantly varies, moreover the trend of discrepancy between the feedback and the amount of followers was observed. It is interesting to note that audience’s preferences identify via its feedback (likes, reshares and comments): citizens are more interested in political news, emphasis of the inequality of the population, all sorts of sensations along with disasters. Video content is in demand, comparing to photo and audio: average number of views on the post is 40.000, whereas the average number of likes is 5.000, which is a low indicator, considering the followers. Nevertheless, both Russian as well as Kazakh accounts are verified.

The main benefit of the Internet Mass Media over newspapers is the direct and constant feedback with the audience. The audience is provided with four key fields: news, music, video and job hunting. These are actually the most popular sections, so almost the whole Kazakhstan (the part that uses the internet to be exact) is the target audience. Average session on the website is 5 minutes [2].

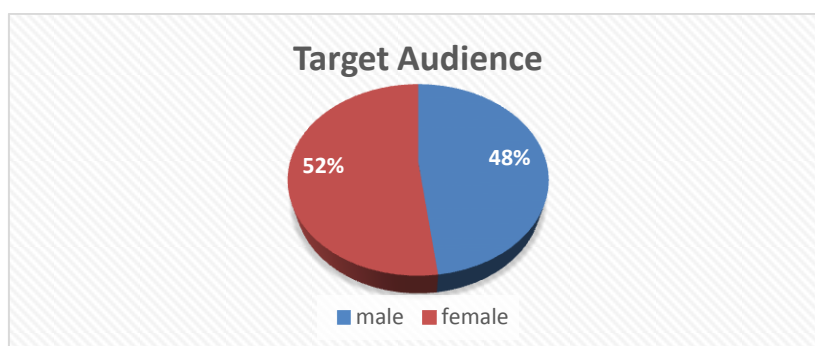


Figure 3 - Overall share of «Nur.kz»’s audience by gender

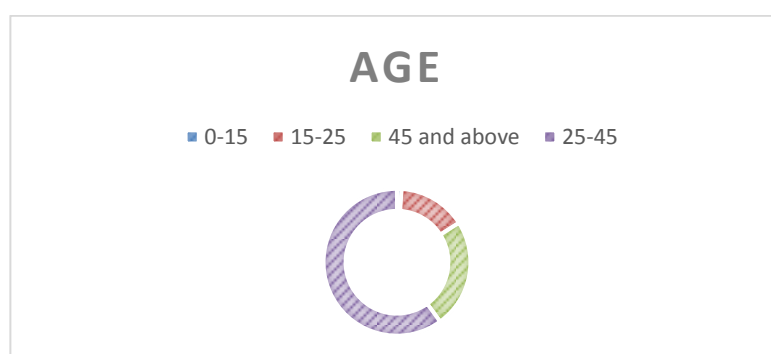


Figure 4 - Overall share of «Nur.kz»’s audience by Age

Owing to the fact that the range of the audience is enormously wide, each project and section of the portal has its own target audience. For instance, males are more interested in politics and NurFin, while females prefer to read general news together with the showbiz related articles. The bigger part of the audience are average citizens, interested in politics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research fully described the structure, history of development, partnerships, content as well as the target audience of «Nur.kz» - the largest media portal in Kazakhstan. According to the research, not only Kazakh audience is aware of «Nur.kz», but also visits from the neighboring European countries were noticed. The dramatic improvement in monthly coverage of the public on the website (from 420.000 people to 12.000.000 unique users a day) during the period from 2009 to 2020 is observed, while social media accounts reach the audience of more than 2 million followers in total. All existing projects are divided by the target audience, which in turn, differs by gender together with the age. The target audience consists from females at the age from 25 to 45. Having achieved success, the portal takes the 903^d place in the list of global internet traffic. Summarily, by taking all subtleties considered, one is able to make a conclusion that «Nur.kz» is the most successful Internet portal, based in Kazakhstan.

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**Қазақстандағы республикалық масс медианы талдау
(«Nur.kz» Интернет-портал мысалында)**

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Қазақстанда кеңінен танымал интернет "Nur.kz" порталының негізінде Республикалық БАҚ-тың дамуы туралы толық зерттеу ұсынылып, ғылыми мақала контент-талдау әдісін қолданған. Сондай-ақ ғылыми мақала порталдың қалыптасуының тарихи үрдісі негізінде жазылған.

Түйінді сөздер: БАҚ, интернеттің әсері, әлеуметтік желілер, редакция, аудитория

Ердинбекова А.С., Досхожина Ж.М.
Анализ республиканских массмедиа в Казахстане
(на примере Интернет-портала «Nur.kz»)

Аннотация. В данной исследовательской работе представлено детальное исследование развития республиканских СМИ Казахстана на основе материалов самого посещаемого Интернет-портала Казахстана «Nur.kz», включая различные принадлежащие ему проекты. Данная научная статья была разработана и структурирована в контексте исторического процесса развития и становления портала, с применением метода контент-анализа.

Ключевые слова: СМИ, Интернет влияние, социальные сети, редакция, аудитория

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