

EAMF 2018

Panel Session 6

Evolution of the Mass Media

The rise of the blogger – threat or progress?

Announcing the panellists, moderator **Maxim Shevchenko**, Russian journalist, started by saying he would not give their nationality because this was no longer relevant in the ‘blogosphere’. Traditional definitions and formats no longer applied in the modern world of blogging.

The six panelists, from East and West, struggled to define the difference between a traditional journalist and a blogger. Some described themselves as one or the other.

Harlem Désir, French, OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media, said there were differences between traditional journalists and bloggers. The main characteristics of journalists were professional standards, a code of ethics and the principle that you should check the news before publishing.

As for bloggers, potentially every citizen with a smartphone could become a virtual news agency. But he added: “We are already in a new age of bloggers, they are already in what we might call their teen-age.” This meant that bloggers were becoming aware of the dangers of fake news, he said.

Nameel Jameel, UK-based head of HBO’s *Vice News Tonight*, described herself as a professional journalist turned blogger. She had more followers – readers – than ever before and she objected to being told she was no longer a journalist.

Bloggers could give opinions and were a very important alternative voice from the mainstream media. It was important not to take everything on blogs at face value but there was no reason that bloggers could not be professional journalists. “Credibility should be open to anyone who earns it.”

Alexei Osipov, Russian, correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* based in the United States, offered an alternative view. It was wrong to call blogging the new journalism.

Bloggers were just citizens giving their own opinions, he argued. Journalists needed to have professional experience and accept a code of ethics that was approved by governments or trade unions. Blogging would never replace traditional journalism.

Ms **Reham Khan**, UK-Pakistan, journalist and producer, said she used to be a mainstream journalist in Pakistan, where there was a huge problem of militancy. She had left the mainstream media in order to be free to report human rights causes and pursue advocacy.

These causes could not get published in the mainstream media because most of the news was controlled by the state. The media houses directed the news agenda. There

was always an editorial line. “It was a kind of inverted totalitarianism,” she said, adding that only bloggers could dispel certain myths promoted by the authorities.

Ms **Zaure Rozmat**, founder of *The Steppe*, Kazakhstan, said neither a journalist nor a blogger. “I’m a media manager, but we employ journalists.”

The journalists on her magazine were independent and tried to be unbiased, unlike bloggers who were mostly biased and expressed only their own views. At the same time, her journalists tried to make their reports lively and full of fun in order to attract readers.

One reason that the traditional media disliked bloggers, she said, was that they were siphoning off the advertising budgets. “80% of advertising budgets is now set aside for bloggers,” she said.

The last panelist, **Rassul Abdullayev** from *Yuframe*, Kazakhstan, said he was a blogger. He was like a parent adding flavour to persuade children to take medicine.

“We add humour. And if we have a million followers, it’s our fanbase. But we understand we have responsibilities too, We have moral values. You might call us ‘halal bloggers.’”

[END/ss]