

**THE MODERN ECOSYSTEM OF REGIONAL MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF
UZBEK AND RUSSIAN REGIONAL PRESS**

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ABSTRACT: This article provides a comparative analysis of the development trends in the regional (provincial) press of Uzbekistan and Russia during an era of rapid globalization and digital technology advancement. Using the case of the “Qashqadaryo” newspaper and Russian regional publications, the study examines the transition of local media from traditional print formats to a multi-platform ecosystem structured as “Internet + social networks + print”. Furthermore, structural changes in the industry, the integration of artificial intelligence elements, and contemporary scholarly research on media convergence (specifically the studies by I.I. Karpenko) are brought into analysis.

Keywords: regional press, media convergence, digital transformation, multi-platform approach, artificial intelligence, circulation, audience, transformation.

The expansion of the information space and evolving reader preferences present new challenges for local newspapers. Today, it is a demand of the times for regional publications to evolve from mere information providers into multimedia platforms. In this regard, studying international experience particularly the Russian regional press system and comparing it with the experience of local publications (such as the “Qashqadaryo” newspaper) holds significant scientific and practical relevance.

A comparison of the 2025 and 2026 issues of the “Qashqadaryo” newspaper revealed a sharp increase in circulation. The November 2025 issue was published with a circulation of 1,405 copies¹. Looking at the situation as of 2026, the February issue was published with a circulation of 4,340 copies². Comparing the two issues, the content in 2025 primarily delivered official speeches, reports, summits, presidential addresses, crime updates, and general statistical data. In 2026, alongside state policy, the newspaper published practical results, water conservation efforts, infrastructure developments, economic reforms, real-world projects, and their outcomes. A significant evolution is noticeable in the newspaper compared to the previous year.

In the global media landscape, the regional press in Russia consists of publications founded by governorships, regional and provincial administrations, as well as independent regional

¹ Qashqadaryo gazetasi, 2025-yil 20-noyabr, № 047 son.

² Qashqadaryo gazetasi, 2026-yil 5-fevral, № 006-son.

holdings”³. Additionally, the regional networks of national publications are also highly developed.

Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti and Fontanka.ru – St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region;

Moskovskiy Komsomolets (MK) – Moscow city and regional content (it also possesses dozens of regional networks);

Vecherniy Kazan and Respublika Tatarstan – The Republic of Tatarstan;

Oblastnaya newspaper – Sverdlovsk Region (one of the largest official publications in the Urals region);

Delovoy Peterburg – The leading business publication of the Northwest region;

Tixookeanskaya Zvezda – Khabarovsk Krai and the Far East region;

Krasnoborskiy Telegraf or Kubanskiy Novosti – Krasnodar Krai (Southern region)⁴.

The newspapers “Komsomolskaya Pravda” and “Argumenty i Fakty” print regional editions with special local pages in almost every region of Russia. In Russia, regional media (e.g., Fontanka.ru or large regional holdings) have achieved strong convergence on social networks, particularly the Telegram and VKontakte platforms. They operate on a multi-platform model. Editorial channels on Telegram and social networks operate more actively and rapidly than traditional websites, offering high interactivity. Regional branches of central publications help rapidly elevate local editorial expertise to a professional level.

Due to political and economic pressures, the survival of independent regional publications in the digital space is becoming increasingly difficult. AI presenters are also being actively utilized in Russian regional media. For instance, “Svoe TV”, a regional television channel that is part of the large government-owned media holdings of the Stavropol Krai, employs an AI weather presenter named Snezhana Tumanova. This TV channel operates within a unified information space in cooperation with the region’s state-owned newspapers. She not only reads the text but also generates the weather forecast program and its script herself”⁵. In the Russian regional press, AI is primarily used to reduce the cost of content production. Internal neural networks automatically convert lengthy regional reports into short SMM posts.

³ IlmiyHujjat.uz. (n.d.). Rossiya matbuoti. IlmiyHujjat.uz.

URL: <https://ilmiyhujjat.uz/product/taqdimotlar-tarix-rossiya-matbuoti>.

⁴ Moskovskiy Komsomolets. (n.d.). About MK. Moskovskiy Komsomolets Official Website.

URL: <https://www.mk.ru/about>; Vecherniy Kazan. (n.d.). About Vecherniy Kazan. Vecherniy Kazan Official Website.

URL: <https://www.vecherniy-kazan.ru/about>; Oblastnaya Gazeta. (n.d.). About Oblastnaya Gazeta. Oblastnaya Gazeta Official Website. URL: <https://www.oblsn.ru/about>; Delovoy Peterburg. (n.d.). About Delovoy Peterburg. DelovoyPeterburg Official Website. URL: <https://www.dp.ru/about>; Tixookeanskaya Zvezda. (n.d.). About Tixookeanskaya Zvezda. Tixookeanskaya Zvezda Official Website. URL: <https://www.tizvestia.ru/about>

⁵ iXBT. (2023). “Она ставит перед собой цель полностью заменить людей-конкурентов”, — представлена виртуальная ведущая Снежана Туманова. iXBT.

URL: <https://www.ixbt.com/news/2023/03/23/ona-dolzha-polnostju-zamenit-ljudejkonkurentov-predstavlena-virtualnaja-vedushaja-snezhana-tumanova.html>.

One of the main scholars who has conducted research on the integration of Russian regional press publications under conditions of media convergence is Karpenko Irina Ivanovna. In 2024, she defended her doctoral dissertation titled “Media Convergence in the Theory and Practice of Russian Regional Media” at the Belgorod State National Research University. In this work, she conducted a complex analysis consisting of 10 levels. By studying the characteristics of media convergence in Russia across technical, technological, organizational, strategic, genre, content distribution, and professional levels, she examined QR codes, augmented reality technologies, cross-media distribution, and infotainment methods in detail. The dissertation consists of 398 pages and was defended in 2024. Among the publications studied were the “Vecherniy” series (Vecherniy Kazan, Vecherniy Krasnoyarsk), regional editions of Moskovskiy Komsomolets, and publications like Argumenty i Fakty⁶. Other Russian scholars have also studied general convergence processes, highlighting economic and technological changes; for example, E. L. Vartanova examined the general theory of convergence⁷, M. I. Makeenko focused on its practical application⁸, A. V. V and A. V. Vyrkovskiy emphasized economic shifts in the context of media convergence⁹ yet a specific focus on the regional press remains dominant in I. Karpenko's work. Regional newspapers are the second most popular mass media in Russia, with 27% of the population reading them regularly and 40% reading them occasionally. However, between 2022 and 2026, the closure of independent publications, threats to archives, and blocking trends (such as the throttling of WhatsApp) restricted development, while digital integration through convergence continues nonetheless¹⁰.

The process of development for local newspapers, provincial publications, and other regional outlets in Uzbekistan and Russia is unique to each country. Both faced transformations under the influence of the internet and mobile technologies. However, due to differences in state control, funding, and technology, the outcomes vary. In Russia, local newspapers are still highly popular, ranking second only to television. Since the 2010s, “convergence” (i.e., the merging of different mediums such as newspapers, websites, and video) has intensified. In regions like Belgorod, Voronezh, and Novosibirsk, newspapers launched their own websites and released mobile applications. Live broadcasts and video news emerged on YouTube, VKontakte (VK), and Telegram. The state provided support (through grants to VGTRK branches), but between 2022 and 2026, problems mounted. Independent publications (local versions of Novaya Gazeta) were closed, archives were blocked, and WhatsApp was throttled¹¹. Consequently, despite being technologically advanced, a decline in freedom was observed.

⁶ Карпенко И.И. Медиаконвергенция в теории и практике российских региональных СМИ: диссертация. Белгородский государственный университет, 2024. URL: <https://www.dissercat.com/content/mediakonvergensiya-v-teorii-i-praktike-rossiiskikh-regionalnykh-smi>

⁷ Вартанова Е.Л. Теория медиа: от локального к глобальному. М.: Изд-во МГУ, 2011.

⁸ Макеенко М.И. Конвергенция СМИ: от теории к практике. СПб.: Изд-во СПбГУ, 2009.

⁹ Вyrковский А.В. Цифровая конвергенция и трансформация медиасистем. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2012.

¹⁰ Rossiya ommaviy axborot vositalari. Vikipediya maqolasi. URL: https://uz.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rossiya_ommaviy_axborot_vositalari (sana: 17.11.2022)

¹¹ Карпенко Ирина Ивановна. Медиаконвергенция в теории и практике российских региональных СМИ: диссертация доктора филологических наук. Белгородский государственный национальный исследовательский университет (НИУ БелГУ). Белгород, 2024. С. 398.

In contrast to this situation, the number of provincial newspapers in Uzbekistan (such as Qashqadaryo, Voha, and Nasaf newspapers) has decreased sharply. Between 2012 and 2022, 283 newspapers closed down¹². The reasons for these closures included the high cost of newsprint and the shift of readers to the internet. Although development has been slower, the transition to Telegram, Facebook, and Instagram has been underway since 2017. As a result, newspapers began to establish their own websites. TV and radio stations also opened their own Telegram channels, though a shortage of professional video content and applications has been observed. The primary reasons for this are rooted in slow internet speeds and insufficient funding¹³.

Based on the analysis results, a transition to digital formats has been observed in both countries in recent years. For instance, in Belgorod, presenting information in a "newspaper + website + video" format helps maintain and increase readership. However, if freedom is restricted, quality declines. In Uzbekistan, beyond Telegram, there is a need to create simple applications and local video content for the regions; high quality can be achieved if funding and grants for these purposes are covered by regional administrations (hokimiyats).

The regional press of Uzbekistan and Russia is undergoing similar stages of digital transformation, though the results differ due to economic and technological capacities. The case of the Qashqadaryo newspaper demonstrated that shifting from dry statistics to analytical, real-life, and practical content sharply increases interest (and circulation) in the print edition.

To further develop the regional press of Uzbekistan, it is essential not to limit efforts strictly to Telegram channels, but rather to create dedicated mobile applications (apps) for provincial publications, enhance the quality of local video content, and establish a targeted financing system through local administrations and international grants. Quality and independent analysis remain the primary factors ensuring the survival of traditional brands in the age of social networks.

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¹² So'nggi 10 yilda O'zbekistondagi gazetalar soni 283 taga kamaydi. Kun.uz, 2022 yil 14-mart. URL: <https://kun.uz/news/2022/03/14>.

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