

TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUSSIAN BLOGOSPHERE AND MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE MIGRATION

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Abstract: *this article examines key trends, shifts in social media audiences, platform development dynamics, the state's role in content regulation, and changes in blogger positioning and their influence on public opinion in Russia. The research results indicate that the blogosphere and media landscape in Russia have undergone significant transformations in recent years. One important trend has been the emergence of new social media platforms and the redistribution of audiences across different platforms. The role of bloggers has also evolved: as their numbers have grown, competition for audiences has intensified, prompting a professionalization of blogger activities.*

Keywords: *blogosphere, mediatization, bloggers, influencers, opinion leaders, blogosphere development, Russian media field, media sphere trends.*

ТЕНДЕНЦИИ РАЗВИТИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ БЛОГОСФЕРЫ И МЕДИАЛАНДШАФТА В УСЛОВИЯХ МИГРАЦИИ АУДИТОРИИ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ МЕДИА

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Аннотация: *в данной статье рассматриваются ключевые тенденции, сдвиги в аудитории социальных сетей, динамика развития платформы, роль государства в регулировании контента, а также изменения в позиционировании блогеров и их влияние на общественное мнение в России. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о том, что блогосфера и медиаландшафт в России за последние годы претерпели существенные трансформации. Одной из важных тенденций стало появление новых платформ социальных сетей и перераспределение аудитории между разными платформами. Роль блогеров также изменилась: по мере роста их числа обострилась конкуренция за аудиторию, что привело к профессионализации деятельности блогеров.*

Ключевые слова: *блогосфера, медиатизация, блогеры, инфлюенсеры, лидеры мнений, развитие блогосферы, российское медианполе, тенденции медиасферы.*

Modern Information Technology Era and Digital Communication have reshaped the paradigm of interaction between individuals, brands, and media. The significance of the topic is driven by rapid and profound changes in the socio-cultural and technological landscape. The era of digital transformation and media digitization has led to the emergence of new platforms where opinions are formed, exchanged, and consolidated, and where brands, communities, and audiences interact. Social networks, once platforms for message and photo sharing, have evolved into digital ecosystems with numerous everyday life services. To achieve the set goal, the following methods will be employed: analysis of scholarly literature on the research topic, analysis of qualitative studies published by Russian analytical agencies in the field of media consumption and marketing, as well as substantive analysis of publications on social networks, enabling the identification of the nature of changes in the media sphere.

In this context, the Russian blogosphere and media landscape hold a pivotal position, playing a crucial role in shaping public opinion, implementing marketing strategies, and communication approaches. Examining audience migration dynamics enables the forecast of changes in consumer preferences and needs, as well as the adaptation of approaches to interaction and brand promotion. The objective of this research is to analyze and identify current trends in the development of the Russian blogosphere and media landscape against the backdrop of audience migration changes in the realm of social media.

The place of the blogosphere in contemporary media culture and mass communication systems cannot be underestimated, as it plays a substantial role in the formation and dissemination of information, news, opinions, and perspectives. The blogosphere represents a dynamic space where individuals share their thoughts, experiences, knowledge, and emotions, making it an essential element of modern media culture and the mass communication system. Influencers can instantly share news and opinions, raise topics that may receive insufficient coverage in traditional media, rendering the blogosphere more relevant compared to certain traditional media sources. According to A.V. Chechulin, modern blogs possess a range of characteristics, including interactivity, hypertextuality,

anonymity, distance, voluntary contact establishment, language creativity, polyphony, syncretic communication nature, and multigenre nature [6, p. 90]. Opinion leaders can exert significant influence on their audience's perspectives: their recommendations and reviews of products, services, or events can impact consumer decisions. Furthermore, the media sphere enables participants to exchange information and opinions regardless of their location.

According to Z. A. Miloslavskaya, the Russian media landscape can be broadly divided into state media, "independent" media, and social networks [4]. In turn, blogs within social media, which were predominantly text-based and of limited popularity, have gained noticeable influence, displacing traditional mass media and communication channels, particularly among the youth [5, p. 712]. Remarkably, there has been a shift in audience dynamics: while traditional media used to attract readers, listeners, and viewers, new media, including mobile and internet resources, now create a more complex perception of information [1]. It is noteworthy that experts express the view of a gradual change in the behavior of the new media audience. The predominance of visual content, especially videos, is identified as a characteristic trend. The tendency towards shorter video content suggests that users prefer a more concise yet expressive form of information delivery.

Research analysis highlights the gradual rise in the importance of the blogosphere and media landscape as communication spheres, whose influence continues to expand [3, p. 42]. People's need for information stimulates an interest in acquiring knowledge not only from traditional mass communication sources but also from experts' opinions in various fields. The development of the blogosphere and media landscape leads to the emergence of significant figures – bloggers with influence, attracting brands and advertisers' attention. Understanding the dynamics of audience migration contributes to effective content monetization and collaboration between bloggers and brands. Concurrently, as the number of bloggers and content creators increases, competition to capture the audience's attention grows. It is important to note that the evolution of the blogosphere and media landscape in Russia is intricately tied to technological innovations, the globalization process, the emergence of new platforms, changes in audience behavior, and socio-cultural trends. Factors such as the development of social media, smartphone accessibility, and increased activity in the digital space exert substantial influence on the dynamics of this evolution. An approximate chronology of the evolution of the blogosphere and media landscape in Russia is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Evolution of the Blogosphere and Media Landscape in Russia.

Year	Description
1990	Inclusion of the Soviet Union in the Internet space
1994	Emergence of the blogosphere: First network diaries on standalone text platforms in Runet ¹
1996	Introduction of the first version of the ICQ messenger
1998	Runet surpasses 1 million users; first appearance of socio-political online media, internet editorial offices
1999	Creation of blogging platforms LiveJournal and Blogger; Russian users on LiveJournal; major federal publications provide online access, transforming their sites into full-fledged online media
2000	Emergence of news aggregator portals (Rambler, Yandex), information agencies also begin transforming their sites into online media
2002	Introduction of Russian blogging platform Diary.ru; beginnings of monetization; blogs on free website builders (Narod.ru, uCoz); development of blog search engines; launch of professional networking site LinkedIn
2003	Launch of WordPress, TypePad, and Myspace; creation of Russian internet portal LiveInternet
2004	First "Runet Prize"; blogging boom; creation of Facebook
2006	Emergence of Russian social networks VKontakte and Odnoklassniki; video hosting platform RuTube; emergence of IT blog Habr; launch of microblogging service Twitter; appearance of first Russian social internet media (Sports.ru, Look At Me)
2007	Launch of Russian segment of YouTube; rise of Tumblr platform; launch of Yandex's Russian blog platform — Ya.ru; Mail.ru's My World project; civic media significantly impact mass media; they not only draw news leads and facts from them but also actively engage with user-generated content (UGC's); RIA Novosti's "You Are the Reporter" project appears, a multimedia news aggregator specializing in user-submitted photos, videos, and text messages
2009	Emergence of collective entertainment blog Pikabu; Forbes magazine's internet project; business publication Slon.ru; launch of WhatsApp messenger
2010	Arrival of Instagram; monetization launch of Russian YouTube segment; popularization of affiliate networks, collaborations; formation of first blogger associations My Duck's Vision, CarambaTV, and "Thank You, Eva"
2011	Launch of Russian segment of Twitter; popularization of microblogs; emergence of first social networks; launch of Snapchat
2012	Introduction of Vine genre for short sketches; growing interest in visual content: videos and photos; development of social networks as platforms for blogs and content
2014	Adoption of law equating content creators with daily audiences exceeding 3,000 people to media (repealed in 2017); emergence of Musical.ly platform, later becoming TikTok
2015	First VK Fest blogger festival ² ; popularity of Periscope; launch of channel format in Telegram messenger;

¹ Russian Internet sites

	emergence of Yandex.Dzen platform; social networks become digital ecosystems with diverse services
2016	Rise in popularity of social media; influencers' growing impact on audience opinion; blog commercialization; professionalization of blogging; development of personalized content algorithms; bloggers become professional content creators, and their platforms become significant information sources for audiences; many bloggers start collaborating with brands and advertisers to monetize their content; introduction of Stories format on Instagram
2017	Challenges with state regulation and limitations in social media; continued rise in popularity and influence of bloggers; increased partnerships between bloggers and brands
2018	Introduction of "Podcasts" section in Yandex.Music; development of new media formats such as storytelling and vertical videos
2019	Brands focus on engaging content and UGC, gamification, trend of content personalization, Giveaways
2020	Heightened online activity during the COVID-19 pandemic; blogs and social media termed "new media," video content becomes a key media consumption trend; integration of e-commerce; launch of educational competition "TopBLOG"; emergence of Clubhouse app for voice communication; growth in popularity of expert content; appearance of virtual influencers; bloggers and media experiment with new content formats including AR filters, podcasts, streaming
2021	Viral popularity of TikTok; spread of short vertical video format to other social networks (VK Clips, Instagram Reels); emergence of new business social network TenChat; Russian alternative to TikTok – Yappy; trend of microblogging, infobusiness, metaverse, 15-second video content, podcasts
2022	Redistribution of social media audience, strengthening of blogger activity regulation; blogging trends focus on authenticity, honesty, naturalness, favoring these over templates and retouching; development of digital ecosystems
2023	Public legal precedents involving dishonest infopreneurs; development of video formats in social media

In the modern digital era, there is a noticeable change in the size and composition of social media audiences due to redistribution. The emergence of new media platforms encourages users to migrate to more relevant and interesting platforms. For instance, younger audiences may switch from one platform to another to stay in trend. The introduction of new interactive tools and more convenient ways of communication, content creation, and sharing can also drive audience migration in search of an improved user experience. Fashion trends also influence the audience, leading them to temporarily move to platforms that align with current trends. A case in point is the popularity of the closed-voice social network Clubhouse in 2020, which fulfilled the need for live communication during lockdowns.

Security concerns, such as data leaks and privacy breaches, might lead to reconsideration of platform choices in favor of more secure options. Excessive embedded advertising can also discourage users. Despite the widespread popularity of social networks and messengers, Russian users approach new services with caution: half of the respondents would register only if absolutely necessary, such as through professional or personal recommendations.

In 2022, among the Russian-speaking media segment, some foreign platforms took a backseat due to restrictions and blockades, while Russian online portals gained new users. TikTok administration announced the suspension of new content uploading for Russian users. The loss of effective advertising channels compelled businesses to redirect and adapt to the new situation. According to A. V. Chechulin, the recognition of certain popular social networks as extremist within the Russian Federation led to a significant transformation of the internet environment. According to Kommersant and Mediascope data, many users continue to use VPN³ to access familiar social networks and reluctantly follow bloggers on other platforms. Moreover, users' time spent on social networks has decreased overall. Despite this, banned social networks have noticeably lost their audience over the past year, while VKontakte and Telegram have increased their user coverage.

VKontakte positions itself as a universal social network, and Telegram continues to grow, especially as a news source and media platform that integrates various services. The Zen platform⁴ offers a convenient space for specialized narrow-profile text blogs and potentially video formats, while YouTube remains the primary video content hosting platform, despite rumors of possible imminent blocking. Twitch attracts gamers and streamers. The activity of Instagram bloggers has slightly decreased, but they still actively utilize the platform. Facebook, regaining some users, continues to attract a business audience.

² Organizer: Russian social networks VKontakte

³ Virtual private networks

⁴ Owner – Yandex

New media platforms, like Yappi, are focusing on original video content and recommendations. Many of these platforms are launching special programs to attract creators and develop new features that would appeal to more creative content makers. Additionally, the platform TenChat is worth noting, as it demonstrates growth potential and occupies a unique position as a business-oriented social network, opening new opportunities for content creators and advertisers.

According to recent data, there is a significant growth in mature and serious audiences on various digital platforms, including the 55+ age segment. On the other hand, young users are part of the “clip culture,” preferring to consume content primarily through mobile devices in any circumstances. In this context, an interesting dynamic emerges: the older generation maintains a preference for traditional sources of information, such as television, newspapers, and radio, while the youth is skeptical of traditional media, believing that they are propagandistic. However, young people often critically evaluate information obtained from the internet, forgetting that it is also subject to influence, and the technologies for influencing the audience in the online environment are constantly evolving.

In the view of M. V. Ilyicheva, the role of new media in influencing society is an important aspect, as increasing trust of citizens is placed in these sources of information, making them representatives of the interests of various population groups. Additionally, L. G. Egorova points out that modern media users are inclined towards interactivity, seek active participation in media processes, and desire to influence the formation of content.

Authors in social media show noticeable dynamics over the past years. There is a constant increase in the number of active content creators on various platforms, driven by the expansion of digital infrastructure and ecosystems, as well as the growing interest in blogging and streaming. According to the Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2023, approximately 70% of influencers note an increase in content production volume, indicating growing activity in this field [7]. According to a survey by VCIOM published in August 2023, users spend the most time on VKontakte among online platforms [13]. As per Mediascope analysis, users are spending more time on e-commerce resources and marketplaces [11]. According to the annual report by Brand Analytics, the number of active authors in social media in Russia reached 63 million in March 2023 [12]. In the context of subscriptions by Russian users on social networks, news communities are the most popular (77%). Educational (41%), humorous (35%), entertainment (33%), and scientific (30%) communities follow in the ranking, with a considerable gap between them.

It is necessary to highlight the significant role of the state in content regulation on social platforms. The current socio-political situation globally contributes to the expansion of authorities of governmental bodies, primarily Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications, concerning media market participants violating legislation. In Russia, social networks have faced increased sanctions for non-compliance with requirements to remove “prohibited” content. In July 2023, the president signed a law significantly increasing fines for social platforms that refuse to delete content violating legislation [9].

Thus, in our view, the following key characteristics of the Russian-speaking blogosphere and media landscape in 2023 can be highlighted:

- Cross-platform presence, in the context of the blogosphere, meaning that influencers actively maintain multiple social networks simultaneously to maximize the potential of each platform.
- The ongoing evolution of the blogosphere: the rapid emergence of new social media platforms creates alternative spaces for interaction and content exchange, emphasizing content and formats specific to each social network.
- The increasing impact of new media on users’ daily lives, focusing on individual preferences, interests, and needs, leading to the creation of more personalized content.
- Development of digital ecosystems: social media platforms are becoming media hubs, combining various online services (messaging, payment systems, e-commerce) and content, enriching user experiences, increasing time spent on the platform, and attracting a larger audience.
- The growing importance of ethical considerations in content creation and dissemination: the rising influence of social networks raises questions about ethics, data security, and psychological effects on users, sparking discussions and initiatives; cancel culture becomes more common, and bloggers face the need for more careful consideration of their posts.
- The application of artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, and chatbots is increasingly used for content creation and audience interaction.
- The increasing role of the state in regulating content within the media landscape due to global events and the growing influence of bloggers and influencers.
- A rapid increase in the number of influencers and content production volumes; social platforms actively support content creators by providing tools for content creation and mechanisms for monetizing their posts (paid subscriptions, donations), incentivizing influencers to use specific resources.
- The rise in the number of content creators leads to intensified competition for audience attention, stimulating diverse interactive and creative formats and attracting increased interest from advertisers.
- A trend towards professionalization and legalization: bloggers pay more attention to content quality, analyze topics that interest their audience, develop content strategies to maintain subscriber interest, seek monetization opportunities, use their influence to raise societal issues, support charitable initiatives, and more; on the other hand, legalizing influencers as individual entrepreneurs (sole proprietors) or self-employed individuals is an important step

towards establishing a legal status for content creators in the online sphere, garnering public recognition and support for this profession, allowing them to fulfill tax obligations to the government, providing legal protection for their commercial and financial interests in resolving conflicts with advertisers, integrating them into the economic process, and enabling them to influence the development of the media industry.

- A shift in the positioning of bloggers: a movement away from aggressive and provocative content towards more relaxed content, as network users seek to avoid such materials, resulting in an interest in everyday topics, household matters, fashion, DIY, reading, the gaming sphere, especially on platforms like Twitch, where new stars emerge and become incredibly popular in recent years.

These changes in user behavior and blogger positioning reflect current trends in the media landscape, tied to the evolution of audience interests, content adaptation to current realities, and the formation of new emphases in media content perception and creation. It can be concluded that the blogging market periodically shifts trends, revising content according to current needs. It is quite likely that in the coming years, we will witness the peak development of the media sphere, with a focus on regional bloggers. Additionally, it is anticipated that in a few years, new media platforms will stand on equal footing with traditional media. Major media conglomerates are investing in blogger development, which is a natural continuation of the current trend. It can be presumed that in the foreseeable future in Russia, the institutionalization of the blogger profession can be expected.

Studying the impact of audience migration on the development of the blogosphere leads to the following conclusions: changes in the composition and size of social platform audiences are a pertinent phenomenon dynamically altering the configuration of blogger influence and demand. Shifts in user preferences could stem from various factors, such as technological changes, socio-cultural trends, geopolitical events, as well as changes in media legislation. Audience migration directly influences blogger content, stimulating them to adapt content to the interests and needs of new platforms, underscoring the importance of flexibility and adaptation in the blogosphere.

Regarding the dynamics of Russian blogosphere and media landscape development, it can be concluded that evolution has traversed numerous stages, from initial personal blogs to the established panorama of multiple platforms and formats. The growing popularity of social platforms shapes new interaction algorithms between bloggers, users, and advertisers. In conclusion, it is important to note that the main trends in the development of the contemporary blogosphere and media landscape include: the increasing influence of new media and influencers, cross-platform presence, the development of new media platforms and digital ecosystems, a heightened attention to ethical aspects of media interaction, changing opinion leader positioning, integration of innovative technologies, the growth of influencers, intensified government regulation of the media sphere, and the legalization and institutionalization of the blogger profession.

Thus, it can be said that audience migration in social media can significantly alter audience preferences, interests, and needs, demanding adaptation of content and communication strategies from bloggers and brands. The emergence of new social media platforms and changes in algorithms on existing platforms create new opportunities for marketers and PR specialists. In our view, they should stay updated on the latest trends to effectively leverage these platforms for promotion.

Further research in the field of the blogosphere and media landscape represents a crucial resource for a deeper understanding and analysis of the evolution of digital media, their impact on society, and interactions among participants in the information ecosystem. Research can delve into more detailed examination of which types of content and bloggers exert the most influence on public opinion, political beliefs, socio-cultural preferences, and behavioral tendencies. It can analyze how new media platforms will develop, how they will compete with traditional media, and how audience preferences will change. Additionally, studying how interactions with social media affect users' psychological well-being and exploring practices that contribute to a healthier content perception could be valuable avenues of research.

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