This information bulletin surveys online news and mass media in the Russian Internet. This survey is based on data from the Yandex.News service for September 2008 — January 2009. During this period, Yandex.News was processing in real time information from more than 2,200 online publishers.
1. Overall figures

According to the Yandex.News service, as of January 2009, every working day at least 36,000 new media items appeared in the Russian internet (every nonworking day there were at least 9,000 new items). Printed, all these items would make a daily paper\(^1\) of 10,000 pages (excluding pictures). It would take a month to be through with all these news stories, reading with an average speed of 1,000 characters per minute. (Luckily, almost a week of this month could be spared, as 20% of news is “copy-pasted”).\(^2\)

As of September 2008 – January 2009, an average online media source released 16 news items per working day and 4 news items per nonworking day. To compare, every work day the online version of the Kommersant newspaper issued 150 stories, Lenta.ru publication had 200, the news agency RIA Novosti came up with 450 news items.

A large majority of news appears in the morning and early afternoon (from ten in the morning to three o’clock Moscow time), approximately 10% of news is published at night, between 22 and 6 Moscow time (fig.1). Reading online news is most popular with web users during working hours, from 9\(^0\) to 17\(^0\), which makes online media “daytime media”. In the morning, there are newspapers and radio, television takes up the evening hours, and internet comes in the afternoon.

Fig.1 News items published online and web users’ interest for them against online activity measured over 24 hours

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\(^1\) A standard format for a daily newspaper is about 5,000 characters per page.

\(^2\) See 4.1

In the fall of 2008, “financial crisis” was profiled in online mass media more than 38,000 times (35 times more often than in fall 2007), and “economic crisis” was mentioned more than 9,000 times (18 times more often in the same period). More than 20% of news items in the “Economics” category included the word “crisis”.

According to TNS and Yandex.News, October 2008
2. Structure of media sphere

In addition to traditional media, the Russian Internet also has specialized services (such as news aggregators) that help online readers navigate in the information space and assist publishers in their business. All together they build up media sphere of the Russian Internet.

There are three key types of the Russian-language online media.

**Professional online media** are websites regularly publishing news stories made by their own editorial team. As a rule, professional media have a rather rigid structure of topics. Media of this kind are analogous to traditional offline newspapers and magazines, some of them are officially certified as media resources. Lenta.ru or Gazeta.ru are typical examples of professional online media.

**Online versions of offline media** are websites of media sources producing offline content and also publishing it online (like Echo Moskvy radio station or Vedomosti newspaper). Currently, websites of many offline publishers are regarded as independent media instead of being just channels of distribution.

**Social media** are websites where news stories are published and commented by registered users. Web users can write stories themselves (as on habrahabr.ru) or copy them from other sources (as on newsland.ru). In addition, on this kind of websites, users can influence how a published item is positioned on a page by voting for or against it.

The border line between professional and social media is fuzzy. For instance, many professional news resources allow their readers to leave comments. Or, a website may publish both editorial content and user-generated content. The main distinction between these two types of online media is that professional websites have a relatively small number of appointed authors, while anyone, potentially, can deliver content to social media websites.
Other than websites publishing news stories, there are **news aggregators** — websites that automatically aggregate, organize and display these news stories. News aggregation websites do not have editorial boards, they are based on text and user behavior analysis that allows them to group news together by subject, define what events are most relevant to a user’s interest right now, and publish the most important news on the front page.

News aggregators are not to be confused with **traffic aggregators**. A traffic aggregator is, essentially, a sort of a banner exchange network and might be taken for a news website only by mistake. A traffic aggregator has on its front page links to items published by partner publishers. Partner publishers, in their turn, display on their pages ads linking to aggregator pages. In contrast to a news aggregator, which aims at capturing the zeitgeist of the day, a traffic aggregator strives to attract at any cost all sorts of visitors to partner websites.

Some news aggregating websites in the Russian Internet:
- Google News news.google.ru
- Novoteka News Network novoteka.ru
- Rambler News news.rambler.ru
- Yandex.News news.yandex.ru

Some most known Russian and Ukrainian traffic aggregators:
- Beta Novoteka beta.novoteka.ru
- ReadMe.Ru readme.ru
- RedTram ru.redtram.com
- MarketGid smi.marketgid.com
3. News item

3.1. Size of a news item

On average, a news item\(^3\) consists of 210 words. A small part of news items accounts for a “long tail” of long publications (fig. 2). Due to this “long tail”, the average size of a news item differs considerably from a typical, most common size.

A typical online media item consists of 70-80 words combined into 5-6 sentences. Its headline has 6-7 words. In\(^4\) general, there is no relation between the size of a news item and its subject: there are both very long and very short stories in every category. On average, the shortest news stories are sports reports, while the science-related news items are\(^5\) the longest. A typical sports report consists of only 64 words in 3—4 sentences, and an average science article has 106 words in 8 sentences.

The longest article\(^6\) released in fall 2008 had 60,239 words — it was a report published in the Izvestia Udmurtskoy Respubliki (Proceedings of The Udmurt Republic) on execution of the Program for social and economic development of the Udmurt Republic in 2005—2009.

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\(^3\) A news item is any publication in professional online mass media.

\(^4\) A typical sports report would end here counting from the beginning of this section.

\(^5\) And a typical science report would end here.

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By contrast, bloggers are normally more reticent with the words than journalists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mass media</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headline</strong></td>
<td>7–8 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>210 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Yandex.News and Yandex blog search, Fall 2008.

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3.2. Geography and personalities

According to Yandex.News, location of event in news reports is mentioned rather infrequently: in the fall of 2008, only 21% of news stories had geographical names in them. 9% of news items mentioned more than one geographical name.

People had a much better chance to be mentioned in the news this fall, especially if the news was political (75% items), cultural (73%) or sports (63%). Even in the least “personality-friendly” Hi-Tech category, approximately a quarter of news stories had personal names. The most “personality-friendly” category (more than three personal names per news item) included news about cultural events.

Table 1 Average number of geographical names per news item in Yandex.News categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical names</th>
<th>World</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Auto</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Hi-Tech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Average number of personal names per news item in Yandex.News categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal names</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>World</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
<th>Auto</th>
<th>Hi-Tech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

Politicians are most frequently mentioned in the news (fig. 3). Footballer Andrey Arshavin is the only non-politician in the Top 20 most frequently mentioned personalities.

Fig. 3 Top 10 most frequently mentioned in online media personalities

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008
4. Information sources and reprinting

4.1. Authoritative sources and “copy-pasting”

According to Yandex, about 8% of news items published in the fall of 2008 referred to other mass media resources by featuring their names or by directly linking to their websites.

This fall, top 10 most quoted publications included (in alphabetical order): BBC Russian, radio station Echo Moskvy, Gazeta.ru, the international information group Interfax, the publishing house Kommersant, Lenta.ru, RIA Novosti, the information agency REGNUM, the Sport-Express newspaper, the Vedomosti newspaper.

Some news stories wander from publisher to publisher practically unaltered. This fall, just as two years ago⁶, this kind of copied news articles accounted for about 20% of all news in the Russian media sphere. A large part of “copy-pasted” publications are political news or international relations news: more than a third of all news in these categories (36%) is replicated. Journalists preferred to create original news stories writing about technology, internet or culture (“copy-pasted” publications in these categories amounted to about 10%). In the fall of 2008, only 20% of media resources published exclusively original news.

This fall, the record breaking news resource was the Azerbaijani Trend News Agency with the news report on presidential elections in Azerbaijan released on the 15th of October — this report scored 112 copies.

4.2. Comments and quotes

This fall, 14% of news reports included experts’ opinion expressed either in a quote or as reported speech (fig.4). Political and business news had the highest number of experts’ comments, while technology news, sports and current events were the least commented.

Among the more active media resources, the newspaper Continent of Siberia was the most successful in procuring expert opinion — it had, on average, 3.3 comments per one news item. The highest number of comments — 48 — appeared in the Interfax article published on the 31st of October concerning the Road Police (GIBDD) report on traffic violation.

Fig. 4 Number of comments in the news

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

No comments 86%
One comment 9%
Two comments 3%
Three comments 1%
Four comments or more 1%

In terms of being most quoted this fall, as expected, no one could compare to politicians. The clear leaders were Dmitry Medvedev (17,767 quotes) and Vladimir Putin (11,646 quotes) (table 4).

Table 3 Top 10 most frequently quoted in the online media personalities (Fall 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dmitry Medvedev</td>
<td>17,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>11,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexey Kudrin</td>
<td>5,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Lavrov</td>
<td>4,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viktor Yushchenko</td>
<td>3,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandr Lukashenko</td>
<td>3,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris Gryzlov</td>
<td>2,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yury Luzhkov</td>
<td>2,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail Saakashvili</td>
<td>2,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulia Timoshenko</td>
<td>1,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

Four out of ten most quoted statements are about the North Caucasus, two statements concern the Russian-Ukrainian relations, and another two refer to the economy crisis (table 5). Interestingly, two years ago the Russian-Georgian problem was no less acute: five out of ten most circulated quotes related to this issue.

Within these two years the Russian online media sphere has considerably matured. In the fall of 2006 the authors of the two most popular in online media statements were two relatively little-known officials, but now the person, whose quotes occupy the top three positions in the quotation rating, is the president of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev.

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8 Mikhail Tyurkin, Deputy Director of the Federal Migration Service and Aleksandr Neradko, head of the Federal Air Navigation Authority.
Table 5  Top 10 most quoted in online media statements (Fall 2008)

“We must set things straight regarding Ukraine's debt and get it to pay the debt back voluntarily, or compulsorily, as is required by the law and by our bilateral relations.”  
(About Ukraine’s gas debt).  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
160 times

“The job of President of Russia is very concrete and practical. But I say quite frankly, based on my own experience, that it is far from easy to make decisions that will affect the lives (in the most direct sense), welfare and health of thousands of citizens, and the reputation and destiny of a great people. When I make these decisions I need to have it firmly in my head that there are things that cannot be given up.”  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
105 times

“We need to take practical steps to boost the rouble’s role as one of the currencies involved in international payments. We must encourage issuing new securities in roubles and preferably in the Russian market. The ultimate goal of all these processes is to make the rouble a regional currency. But the more powerful financial centres there are in the world and the greater our interdependence, the safer and more sustainable global development will be.”  (In connection with the global financial crisis).  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
81 times

“Military investigators have determined the person who activated, a fire safety system on board the submarine.” (About the incident on Nerpa sub).  Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for the Investigation Committee of the Prosecutor General's Office.  
71 times

“As a result of Georgia’s military offensive on South Ossetia, tension has significantly increased in the entire Caucasus region. So, the local adventure of the Tbilisi regime has triggered fueling up tensions far outside the region, in entire Europe and worldwide. It questioned the principles of global order. The global financial crisis also started as a local emergency.”  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
70 times

“This is a clear provocation. It is not the first time they have done such a thing: they arrange provocations and then blame Russia,” said Lavrov in Lima. In addition, Lavrov stressed that Moscow considers a provocation that fact that Georgia’s president invited a president of another country for a celebration in Tbilisi and then took him in a car to a different state. (About an alleged attack on the presidents of Georgia and Poland on the Georgia-Ohsetia border).  Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister  
70 times

Russia’s Prime Minister, leader of Yedinaya Rossiya (United Russia), promises in the time of the global economic crisis to do everything possible to prevent economic collapse in Russia, to protect bank deposits of citizens, to protect legal interests of all those who invested their money in housing construction.  Vladimir Putin, Russia’s Prime Minister  
69 times

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Moscow will stand up for the rights of Russian television companies to broadcast their programs to Ukraine in line with general practice, expressing confidence that this issue can be settled. (In connection with the ban of Russian television channels in Ukraine).  Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister  
67 times

“This is truly a historic event and we took a difficult road to get here. The peoples of these republics have endured much to reach this moment,” said president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday after signing the treaties in Kremlin.” (In connection with acceptance of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia).  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
65 times

“What did NATO secure, what did NATO ensure? NATO only provoked the conflict, and not more than that. The events in the Caucasus have merely confirmed the absolute correctness of the idea of a new European Security Treaty,” said Medvedev.  Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia  
64 times

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008
5. Visitor traffic

56% of readers of online mass media purposefully search for information on the latest events: they log on to media websites, enter news queries on search engines, use news aggregators, or look for online publishers in catalogs. 29% of online readers visit media websites via links from banners placed on traffic aggregators, other media websites or banner exchange networks. It is hard to tell if the remaining 15% visitors on online media resources are task-oriented or incidental.

Fig. 5 Visitor traffic on Russian online media websites

![Visitor traffic diagram]

Based on analysis of the first hundred online media websites with available Liveinternet.ru statistics, December 2008

News consumers in Russia, on average, are more task-oriented than their Ukrainian counterparts — news readers in Russia directly log on to media websites and make news queries on search engines more frequently, while Ukrainian news readers are more likely to visit these websites by clicking through from banner ads on traffic aggregators or banner exchange networks.

The percentage of visitors on media websites coming from banner exchange networks, rather considerable two years ago, now has dropped. This can be explained by the growing popularity of traffic aggregators, which are able to drive additional visitors to websites more effectively.

Publishers actively using traffic aggregators can have up to two thirds of their audience redirected from these websites. For instance, Bugnet online publisher receives 63% of its audience from aggregators, and Novosti-Ukrainsky Portal gets 60%.

\[\text{News queries are search queries that, according to Yandex's search, web users explicitly make to find information about a certain event. Yandex search processes more than a hundred thousand news queries per day.}\]
A publisher may make use of a number of traffic aggregators (fig. 6). For instance, as of December 2008, the Ukrainian newspaper *Fraza* had partnerships with seven traffic aggregating networks.

**Fig. 6** Number of traffic aggregators used by media websites

- One 13%
- Two 13%
- Three 17%
- Four and more 44%
- None 13%

Based on analysis of the first hundred online media websites with available Liveinternet.ru statistics, December 2008

As a general rule, the decision not to participate in traffic aggregating networks represents a conscious editorial choice. Media resources that make this choice normally do not participate in banner exchange networks either.
6. Popular topics

A large majority of news does not attract much attention and is covered by only a few media resources. **Only 5% of all news** was covered by **more than 20 publishers** and only single events get an even bigger coverage.

Generally, online media do not limit the range of their topics (table 6): only 3% publishers focus on only one theme.

**Table 6** Number of topics covered by online media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of topics</th>
<th>Percentage of online media covering this number of topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

**Fig. 7** News topics in online media

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

- Economics: 27%
- Sport: 17%
- Society: 15%
- Politics: 14%
- Accidents: 11%
- Culture: 5%
- Other: 12%
This fall, the economic crisis was in the focus of attention of online media, outweighing all other events. At the same time, the global crash was not the only economy-related topic getting extensive media coverage. For example, throughout the fall, there was a lot of the “gas” news in the “Economics” category, and after the winter holidays the “gas issue” became the hottest topic (fig. 8). Science, medicine, travel and internet are the least popular: these topics generated only 1% of all news in the fall 2008.

Fig. 8 Number of news items on economic crisis, rouble/dollar exchange rate and gas crisis in the Economics category per week


Number of news items returned to search queries (translated from Russian)

"(financial economic) << crisis",
"(dollar/rouble/currency/euro) << exchange rate",
"gas ~ sector ~ israel ~ palestine".
News popularity might also be defined through frequency of a specific news query on Yandex search. A person making such query, as a rule, already knows about the event and wishes to find out more. Fig. 9 shows percentage of news queries made by web users on Yandex search in the fall of 2008 distributed across the Yandex.News categories. Most often, understandably, people wanted to know more about events in society and accidents.

Fig. 9 Topics of news queries

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008

Fig. 10 Top ten most covered events in online media, Fall 2008

According to Yandex.News, Fall 2008
Appendix

Key facts and figures

According to the Yandex.News service, as of January 2009, every working day at least 36,000 new media items appear in the Russian internet, every nonworking day there are at least 9,000 new items. On average, an online media source releases 16 new items per working day and 4 new items per nonworking day.

An average online news item consists of 210 words combined into 13—14 sentences. Its headline has 7—8 words. In contrast with journalists, bloggers are much more reticent. An average blog posting consists of 101 words with a 2-3-word heading.

One out of five news stories has a geographical name in it, while a personal name is mentioned in every second article. 14% of news items include expert opinion expressed either in a quote or as reported speech. In the fall of 2008, the most frequently quoted persons in online media were Dmitry Medvedev (17,767 quotes) and Vladimir Putin (11,646 quotes).

About 8% of news refer to other mass media resources by featuring their names or by directly linking to their websites.

The amount of “copy-pasted” news — news articles copied unaltered from other media sources — during the past few years has held at 20%. In the fall of 2008, 80% online publishers copied news from other sources at least once.

56% of readers of online mass media are purposefully searching for information on the latest events, while 29% are incidental readers.

News consumers in Russia are more task-oriented than their Ukrainian counterparts. In the fall of 2008, the majority of news items (26%) appeared in the “Economics” category. This fall, “financial crisis” has been profiled in online mass media more than 38,000 times, and “economic crisis” has been mentioned more than 9,000 times. More than 20% of news items in the “Economics” category used the word “crisis”.

Information bulletin Media Sphere of the Russian Internet (according to the Yandex.News service)
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