

Mass Media in the Russian Internet

Based on Yandex.news data
Autumn 2006

Contents

A Portrait of Russian Internet Mass Media

Information Activity of Russian Online Mass Media.....	1
Geography of Russian-Language Online Mass Media.....	2
Traffic. Sources of Audience for Internet Media.....	3
Authority and Citations.....	3

People and Topics Covered in the Russian Internet

Subjects and Events.....	4
Personalities and Quotes.....	7

Summary.....	10
--------------	----

A Portrait of Russian Internet Mass Media

Information Activity of Russian Online Mass Media

According to surveys, in October 2006 close to 13% of the Russian population read the news on the Internet*. Along with the general audience of the Russian Internet, this amount is steadily increasing: a year ago, only 10% of Russians read the news online.

On the web, news is delivered by Internet mass media – systematically updated information sites that have regular audience and are often officially licensed as mass media (*in this research, the term Internet mass media is used to denote both purely online resources and websites of traditional mass media*).

The data of Yandex.News** show that some **27,000** news stories are published in the Russian Internet on weekdays and around **6,000** on weekends and holidays. The number of news items in the Russian-language online media is growing as rapidly as the daily audience of the Russian Internet. Over the year, the number of news stories per Russian-language user did not change: both the daily audience and the daily supply of news in the Russian Internet gained **50%**.

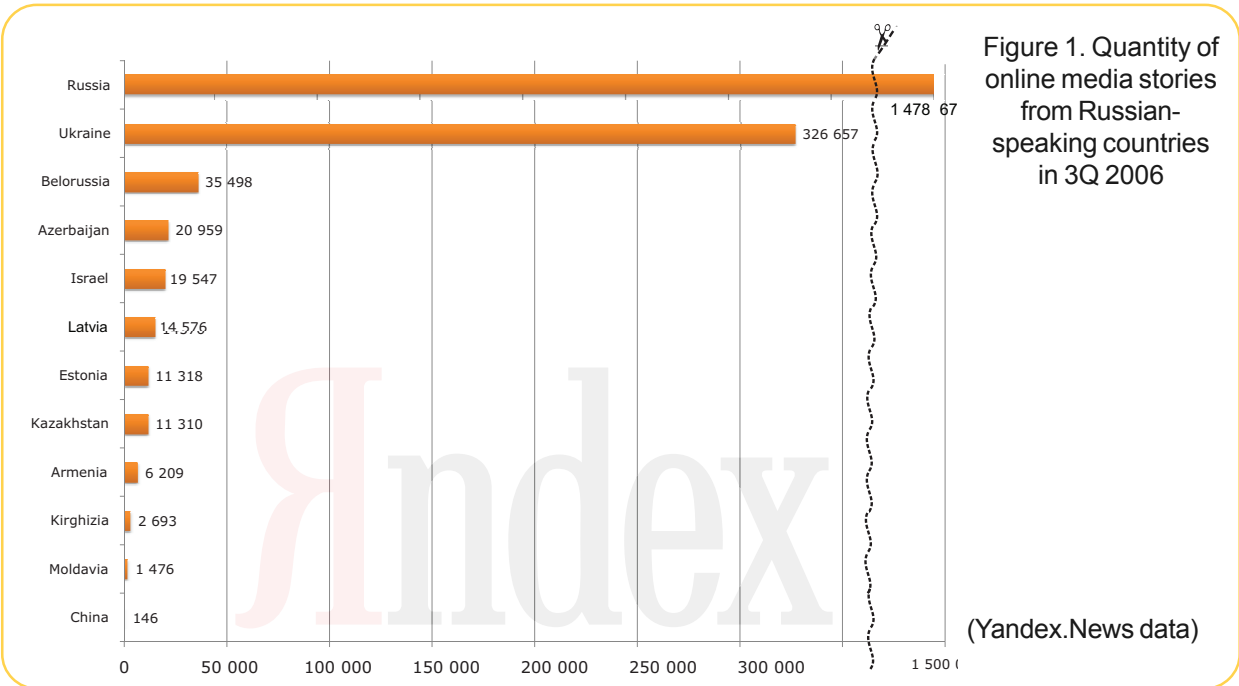
Part of the content offered to the users is not generated by Internet media themselves, but is rather copied from their peers in the media business. According to Yandex.News, for several years in a row the share of “copypaste” in the Russian Internet news has been **20%** of the total amount of information messages.

An average Internet Media Institution creates **18 news stories daily**. The most active mass media offer a much stronger information flow: on average, the first hundred of the most actively writing institutions provide **161 news stories per weekday** (compared to 102 stories a year ago).

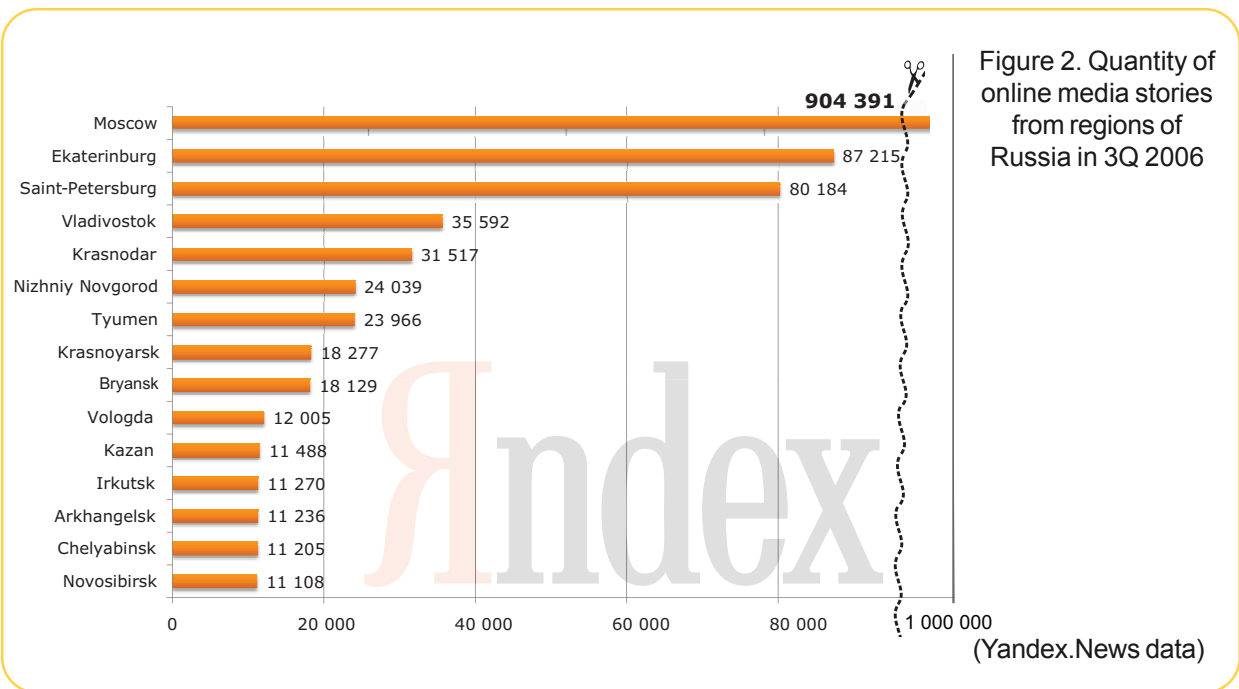
Every year, the share of specialized media providing information on specific industries in the Russian Internet increases. On average, one specialized edition creates 4 information messages per day, and the most active generate 44 news items (approximately four times less than the mediasphere average for actively writing institutions).

Geography of Russian-Language Online Mass Media

The geography of the Russian Internet media is fairly vast. More than **75%** of all Russian-language stories are published by mass media operating in Russia, the rest come predominantly from the neighboring countries. The rating of countries that are the most active suppliers of news to the Russian Internet users is as follows:



The list of 15 Russian cities whose stories are most often featured in Yandex.News is shown below:



Traffic. Sources of Audience for Internet Media

There are different ways for readers to reach newswire pages. For the most frequently visited online media, **only one third** (on average) of their audience “remember” where exactly they usually read their news, i. e. type the address in the browser’s bar or go to the site from their bookmarks. These visitors can be called “subscribers” or the regular audience of a news site. Other sources of user traffic for a typical Internet medium are banner exchange networks (including between the media themselves), website directories (for instance, Rambler’s Top-100), news aggregation sites (sites that do not generate their own content but provide links to online newswires, for example, Novoteka, RedTram, Yandex.News), and search engines.

Distribution of referrals from various traffic sources to pages of Internet mass media is presented below (Fig.3):

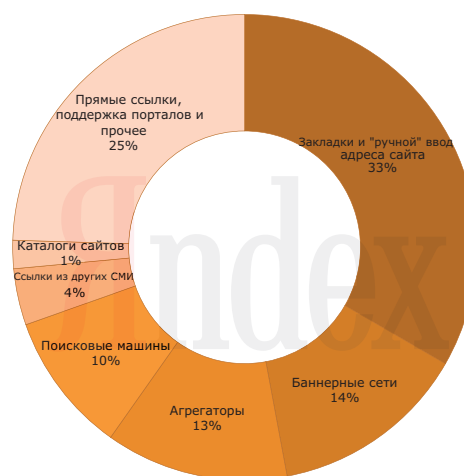
The main source of “non-regular” audience for the majority of Internet media is banner networks. Their input in the online media’s number of visitors may be as high as **50%**. Two other notable traffic generators are news news aggregation sites and directories. Mass media featured on the first page of web-directory Rambler’s Top-100 usually get up to **10%** of traffic from this directory.

Some newswires (like the sites of Echo of Moscow radio station and New Izvestia and Trud newspapers) get around **35%** of their audience from Yandex.News pages alone. In October 2006, four million users of Yandex.News clicked through to news websites 20 million times. Hence, each user visited an average of five news pages of partner mass media.

Due to the effect of “traffic multiplication” created by news aggregators, some of the Internet media adjust their editorial policy in order to generate more traffic (for example, by dividing one news story into several smaller ones, putting up flashy headings, and so on).

Another means of attracting the audience is placing links to the news on large portals. However, this approach is not yet widespread: in the Russian Internet, the only medium actively using it is the business newspaper Vzglyad, which replaced RBC news on the main page of Mail.ru portal about a year ago (according to Yandex estimates, the support from Mail.ru provides Vzglyad with up to 300,000 visitors per day, or 70% of its daily audience).

Figure 3. Traffic structure of Russian Internet media



(based on analysis of the first 50 online media by number of visitors that provide open access to their statistics at LiveInternet.ru counter, November 2006)

Authority and Citations

The audience’s interest in Internet media can be measured by traffic as well as other parameters. For example, to assess the “authority” of online resources, Yandex Topical Citation Index can be used. This indicator accounts for the qualitative characteristics of links to a cited website from other sites – the so-called “link weight” (you can find more detailed information about the TCI [here](#)).

Another criterion to assess user interest in online mass media is the number of times they are mentioned in Russian-language weblogs (according to Yandex Blog Search). The ratings of mass media citations on the web and in blogs are shown below:

Clearly, both lists cannot be considered representative of all the Russian Internet audience. Bloggers may pay little attention to the most frequently-visited websites. Afisha magazine, Echo of Moscow radio station, and Kommersant newspaper are among the top ten resources quoted by bloggers, although they fall behind ten most frequently visited sites (according to Mail.ru, Rambler, and LiveInternet counters). On the other hand, RBC and Utro.ru, which enjoy high traffic, failed to make it into ten Internet mass media that are most often quoted by bloggers.

People and Topics Covered in the Russian Internet

Subjects and Events

Incidents, sports, and culture are the most interesting news subjects for the readers of online mass media. Their attention to incidents is more than double that to political news. The preferences of Yandex.News audience are shown below:

Figure 4. Citation ratings of Russian Internet mass media

"Authority" of mass media by TCI	Internet mass media most frequently quoted in blogs
1. Gazeta.ru	1. Lenta.ru
2. RIA Novosti	2. Vzglyad
3. RBC	3. NEWSru.com
4. Lenta.ru	4. Gazeta.ru
5. Komsomolskaya Pravda	5. Kommersant
6. Utro.ru	6. RIA Novosti
7. Izvestia.ru	7. Komsomolskaya Pravda
8. Kommersant	8. Echo of Moscow
9. Newsru.com	9. Afisha
10. Nezavisimaya Gazeta	10. REGNUM

(Yandex Search and Yandex Blog Search data, November 2006)

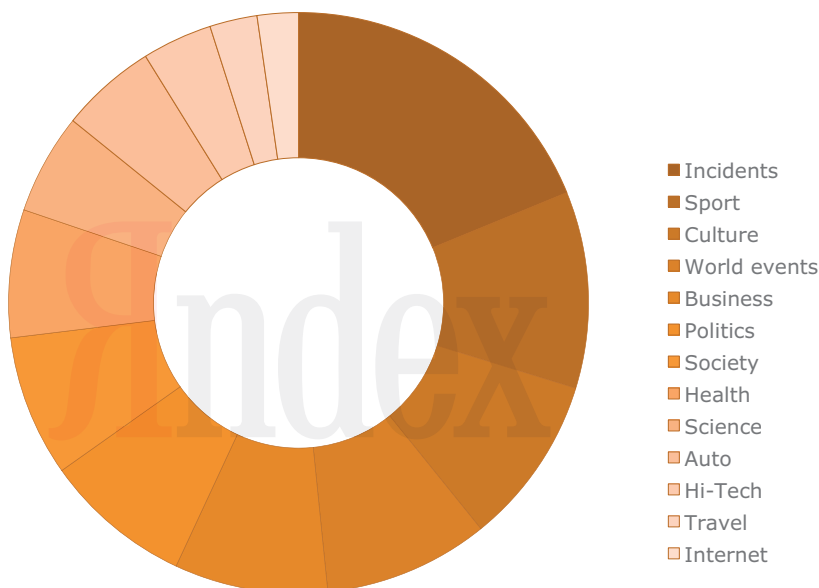
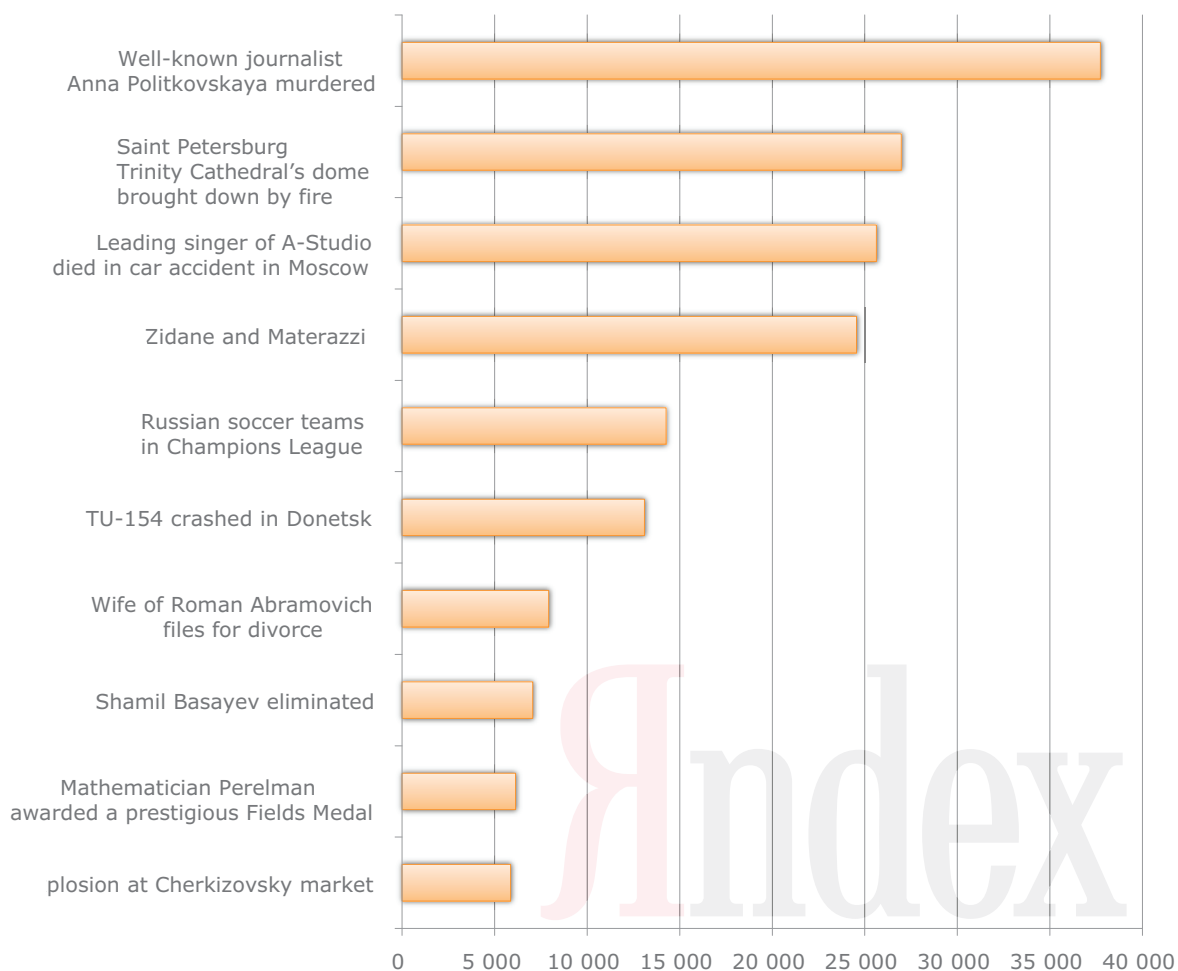


Figure 5. Average daily visits by main sections of Yandex.News Incidents

(Yandex.News data, November 2006)

Another indicator of readers' information needs is the statistics of the most popular event-related search queries:

Figure 6. Most frequent news-related search queries (August-October 2006)

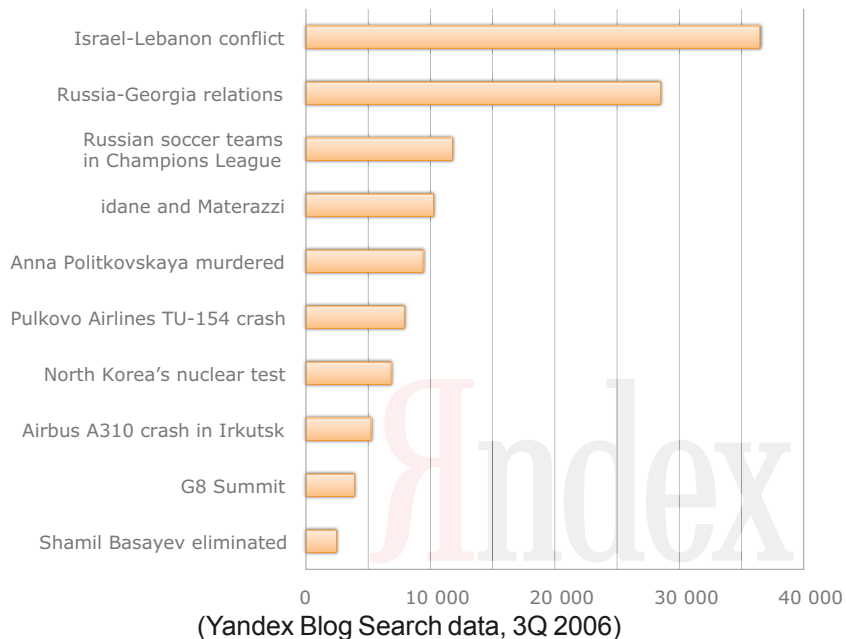


(Yandex Search data, autumn 2006)

The most popular news-related search query in the last three months was about Anna Politkovskaya. The second was about the fire in the Trinity Cathedral in Saint Petersburg. People interested in this event usually submitted a query “Trinity Cathedral is burning”, with the verb in the present tense. There were a total of 910 news stories and 1375 blog posts on this subject. Many eyewitnesses of the fire provided a live coverage in their blogs (online diaries), leaving the mass media behind.

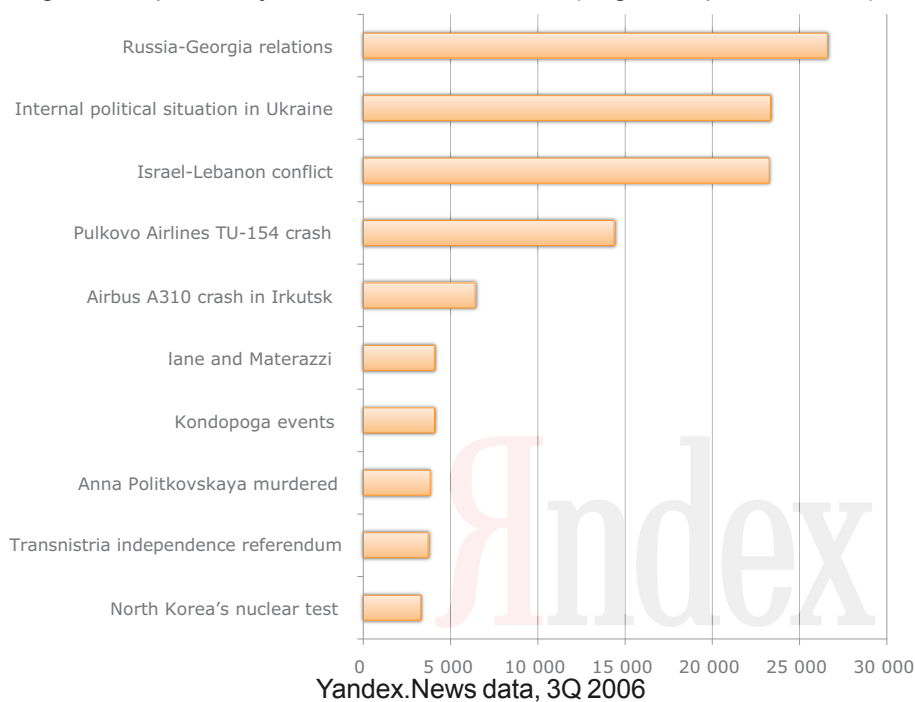
Blog authors comprise the active segment of Internet users. Tens of thousands of bloggers write every day about what they see with their own eyes and what they learn from news reports. In August-October 2006, bloggers discussed the following subjects:

Figure 7. Top ten news-related subjects in Russian-language blogs (August-October 2006)



The mass media version of the information picture of this period is different. Events that caused the greatest response of the media are listed below:

Figure 8. Top ten subjects in online mass media (August-September 2006)



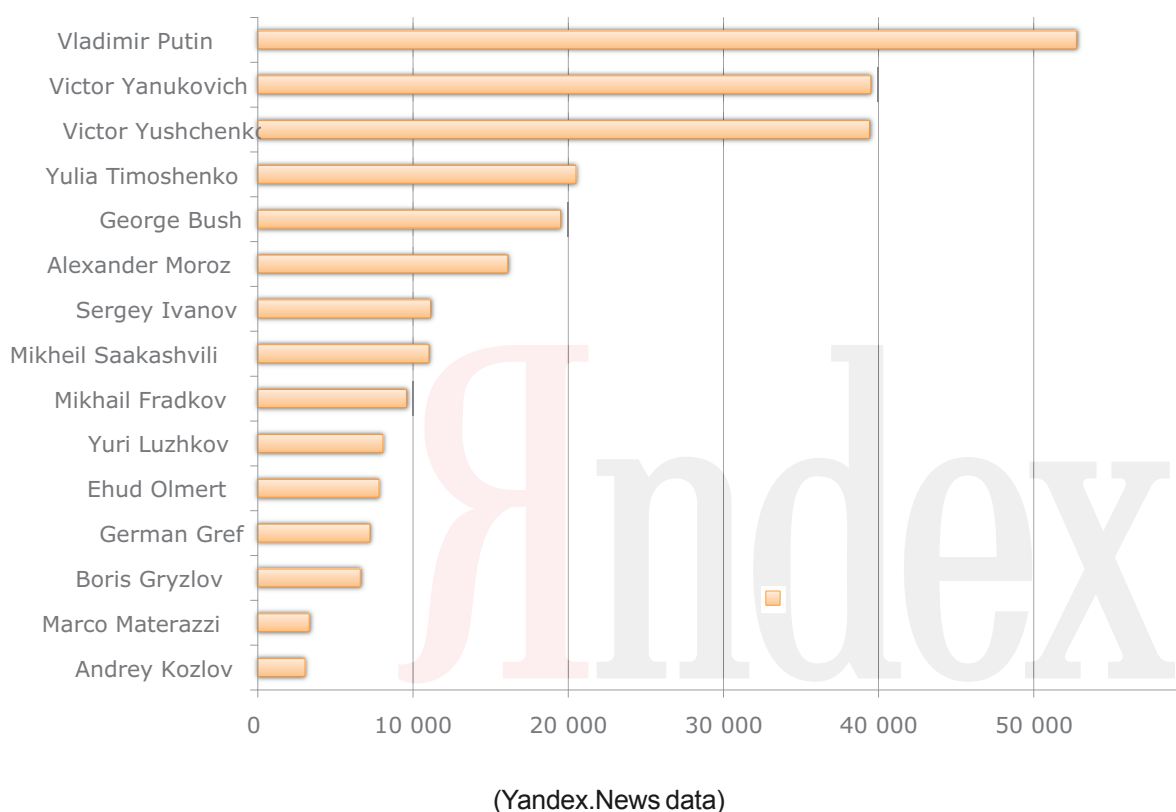
Here a marked difference can be seen between the Russian mass media and the blogosphere. Over the last three months, the highest number of media comments covered Russian-Georgian relations. In the blogs, this subject came second, while the Israel-Lebanon conflict unraveling far from the Russian border was the number one subject in the blogs. Transnistria independence referendum caused substantial reaction of the media and made it into the ten major events, yet the bloggers were not inclined to discuss it. And despite the fact that more than 23,000 stories in Internet mass media covered the situation in Ukraine (20% of all top-ten stories), Russian-language bloggers did not show much interest. On the other hand, in contrast to the media, blogosphere acknowledged the G8 Summit. The three-day summit was among the ten most popular subjects in the blogs together with the “long-lasting” Israel-Lebanon conflict and Russian-Georgian relations.

Personalities and Quotes

Beside the information about the most popular events, Yandex.News keeps statistics on the most popular people by citations in news stories (based on Press Portraits section). These data can help complete the picture of events that attracted the most attention of the media, since high interest in a person attests to interest in the event connected to the person.

The list of the most important people for the Russian mass media (ranked by the total number of references) is as follows:

Figure 9. References to information space participants in the news in Q3 2006 (by absolute number of references)



Today, *Vladimir Putin* is the politician mentioned the most often by the Russian-language mass media.

The following three places are taken by Ukrainian political figures: *Victor Yanukovich*, *Victor Yushchenko*, and *Yulia Timoshenko*. The two Victors go side by side in our list, Yushchenko behind Yanukovich by some three thousand citations (less than one per cent of the total). The Ukrainians followed by *George Bush* have pushed *Michael Fradkov* down to the sixth place. However, this may be the result of high activity of Russian-language online media in Ukraine.

The list of 15 personalities in the limelight of the media's attention is by 90% comprised of politicians. The few non-political figures on the list are two soccer players and economist *Andrey Kozlov*. The only lady in this men's company is Yulia Timoshenko.

Another list that includes 15 people who got more attention in July-September 2006 than in April-June is shown below (Fig.10):

The first place is taken by *Andrey Kozlov*, Deputy Chairman of the Central Bank of Russia, who was murdered.

The second place is occupied by *Kofi Annan*, his second term as United Nations Secretary-General coming to an end. *Kofi Annan* was mentioned predominantly in connection with Israel-Lebanon conflict and the 61st UN General Assembly opened on September 20.

Hugo Chavez called George Bush "the devil", said that oil prices above \$50 were fair, promised to invest half a billion dollars in the Russian energy sector, and landed the third in the rating.

The interest of mass media in *Marat Safin* more than doubled, not only through tennis, but mostly due to his friendship with Daria Zhukova, whose affair with Roman Abramovich was actively discussed by the media.

Maria Sharapova, on the other hand, earned her fame in the tennis court, moving up to the second place in Women's Tennis Association ranking and making it to the fifteenth place in the rating of relative popularity growth.

Figure 10. Personalities with the number of references in the media sharply higher in Q3 2006
Increase in media attention to previous quarter

Person	Increase in media attention to previous quarter
Andrey Kozlov	81800%
Kofi Annan	7900%
Hugo Chavez	1400%
Marco Materazzi	800%
Ramzan Kadyrov	430%
Victor Yanukovich	390%
Alexander Moroz	290%
Marat Safin	240%
Andrey Sychev	210%
Vladimir Resin	200%
Condoleezza Rice	200%
Boris Gryzlov	180%
Ehud Olmert	180%
Yuri Luzhkov	130%
Maria Sharapova	130%

(15 people mentioned by the media more frequently in the third quarter of 2006 compared to the second quarter)

Another important characteristic that helps assess the popularity of a person with the mass media is the number of publications of a comment. Quotations in the News , a section of Yandex.News, makes it possible to identify the most extensively quoted statements:

Figure 11. Ten comments most quoted by mass media on the web in 3Q 2006

Rank	Number of publications in online media	Comment	Author
1	258	Today, we have closely analyzed labor-market demand with due account of the population of the Russian Federation and decided that we won't grant residence or labor quotas to Georgian citizens, Tyurkin told NTV channel.	Mikhail Tyurkin, Deputy Head of Federal Migration Service of Russia
2	248	According to Alexander Neradko, Head of Federal Air Navigation Agency, the decision to suspend air links with Georgia is due to the growing debt of Georgian air space users.	Alexander Neradko, Head of Federal Air Navigation Agency
3	184	Alkhanov believes that the word "Chechnya" has a negative tinge, is perceived negatively, and has no legal basis.	Alu Alkhanov, President of Chechen Republic
4	183	According to Vladimir Putin, "things that sometimes happen at trade markets are, in one word, lawlessness."	Vladimir Putin, President of Russia
5	179	Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov claimed that the Tbilisi was seeking to provoke Russia into an inadequate response.	Sergey Ivanov, Defense Minister of Russia
6	173	Speaker of the State Duma Boris Gryzlov told journalists that no more than four specially designated zones will be created in Russia for gambling activities.	Boris Gryzlov, Speaker of the State Duma
7	162	Earlier on Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov stated that banditry in Georgia has reached state proportions.	Sergey Ivanov, Defense Minister of Russia
8	145	Vladimir Putin promised that law enforcement bodies would make every effort to ensure objective investigation of the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya.	Vladimir Putin, President of Russia
9	135	Regarding natural gas supplies from Russia, Mr. Yanukovich told journalists that "price parameters were roughly determined for the rest of the current year and the beginning of next year".	Victor Yanukovich, head of the Party of Regions
10	233	According to the Minister of Internal Affairs Yuri Lutsenko, when working in Donetsk Organized Crime Investigation Department (UBOP) Roman Yerokhin specialized in economic crimes.	Yuri Lutsenko, Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

(Yandex.News data, 3Q 2006)

Conclusions

Approximately **27,000** news stories appear in the Russian Internet on weekdays and some **6,000** on weekends and holidays. The number of news stories in the Russian-language online media is growing as fast as the Russian Internet daily audience. According to Yandex.News, the share of news that the publishers copy from other media has remained at **20%** of the total amount of information messages for several years in a row.

On average, **only one third** of the audience of the most popular Russian-language mass media “remember” the exact location of their usual sources of news (i. e. type the address in the browser’s bar or go to the site from their bookmarks). Other sources of user traffic for a typical Internet media institution are banner exchange networks, website directories, news aggregators, and search engines.

The readers of Russian-language Internet media are mostly interested in news on **incidents, sports, and culture**. Notably, **reader demand for political news is much lower than the supply of stories on the subject** (of the ten major news subjects from the viewpoint of mass media in the third quarter of 2006, only three were not related to politics).

Two statements most widely quoted by the Russian-language online media in the third quarter of 2006 were made by relatively little-known and non-public government officials – *Mikhail Tyurkin*, Deputy Head of Federal Migration Service of Russia, and *Alexander Neradko*, Head of Federal Air Navigation Agency (both comments refer to the Russian-Georgian conflict).

Russian-language mass media often write about Ukrainian politicians. In the rating of newsmakers most frequently mentioned by Russian online newswires over the same period, *Victor Yanukovich*, *Victor Yushchenko* and *Yulia Timoshenko* took the second, third, and fourth place.

The largest amounts of news in the Russian Internet are delivered by online media in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. As for the most informationally active cities, Moscow takes the lead, followed by Ekaterinburg and Saint Petersburg.

Yandex Analytical group

analyst@yandex-team.ru

* According to All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM)

**News aggregators offer possibilities (traditional for the web) to measure both readers’ interests and media characteristics of the mass media. We based our research on the data of Yandex.News – currently one of the largest news aggregators in the Russian Internet (its daily audience is close to half a million people, and the number of mass media participants exceeds 1,500).