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Convergence in Russian Newsrooms: Changes of Media or Change of Society?

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What is convergence?

Convergence process - producing digital media product through the **integration of multimedia and social elements** (text, photography, graphics, audios, videos, hypertext, blogs, social media, and the like) and **distribution of these products** across a wide number of channels, made possible by their **digital form**



Convergence and media

We see strong “**industrialization**” of convergence, the tendency to build multimedia elements into the Russian mass media business model

Possible consequences

- *dramatic changes of mass media economy*
 - *fundamental change of the social role of mass media in Russia.*
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Examples

Three most prominent Russian dailies launched **cable / satellite channels** in the last 3 years

Basic multimedia model:

- *online platform* -
 - *online TV / radio broadcasting* -
 - *FM radio station* -
 - *cable / satellite channel*
-



Examples

Who are they?

Komsomolskaya pravda – the largest mass daily of Russia (2,9 mln readers, old Soviet brand)

Tvoi den (Zhizn) – the first Russian tabloid

Kommersant – the largest Russian quality daily (235,000 readers)



Case story

Tvoi den (Zhizn)

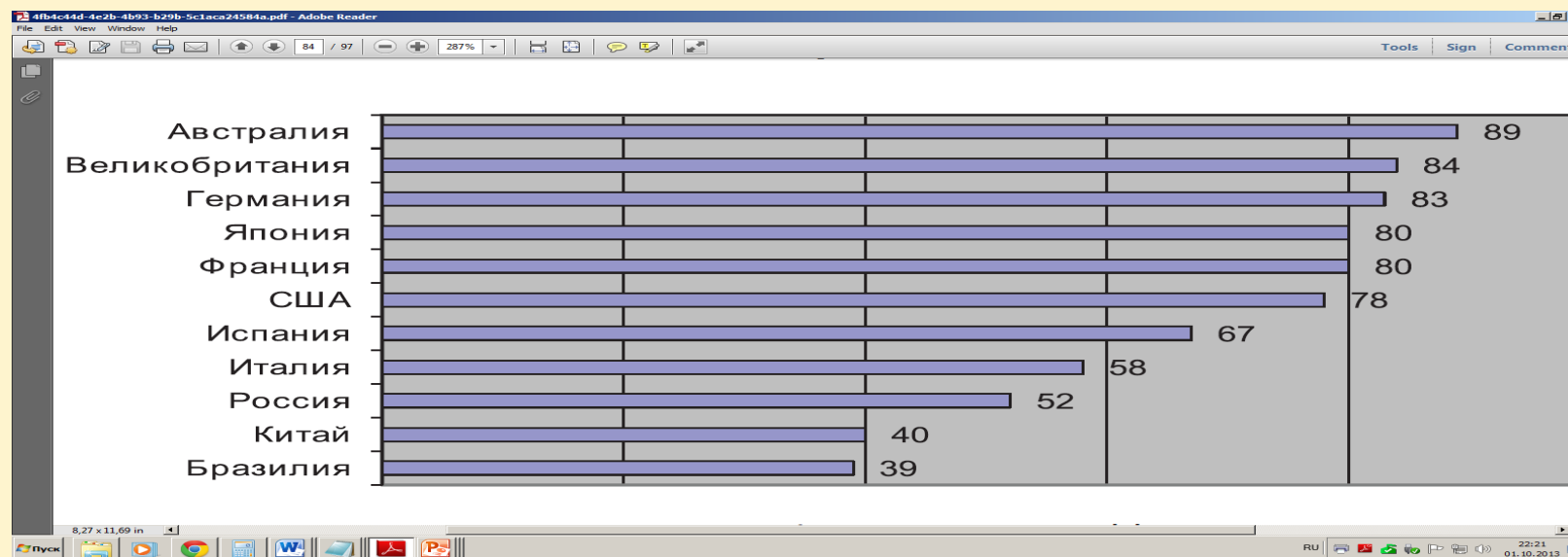
- 1) First Russian tabloid. Tandem *daily – weekly*
 - 2) Site www.lifenews.ru started (3,000,000 visitors monthly). Simultaneously www.tden.ru and www.zhizn.ru exist
 - 3) Sites www.tden.ru, www.zhizn.ru have been closed. Site www.lifenews.ru has been transformed into the video platform
 - 4) “Mobile reporter” app has been launched: editors give assignments to readers, they report
 - 5) *Life Channel* has been launched
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Background

We see the strong willingness of Russian media managers to enlarge the audience and enhance its involvement. The prospects seem promising

Internet penetration (9th place, 52%)





Background

New devices

- Mobile audience in Runet grew by 51% in 2012 (totally 34,5 mln)
 - Apple mobile devices are responsible for 34% of the total Internet traffic
 - Average visit continues for 5 minutes.
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Background

The core Internet audience is generation of 80s and 90s (“digital-born” or “digital-grown” audience that rejects to consume the “old” mass media “lives” in Internet for almost 100% scale)

But: online audience is getting older, substantial increase is possible only by involvement the 70s, 60s generations. Media managers seek to enhance online activity of older consumers

*Russia is the **first** in Europe in terms of broadband access to Internet*



Citizen/Public Journalism

We see the rapid rise of public activities based on the possibilities given by Internet.

Tools:

- *blogs,*
- *non-mass media sites,*
- *online forums,*
- *video hostings etc.*

NB! Both **multimedia** and **social** components of convergence do work



Citizen/Public Journalism

Examples:

- Alexei Navalny's blog as a platform for anticorruption and political activities (<http://navalny.livejournal.com/>)
 - Volunteer movement
 - "Sinie Vederki" movement (<http://sineevedro.ru/>)
 - Recent: Fight in the Mitino marketplace, participant of the documentary project "Realnost" has shot the video. The story has become the breaking news
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Obstacles

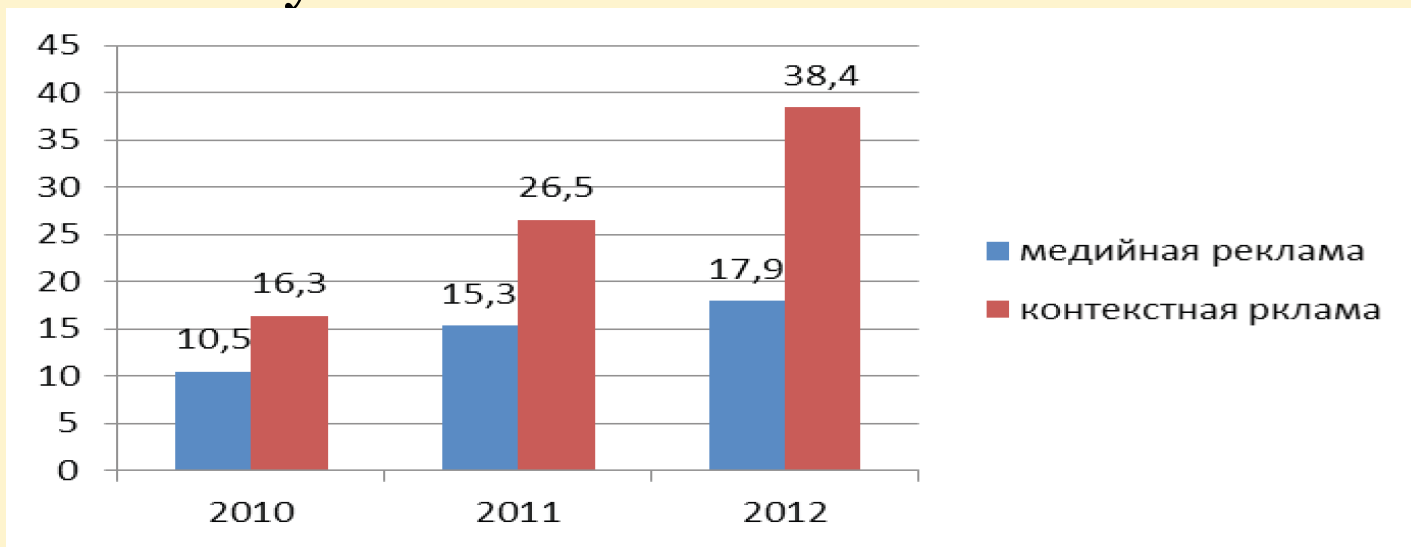
Absence of substantial financial output from digitalization / convergence

According to our surveys revenues from convergence ***is not very high***: for instance in Russian dailies convergent products generally bring not more than 10% of the gross revenues made by the newspaper (the print version plus the website)



Obstacles

Advertisers' money go to Internet but not to mass media (Yandex.ru, Google.ru, Mail.ru etc. are the leaders; context advertising prevails). Context advertising performs better than media/ display one. Online mass media industry is underfinanced





Prospects

According to our surveys

- Most Russian mass media rely on ***tangible growth*** of convergence revenues in the near future
 - Most Russian mass media are willing to ***develop convergence projects*** in the near future and ***grow investment*** into these projects
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Rapid change

“Convergent revolution” rapidly transforms

- *models and tenseness of public activity*
- *business models of mass media*

We see the strong intention of mass media to involve it's audience into:

- the creation of the content
 - the purchase of the content
 - the distribution of the content
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Rapid change

Given the substantial (sometimes even fundamental) growth of investments into the convergence we can look forward to:

- *acceleration of public activities,*
 - *growth of the fundamentally new type of audience that is ready to pay for the content, create the content and distribute it*
 - *vulnerability of the Russian mass media industry,*
 - *transformation of the Russian mass media system,*
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Many thanks!
