Corruption of the Fourth Power: The Decline of the Russian Media

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Abstract

Independent and free media are among the key instruments in fighting corruption. But in today's Russia this instrument itself has been corrupted and misused. Russian government has deliberately taken control over the major national media outlets, including TV channels, radio stations, print press, and some internet resources. Only few publications remain free and are able to fulfill their duties. As competition on the global media market becomes fiercer, traditional media in all the countries are looking for new ways of surviving and are becoming more susceptible to corruption. The problem is universal, but in case of Russia it is aggravated by Vladimir Putin's corrupt political regime. Corruption has poisoned Russian media on both levels—institutional and individual. The objectives of this research are: to investigate main methods of corrupting the media and the journalists that the Russian government has employed; to trace the effects such a corruption can have on media content and, as a result, on public opinion; and to see whether the few free media can contribute into overcoming this negative trend.

The research framework

Ten years ago, corruption as a subject of study was quite a small field. Today, numerous academic and media articles on the issue are being published almost daily. The research field on corruption has expanded, and this trend reflects growing public concern for the effects that corruption has on people's lives. Another reason for the growing interest is development of the new media (mostly, internet) that allowed for better access to information and data exchange and, therefore, led to a greater awareness of the scale of the problem. Despite the fact that media made an invaluable contribution into exposing corruption, unfortunately, media themselves could not be spared from the corruption. This paper will explore the correlation between the specifics of the Russian political system and corruption practices in the Russian media.

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INTRODUCTION

The media are often referred to as "the fourth estate"—an institution that monitors and shapes the political process. Sometimes the media are called "the fourth pillar of democracy"—an institution established to complement three other pillars, or branches of power—legislative, executive, and judicial. There is a universal consensus that the media have become an integral part of modern societies, and their impact on everyday life has only been only gaining momentum. The media exist in all types of countries—from the poorest to the richest, but they are also associated with democratic states where they serve not as tools of propaganda or mere sources of information, but also as watchdogs. In the latter capacity they play an essential role in fighting corruption.

Due to the wide spread of the mass media, almost every moment of people's public and personal lives is currently being mediated through television, radio, the press, internet, social media, et al. The media help to create the public space where personal interests meet public interests, where these interests can be discussed and eventually transformed into policies [Habermas]. In a sense, a study of modern politics and political issues is a study of how these issues are presented and interpreted in the media. Political agendas are shaped and promoted through the media. In developed democracies, the media aspire for meeting the standards of information accuracy and objectivity. "A mature democracy depends on having an educated electorate, informed and connected through the parliament," and it's the media's public duty to inform and educate the public [Sampson]. As a prominent political reporter Walter Lippmann once noted, "if there is no steady supply of trustworthy and relevant news," the democracy falters.

In democratic countries, the media are responsible for providing information to citizens so they could participate in process of governance, "to maximize the opportunities for citizens to make political decisions and cast ballots on the basis of informed choice." [Gunther and Mughan]. Democratic media model means that there is a significant degree of pluralism in the media; access to the media is not obstructed; the media represent a wide spectrum of views, ideas, opinions, and ideologies; and they are not controlled by the government and/or limited number of private owners in a way that limits the media's freedom or pluralism [Becker].

However, under conditions of other types of political systems (authoritarian, totalitarian), the media are incorporated into the state apparatus and usually serve merely as tools of propaganda. In closed regimes, the state use the media to sustain state policies, impose influence on the public and manipulate public opinion to maintain the current order. National media need to be studied in the context of the political system in which they are compelled to operate. It would not be correct to expect North Korean Central TV to report on the faults of Kim Jong Un's policies, or the Cubavisión (one of Cuba's two official TV channels) to criticize Fidel Castro for his anti-

Americanism. The media of these countries are not free to choose what to report, as they are, in essence, branches of the government.

Russian political system is currently described as authoritarian (or hybrid authoritarian), which is characterized by "the great power" agenda, neo-imperialism, militarism, and dominance of a personalized authority [Shevtsova]. In this context, the media cannot be considered "the fourth pillar of democracy." But at the same time they are not under total state control. The state allows for "islands of freedom," a.k.a. independent liberal media, to operate at the margins of the public political discourse, as long as their audience is insignificant and therefore irrelevant at the national scale. These media exist so that political opposition can channel their criticisms and frustrations and "blow off steam" without posing real treat to the regime.

One of the gravest problems of the modern Russian state is corruption, and it was acknowledged by many international organizations and even by the Russian government. Transparency International ranked Russia 133rd out of 177 countries in its 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index[1]. And according to official estimates[2], in 2013 only, the country lost $312 million to corruption practices. Anti-corruption campaign has been on the state's political agenda for years, but no real effort to overcome the problem has been made yet.

Most scholars and observers agree that corruption in Russia penetrated every level of people's life, and no institution has been spared, including the media. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Russian media have undergone substantial ideological and economic changes, but they have not developed enough to become a strong independent institution that would be able to resist pressure from the new political elites or business structures. At the same time, Russian media joined the international media community and were exposed to a number of global trends—convergence, tabloidization, commercialization of content, shift from informing to entertaining ("infotainment").

This paper argues the spread of corruption in the Russian media was caused by a combination of two factors—authoritarian rollback under Vladimir Putin's presidency and commercialization of the media content.

[1] http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/
[2] http://rapsinews.com/anticorruption_news/20131031/269475885.html

CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS MEDIA CORRUPTION?

Corruption and the Media

Media corruption is a rare subject of research. Most of the studies focus on the opposite situation—how the media participate in exposing and overcoming corruption. But as it is indicated in the 2010 report titled "Cash for Coverage: Bribery of Journalists Around the World" by the Center for International Media Assistance, "with all the organized efforts to support media development and defend press freedom around the world, there has been remarkably little done in any concerted way to reduce the problem of corrupt journalism."

What does exactly the term "media corruption" signify? Does it mean "cash for news coverage" or can it be extrapolated to a broader context—such as failure of the media as a democratic institute and their dereliction of duty as a watchdog?

The definition of the term "media corruption" has not been developed yet. This paper uses the term "media" as the main means of mass communication (such as television, radio, print press, and the internet) regarded collectively[3] and suggests the definition of "media corruption" based on the analysis of various types of corruption observed in the media.

Generally, corruption is defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain."[4] But there are many types or forms of corruption. For example, Transparency International classifies corruption into three categories—grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs. Grand corruption happens at the high level of government and distorts policies or "the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good." Petty corruption describes "everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens." Finally, political corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.

Some researchers point to the "systemic corruption" referring to corruption practices as an integrated aspect of the country's economic, social and political system [Johnston]. Others distinguish "corporate corruption" that occurs in relationships between private business corporations and the suppliers or clients as well as within corporations, when corporate officials use the corporation resources for private gain, at the expense of the shareholders. Finally, studies of corruption point to national specifics of corruption, which is predetermined by the country's historical traditions, and aspects of political, legal, and economic system.

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[3] *McLuhan, Marshall*. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. MIT Press, 1994.
[4] http://www.transparency.org/whoweare/organisation/faqs_on_corruption

This classification of corruption can be applied to the media. All media are forced to operate in the constrained environment, determined by such factors as: specifics of the national political and legal systems, economy, level of press freedom, journalism professional codes and ethics. Depending on the country's national specifics, corruption in the media can happen on every level and range from petty to grand, to systemic, to corporate. It can be found at the institutional and personal levels.

At the institutional level, media corruption means deterioration of the role of the media as "the fourth pillar of democracy" and a watchdog. An example is when the media becomes incorporated with the state as a propaganda tool. Another example of media corruption describes informal editorial practices, such as advertisements published as editorial content, extortion of money for publishing favorable of damaging articles, etc. At the personal level, media corruption refers to practicing petty corruption, such as bribery, tapping, et al.

One of the obvious reasons for media corruption is economy: in many countries journalists are underpaid, which creates incentives for bribery and extortion. Another reason is political: government officials, politicians, owners of large corporations want to control public information about them, therefore they want to control what the media say about them, therefore they want to control the media.

Similar to political corruption, media corruption can be found everywhere in the world, but the scale of media corruption and its costs differ from country to country. Overall, media corruption undermines the fundamental principles of journalism, such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability. It also betrays public trust for the media, damages the economy of the media business, and obstructs democratic development.

Media Corruption vs Press Freedom

Some studies of corruption point to the correlation between the scale of corruption and the press freedom. "When press acts like a watchdog, corruption becomes a risk to government officials. (…) Their illegal actions are more likely to be discovered and disseminated to the public, leaving them vulnerable to public outrage… Corrupt governments are correct to fear free and curious press." [Vogl].

Officials in every country are prone to corruption that comes with the nature of political power that they are endued with. Still, corruption is more likely to occur in the countries where democratic institutions are underdeveloped, judiciary is failing, free media are lacking. Officials involved in corruption practices try to balance expected costs of a corrupt act against the potential benefits. The most evident cost would be the risk of being caught (such as public exposure) and then punished for the criminal deed. Therefore, in the countries that enjoy more freedom of the press, this risk is usually larger. In the countries where the media are not free, the risk of being exposed is less,

which leads to escalation of corruption practices [Treisman].

There is a variety of definitions of free press, but in essence the concept of free press suggests that the media are free from the government control, while citizens have access to the free flow of information. Scholars agree that free press is crucial for political (and market) efficiency, as well as for the citizens to make knowledgeable decisions about their voting choices.

Freedom of speech is one of the fundamental principles of unbiased media coverage, as defined by Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 19 of the UN Convenant on Civil and Political Rights. Both documents were signed by the majority of countries in the world. Still, each country's legal and political framework has a direct impact on the environment in which the journalists have to do their job. In developing countries, democratic institutions are not mature and strong enough to secure proper conditions for independent and objective media—and some governments use this situation to impose restrictions on the journalists to control their work and preventing them from reporting unfavorable information.

Restrictions to the press freedom can take various forms, i.e. censorship for security reasons, media licensing and registration, etc. Some of the current examples are: blocking of certain websites (China, Belarus), oppressive regulatory system (Saudi Arabia), imprisonment and violence against journalists (Syria, Eritrea). In the more oppressive regimes, like Myanmar, North Korea, Cuba, the media are subject to direct censorship and are entirely controlled by the authorities[5]. In other countries, where press freedom is guaranteed constitutionally, it might not be respected on practice. For example, in Honduras[6], press freedom is limited by intimidations and restrictive press laws that are used against journalists who try to cover sensitive subjects, such as government corruption, human rights abuses, drug trafficking, etc. Defamation and libel laws can also be used to restrict press freedom.

Another dimension of restricting press freedom is media ownership that has direct effect on reporting both in the developed and developing world. However, in developed democracies independence of the media is to a large extent protected by the law, active civil society, and long-term traditions of unbiased reporting. In the developing countries the lack of these conditions, media ownership defines the news agenda and the angle of reporting.

There are several types of media ownership: state-owned, private, public, and community media. By nature, the state-owned media is the model that allows for the greatest government control of the information, but independence of the private media can also be infringed due to the owner's personal interests or through the state regulation (i.e. licensing, advertising, taxation). Concentration of private media in the hands of a small group of individuals (or corporations) is another factor that can lead to

[5] '10 Most Censored Countries.' A Report by Committee to Protect Journalists, May 2012.
[6] 'Freedom of the Press 2013.' A Report by Freedom House, 2012.

restraining the media, which is the case for many countries in Latin America. Among other factors that limit the media and can eventually lead to corruption are low professional standards and poor ethics in journalism.

The current state of affairs in the Russian media system allows for greater scale of corruption, which has been numerously confirmed by the Russian officials, opposition leaders, and international watchdog organizations. However, the problem is also spiraled by another factor—lack of rule of law. For people involved with corruption practices, the probability of getting caught and punished is derived from the efficiency of the country's law-enforcement and legal system. Even if a person gets caught and exposed by the media, the risk of being punished can be mitigated through the corrupt legal system. This is the case for Russia where, according to a global survey by Transparency International, police, judiciary, and officials are viewed as the most corrupt institutions.

Russian media are also not free and therefore are most prone to corruption. According to the 2013 Press Freedom Index[7], published by the Reporters Without Borders, Russia is ranked 148 out of 179 countries (it fell six points down since 2012). Over the last 10 years, the country's position in the Index fluctuated around the 140th place, except for 2002 when Russia was ranked 121st with the worst year being 2009 when Russia was ranked 153rd. Similar dynamic is being shown in the Freedom House's Press Freedom Index: since 2002 when they were considered "Partly Free" (Press Freedom Score – 60), the Russian media dropped deep into the "Not Free" category (Press Freedom Score – 81)[8].

[7] 2013 World Press Freedom Index: Dashed Hopes After Hopes. A Report of Reporters Without Borders, May 2013.
[8] 'Freedom of the Press 2013.' A Report by Freedom House, 2012.

CHAPTER 2. RUSSIAN MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The State Commercialized Model

The roots of media corruption in Russia should be explored within the framework of the Russian political system and in the context of the developments of the Russian media market. Studies of the Russian media system usually highlight a number of factors that shape media landscape in the country. Some scholars refer to economy, political environment, and technologies as main driving forces, while others point to the civil society, the market, and the state. There are scholars who argue that "cultural factor" needs to be included in the equation as well. In case of Russia, the latter is crucial because this factor allows for better understanding of the country's traditional informal practices that were established in politics, economy, social life, and as a result—in the media as well. [Ledeneva].

There are several approaches to studying the Russian media. The first approach focuses on the trends that shaped Russian media market within the country and analyzes them in the context of the country's democratic development. [Hallin, Mancini, 2012]. The second approach is comparative—it studies Russian experience within the tectonic changes of the post-Soviet space, including Eastern and Central Europe [Smaele]. The third approach is framed by the political constraints of the closed (authoritarian) regimes and the trends of the global media market (commercialization, tabloidization, et al.) [Nordenstreng]. This paper uses a combination of the first and third approaches that allows for better understanding of how the national media system is shaped.

Hallin and Mancini in their classic work *Comparing Media Systems* use a framework of four dimensions to analyze media in various countries. These dimensions are: structure of media market, the degree and form of political parallelism, journalistic professionalism, and the role of the state. Based on the framework of this approach, Vartanova describes the current Russian media model as *State Commercialized*. It is characterized by the duality of the state's attitude towards the media system and journalism. On one hand, the state controls political content of the public information and mitigates the risks of publicizing sensitive political issues; the state also manages the political agenda to guarantee favorable public opinion and necessary public support for the President and his allies. On the other hand, the state allows for the free growth of the profit-driven, commercialized entertainment media [Vartanova].

In the *State Commercialized* model, media corruption penetrates both—institutional and personal levels of the media. Due to the state control over political information, Russian media have been incorporated inside the state's repressive machine and are being used as propaganda tools. As a result, most of the Russian media (especially, television) abandoned their role as a watchdog. Because of the large scale of media commercialization and the prevail of informal practices in the country's politics,

economy and social life, Russian media became engaged with corrupt editorial practices, such as paid articles presented as editorial content. Under the described circumstances, these corrupt practices became a norm among the majority of the journalists. Therefore, they welcome petty corruption (bribery, extortion, gifts) and see it as an inherent part of the media business, because "everyone is doing so."

Brief History of the Russian Media

Recent history of the Russian media shows how the media system was preconditioned by country's political development. In the 1990s the Russian media system underwent major transformations following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The media were introduced into new realities: market economy, end of ideological control of the Communist Party, political pluralism, development of the new public institutions, et al. Fascinated by the seemingly ideal Western model of the press, Russian media borrowed most of its characteristics: freedom of speech, private ownership of the media outlets, similar legislation, distance from the state, public influence, watchdog role.

Still, development of the new Russian media system in the direction of the Western ideal was constrained by the deeply rooted cultural and professional traditions of the Russian journalism. "For centuries, journalism as a social institution in Russia has been developing free from economic considerations while the role of the economic regulator has been carried out by the state which in turn secured the paternalistic foundation in journalism… [In the 1990s] the state, while liberating the economic activity in the media, was not ready to relax control over the content. This has produced practically unsolvable tension for the media themselves trying to function both as commercial enterprises and as institutions of the society." [Ivanitsky]. The role of the state in the Russian media system has been and remains dominant.

After the new Law on Mass Media was adopted in 1991, thus effectively establishing guarantees for independence of the media and the freedom of speech, *the first stage* of privatization of the media market followed. In early 1990s, as the country was going through an acute financial crisis, state funding of the media was cut manifold, which, in its turn, led to drastic cuts in circulation numbers and staff. As some scholars note, a whole generation of Soviet journalists were forced to change profession. At the same time, numerous private media companies were created driven by the forces of the free market; many old media outlets were privatized, reformatted and repurposed.

Despite the fact that Russian political and social institutions underwent major formal changes during the transition period, there was no systemic change in the informal practices. As the new elites were fighting for redistribution of power and economic wealth, the country's transformation reminded more of the "democratic civic masquerade" [Gross] rather than presented real change. The "masquerade" could also

be observed in the media system. Creation of formal procedures of interactions between the media and the state did not destroy traditional informal relations between journalists and officials.

As the country acquired relative political and economic stability by mid-90s, *the second stage* of the media privatization began under President's Yeltsin "polycentric" political model. "Polycentric" model was based on the balance of various power centers—oligarchs, industrial-financial groups, and regional state administrations. During this period the media enjoyed relative freedom and independence from the state, however, the new owners and managers of the media enterprises used them quite instrumentally—to manufacture favorable public opinion. Both political and business elites saw the media as weapons to gain political capital. On various occasions, business elites would barter the loyalty of their privatized media for economic and political perks. As Boris Berezovsky, one of the owners of ORT (Public Russian Television, now renamed to Channel One) of the time acknowledged, he "never got financial profits from ORT… Political profits were endless, economic—none." [Resnyanskaya].

During this period the struggle among the elite clans was often reflected in the media in the form of "black" and "grey" PR, and *kompromat wars*. The elites seemed to recognize the advantages of the media in this struggle and aspired for converting these advantages into concrete benefits and moves in the power play. But the media could provide even more leverage for political purposes. Election campaigns—national, regional and local—would be impossible to win without the support of the media. The struggle for political power culminated in 1996 presidential elections, in which the incumbent President Yeltsin went to the runoff with the leader of the Russian Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov. In this historical standoff, Yeltsin managed win by the small margin.

Much of the credit for this victory is attributed to the new liberal Russian media outlets that actively endorsed the incumbent president, despite his health problems and a much publicized alcohol addiction. Among these media were NTV, Russia's first independent TV-channel that was considered one of the most objective and highly professional television networks in 1994-96, and *Kommersant*, one of the first business dailies in Russia. At the time NTV was a part of *MediaMost* media holding owned by an influential Russian oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky; and *Kommersant Daily* belonged to another influential oligarch and advisor to President Yeltsin—Boris Berezovsky. Thus, the media played a crucial role in the drive of the public opinion in favor of Yeltsin and in his eventual victory.

The third stage of the evolution of the media system in Russia started with Vladimir Putin's rise to power in 2000. The new Russian president transformed the country's political system from "polycentric" to "monocentric" under the slogan of increasing stability and security—the issues that brought him substantial public support. By building the so-called "power vertical" Vladimir Putin eliminated all alternative political forces and established control over the government, the parliament,

the judiciary, and the media system to secure stability of the new regime. In early 2000s various state agencies took financial or managerial control over 70 percent of electronic media outlets, 80 percent of the regional press, and 20 percent of the national press [Vartanova]. As a result, Russian media continued to be used as tools of political control but now these "tools" were no longer distributed among competing political parties and businesses, but remained concentrated in the hands of a closed political circle that swore loyalty to President Putin.

Overall, during this period the political discourse in Russia deteriorated, and the public debate in the media was either substituted by the imitative forms[9] or squeezed out from the popular media outlets, such as television and dailies with large circulation, to the publications with much smaller readership, like *Novaya Gazeta,* or to the internet. Under the pressure from the new Kremlin's elite, in 2001 Boris Berezovsky was forced to sell his share of ORT to Roman Abramovich, another Russian oligarch, who claimed his loyalty to Vladimir Putin. The symbolic culmination of the new elite's war for media control was the government's takeover of *MediaMost* holding (its most valuable asset was NTV) in 2002 by Gazprom Media—a subsidiary of Gazprom, the largest state-owned corporation in Russia.

At the same time, during this period, Russian media became an integral part of the global media community following the process of global convergence and homogenization. "While the media were exercising its policies to make TV less politically engaged, the advertising and media business easily filled "empty" niches of political programming with entertainment content." [Vartanova] Under the new conditions of the monocentric political system, it was a natural process: the state enjoyed the benefits of controlling the political discourse, and the media welcomed financial inflow from the booming advertising industry in Russia.

One of the key characteristics of Russia's political system under Vladimir Putin's rule is informal subjecting of the legislative and judicial branches of power to the executive branch, controlled by the President. This hierarchy helped the President to achieve his goal—to establish control over the entire political process, eliminate possible risks of competition, and restructure the system of checks and balances. By silencing a group of powerful non-conforming businessmen[10], Vladimir Putin sent a

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[9] One of the examples is Maxim Shevchenko's talk show titled "Sudite Sami" (Judge for Yourself). It's broadcasted daily on Perviy Kanal, on prime time. The idea is to invite experts who have different views on an issue suggested by the show's anchor. The experts have to present their arguments, while Shevchenko moderates the discussion. At the end, the audience vote for the best argument. Despite the looks of it, the pool of experts invited to the show as well as the formulation of the issue are carefully selected on the condition of their support for the regime. It is a known fact that Perviy Kanal has black lists of people (those, opposed to the regime) who will never be invited to the show.

[10] Criminal cases were opened against the media magnates—Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky—resulting in both businessmen ceding their assets in favor of the state and fleeing the country. Imprisonment of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, head of Yukos, the largest oil company in Russia, came as a shock to the business world and became a breaking point for the public stand of many owners of Russian companies.

clear message to the business community to distance themselves from politics and thus established control over corporate Russia. From now on, only those who complied with his political line and demonstrated loyalty and support were allowed to continue their business as usual.

The state learned to utilize a wide selection of political, economic and legal tools to put pressure on and intimidate the media [Vartanova]. Some of them are:

- providing personal privileges or access to closed sources of information; preferential treatment for certain media outlets and journalists;
- acquiring state ownership in media outlets or establishing indirect control through ownership by private companies whose owners are loyal to the state;
- banning access to official events and press conferences, refusal to provide requested information;
- bringing legal suits against media outlets and journalists on the grounds of defamation, libel, et al.;
- penalizing the media and suspending the license;
- using legal sanctions, such as tax or customs legislation, fire safety and sanitary regulation.

Application of these techniques transformed Russian media system into a restricted homogenous field, where only state-controlled media outlets were allowed to operate on the national scale. The regime allowed for limited operations of the independent media (the press and the internet media) to absorb the protest mood[11].

Because of the constrained political environment, Russian media were unable to resist the pressure from the state and succumbed to the well-known propaganda and conformism pattern according to which they've been operating in the Soviet times. The period of the relative freedom of press ended with Vladimir Putin ascension to power, it was too short for the Russian media to become a strong democratic institution and a watchdog.

It is noteworthy that today's situation differs from the Soviet times. Russia is no longer a closed country, Russian media are exposed to the free flow of information and the developments of the global media market, and Russian journalists are aware of the media's role in the free world. Therefore, by choosing to serve as propaganda tools to receive benefits from the state, by abandoning their public duty to report the truth, the majority of them media voluntarily chose to engage in corrupt practices.

[11] One of the examples is *Snob* media project that was launched in 2009 with financial support of one of the richest businessman in Russia Mikhail Prokhorov. As some analysts suggest, the project was created as a "reservation zone" for Russian liberal intellectuals so they could participate in political debates through this media outlet with limited readership but have little to none influence on the national political agenda.

Deterioration of the public political discourse is a direct result of the lack of political pluralism and competition. As it happens in all closed regimes, political discourse in Russia transformed from an open political communication into the state's narrative [Khvostunova]. As a result, the content of political discourse became flat and dull.

Considering general disillusionment of the Russian citizens in politics and in their own abilities to influence political process or bring about change, public interest shifted from politics to the entertainment segment, which drives the expansion of the entertainment segment. Another reason for this expansion is commercialization of the global media market driven by advertising industry and aimed at stimulating consumption. As mentioned above, the diminishing political discourse created an information vacuum in Russia that, with lack of other alternatives, had been filled with entertainment content. Eventually, this process led to tabloidization of the media and the prevail of the popular media formats that appeal primarily to the mass audience.

CHAPTER 3. RUSSIAN MEDIA MARKET AND THE GLOBAL TRENDS

The outlook of the Russian media market provides an insight into the type of information Russian media produce and the public consumes. It shows that entertainment content has filled the empty niche of the political programming. At the same time, while political and investigative journalism is declining in Russia, Russian media market is booming due to the high inflow of advertising money. Today, Russia ranks ninth in the top-10 media markets in the world, and in 2013 its market growth rate is estimated to be at 12 percent—the highest rate across the top ten media markets (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top-10 Media Markets

Ranking (2013, est.)	Country	Growth Rate (2012*)	Growth Rate (2012**)
1	United States	+4%	+3%
2	China	+6%	+7%
3	Japan	+3%	+3%
4	United Kingdom	+4%	+3%
5	Germany	-1%	0%
6	Australia	-1%	+1%
7	Brazil	+13%	+9%
8	France	-4%	0%
9	**Russia**	**+13%**	**+12%**
10	Italy	-12%	-5%

Source: Aegis Global Report.

* Compared to 2011; ** Compared to 2012.

According to Aegis Global Report, the high growth rate of the Russian media market is driven by the growth of the advertising market, especially in the premium sector (companies with the annual advertising budget of more than 3 billion rubles, or ~$100,000). Industries, such as medicine and IT, have demonstrated the highest growth of 18 and 13 percent respectively. The 2014 Sochi Olympic Games is expected to give the market an additional boost next year.

Television

The ownership structure of the Russian media market shows that the national media outlets with the highest audience reach are controlled by the state, primarily—television.

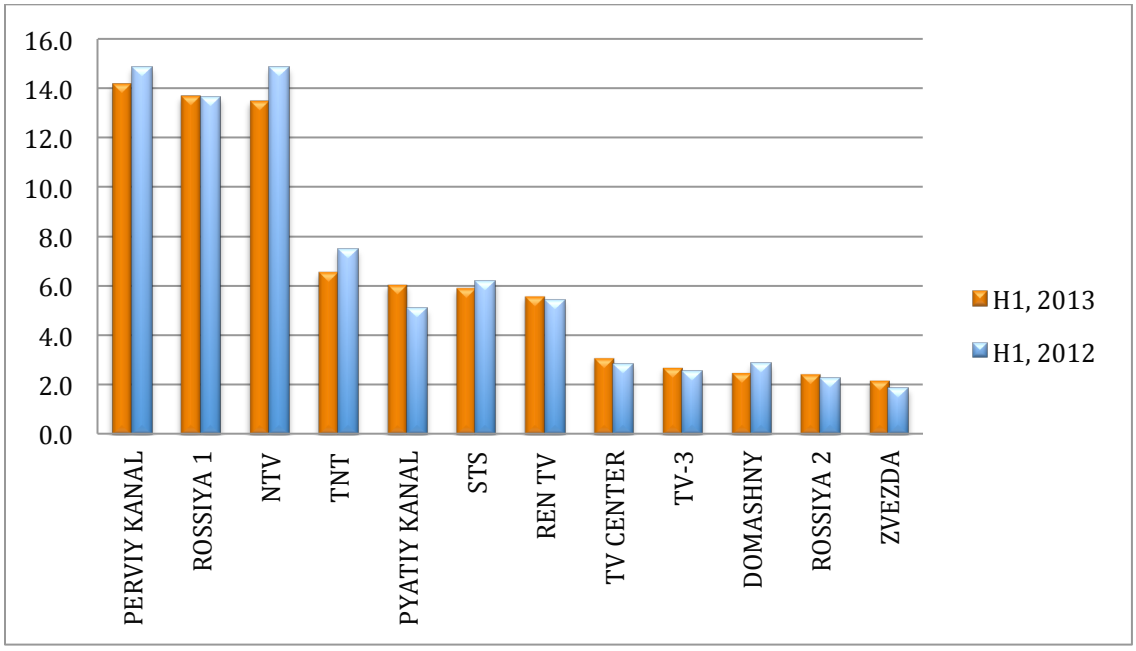
Television in Russia is the leading source of information. 99 percent of Russian households have at least one TV-set, and about 94 percent of Russians watch TV on a daily basis [Vartanova]. The core of the TV market consists of 19 federal channels available to more than 50 percent of population. The top-five channels by the audience reach are: Perviy Kanal (Channel One), Rossiya 1, NTV, TNT and Pyatiy Kanal (Channel 5).

Russian television is a mixture of two models—one is state-controlled (major TV channels are either owned by the state or by businessmen and companies loyal to the state); the other model is purely commercial—it provides entertainment content. Regardless of the ownership structure, Russian television is mostly financed through advertising and sponsorship [Vartanova].

The chart below shows that the three main channels—Perviy Kanal (Channel One), Rossiya 1 and NTV—have the highest audience reach: 14.2 percent, 13.7 percent, and 13.5 percent respectively.

All three TV channels are controlled by the state: the majority share of Channel One belongs to Rosimuschestvo (the Federal Agency for State Property Management). Other shareholders include National Media Group (controlled by the structures of Yuri Kovalchuk, Chairman of the Board of *Rossiya* Bank, one of the largest banks in Russia, and Vladimir Putin's personal friend; and Roman Abramovich, owner of Chelsea football club and Putin's ally). Rossiya 2 is a part of VGTRK (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company) which is owned by Rosimushchestvo. NTV is also controlled by the state through Gazprom Media. TNT and Pyatiy Kanal that come respectively fourth and fifth in the top TV channels by audience reach, are also controlled by the state. TNT belongs to Gazprom Media, while Channel 5 is controlled by National Media Group.

Top TV Channels Audience Reach, 2012-2013



Source: Aegis Global Report.

Print Press

According to the recent Report of the Russian Guild of Press Publishers, the total circulation of print media outlets in Russia is around 7.8 billion copies, including 2.7 billion copies of national dailies, 2.6 billion—of regional copies, and 2.5 billion—of local press copies. Similar to the television segment, the press market is divided between the two media models: quality dailies and weeklies that are mostly business oriented and have relatively small readership; and popular newspapers and magazines that are inclined to tabloidization.

For the last five years, the share of print press has been steadily decreasing. In the first half of 2013, the circulation of national newspapers and magazines went down by 7.5 percent, while its market share shrank by 6 percent. The main reasons for that were the recession following the 2008 financial crisis, growth of the share of internet media, ban of advertising alcohol beverages (since January, 2013) and the expected ban of advertising tobacco products (projected to come into force in 2014). Tobacco and alcohol companies were among the major contributors in the print market profits.

The structure of the print press market is much more diverse in terms of ownership, but publications with entertainment content, glossy fashion magazines, tabloids, et al. are dominating the market.

The results of 2012 TNS survey on the audience reach of the Russian publications presented in Table 2 reveal a number of current trends: 1) the newspaper with the largest audience reach in Russia is a classified daily (*Iz Ruk v Ruki*); 2) it is followed by *Metro*—a freesheet daily intended primarily for commuters; 3) the third is *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, an official source of political information provided by the state; owned by Rosimushchestvo; 4) out of top ten outlets, only two newspapers provide quality political/business content—*Kommersant* (8th) and *Vedomosti* (9th), while other newspapers cover entertainment sector.

It is noteworthy that *Izvestia,* a well-known, respected Soviet brand, was acquired by the National Media Group in 2011. The new owners pronounced it to become a state-controlled competitor of *Kommersant* and *Vedomosti. Izvestia* covers Russian politics, but as one of its owners and editor-in-chief Aram Gabrelyanov told in an interview,[12] his newspaper has three forbidden topics: the president, the prime minister, and the patriarch. Another detail that needs to be mentioned is that even though *Kommersant* gained its reputation of the first independent quality daily in Russia, in 2006 it was acquired by Alisher Usmanov, head of Metallinvest Management Company. Mr Usmanov was ranked 1st in the *Forbes*' Top-200 Richest Businessmen in Russia in 2013, and openly supports Vladimir Putin. In the context of the Russian political system, such ownership suggests that *Kommersant's* coverage of politically sensitive issues can be managed by application of the so-called "administrative resource," a.k.a. pressure from the Kremlin.

Table 2. Top Dailies in terms of Audience Reach* (All-Russia)

	Newspaper	**Audience Reach (thousands of people)**	**%**
1	*Iz Ruk v Ruki (From Hand to Hand)*	3242.9	5.4
2	*Metro*	1932.1	3.2
3	*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*	1060.3	1.8
4	*Moskovsky Komsomolets*	1048.1	1.7
5	*Sport-Express*	523.9	0.9
6	*Sovietsky Sport*	418.9	0.7
7	*Izvestia*	334.9	0.6
8	*Kommersant*	219.9	0.4
9	*Trud (Labor)*	196.9	0.3
10	*Vedomosti*	134.6	0.2

Source: TNS Russia, NRS, 2012

[12] Aram Gabrelyanov: "Putin is the nation's father, and there is nothing you can demand from him." http://os.colta.ru/media/paper/details/23555/page1 (accessed on November 18, 2013).

* *Komsomolskaya Pravda* did not participate in this survey, but according to the public data, its daily circulation is around 655,000 copies, Friday edition—2.7 million.

Table 3 provides evidence that the Russian readers lack interest in political issues. All top ten weeklies with the largest audience reach in Russia are popular publications with mass appeal (i.e. *Argumenty i Fakty, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Moya Semiya*) and tabloids (i.e. *Zhizn, Express Gazeta*). Weeklies that provide serious analysis of the current political issues are scarce on the market. Few examples are *Kommersant-Vlast, Expert*, and *the New Times,* but the first two magazines are owned by the oligarchs who openly support the President. *Kommersant-Vlast* is produced by Kommersant Publishing House that, as mentioned above, is owned by Alisher Usmanov. *Expert* is a part of Expert Media Holding that is owned by Oleg Deripaska's Basic Element and a Russian state corporation—Vnesheconombank.

Table 3. Top Weeklies in terms of Audience Reach* (All-Russia)

	Newspaper	**Audience Reach (thousands of people)**	**%**
1	*Argumenty i Fakty (Arguments and Facts)*	6389.3	10.6
2	*Komsomolskaya Pravda*	5287.1	8.8
3	*Teleprogramma*	4890.1	8.1
4	*777*	4399.0	7.3
5	*Orakul (Oracle)*	2230.7	3.7
6	*Moya Semiya (My Family)*	1806.0	3.0
7	*Moskovsky Komsomolets (MK + TV)*	1744.6	2.9
8	*Zhizn (Life)*	1710.1	2.8
9	*MK Region*	1532.2	2.5
10	*Express Gazeta*	1250.4	2.1

Source: TNS Russia, NRS, 2012

At the same time the audience preferences across Russia differ from those of the population of the large cities. Table 4 shows this difference for Moscow audience. *Moskovsky Komsomolets* is the second most popular newspaper in Moscow. Even though the newspaper has a mass media appeal and tends to tabloidization, sometimes it publishes sharp political commentaries. The newspaper is owned by its editor-in-chief Pavel Gusev, who also holds several official positions, such as head of the Moscow Union of Journalists, member of the Presidential Human Rights Council, and member of the Russian Public Chamber. Still, private ownership of the newspaper allows for certain freedom in terms of political discourse.

Another difference is that *Novaya Gazeta* appears eighth in the top ten most popular newspapers in Moscow. *Novaya Gazeta* is one of the very few newspapers on the market that produces high standard pieces of investigative journalism. It is owned by the members of the editorial board; minority shares belong to Russian businessman Alexander Lebedev and former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev.

Table 4. Top Dailies in terms of Audience Reach* (Moscow)

	Newspaper	**Audience Reach (thousands of people)**	**%**
1	*Metro*	1164.1	11.6
2	*Moskovsky Komsomolets*	685.8	6.8
3	*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*	210.5	2.1
4	*Sport-Express*	171.8	1.7
5	*Sovietsky Sport*	167.5	1.7
6	*Iz Ruk v Ruki*	138.9	1.4
7	*Izvestia*	119.2	1.2
8	*Novaya Gazeta*	112.1	1.1
9	*Kommersant*	110.4	1.1
10	*Vedomosti*	91.7	0.9

Source: TNS Russia, NRS, 2012

Radio

Radio is the growing segment of the Russian media market. According to Vartanova, the main reasons for the increase in number of the radio stations are advancements in broadcasting of commercial music, and fragmentation of the audience. Aegis Global Report shows that in 2012 radio segment of the advertising market in Russia increased by 23 percent, but in the first half of 2013 the growth slowed down to 14 percent.

The majority of the Russian radio stations broadcast music and entertainment content. According to 2012 VTsIOM survey, Russkoye Radio is the most popular radio station in Russia, followed by Europa Plus and Autoradio. Out of 15 radio stations that are listed in the ranking, only three broadcast political talk shows: Mayak, Radio Rossiya, and Ekho Moskvy. Mayak and Radio Rossiya are state-owned (Rosimushchestvo), while Ekho Moskvy is owned by Gazprom Media. Still, Ekho Mosvky allows for members of opposition to participate in some its programs and to voice criticisms of the regime.

Table 5. Most Popular Radio Stations

#	Radio Station	Audience Reach
1	Russkoye Radio (Russian Radio)	14%
2	Europa Plus	11%
3	Avtoradio	10%
4	Mayak	9%
5	Radio Shanson	8%
6	Radio Rossiya	7%
7	Dorozhnoye Radio (Road Radio)	5%
8	Radio Dacha	4%
8	Retro FM	4%
9	Hit FM	3%
9	Dynamite FM	3%
9	Yumor FM (Humor FM)	3%
10	Ekho Moskvy	2%
10	Love Radio	2%
10	Militseyskaya Volna (Police Wave)	2%

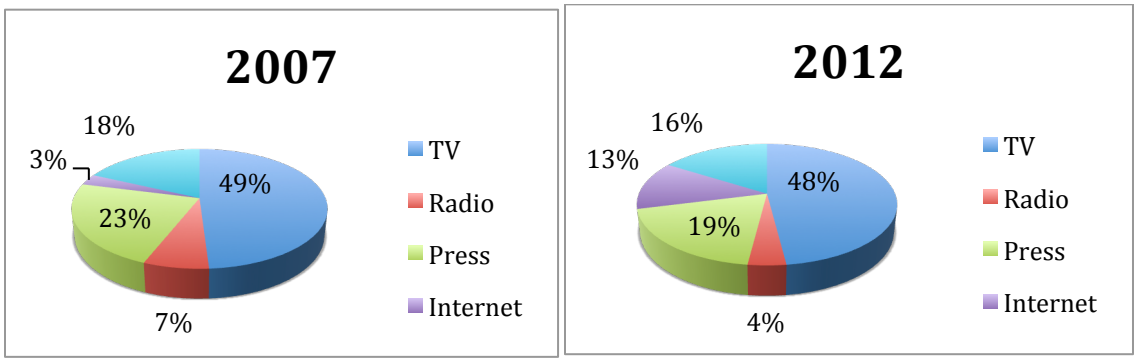
Source: WTsIOM, 2012

Internet

Internet market in Russia shows extremely positive dynamic. In the first half of 2013, internet advertising grew by 30 percent, which is the highest increase across all media.

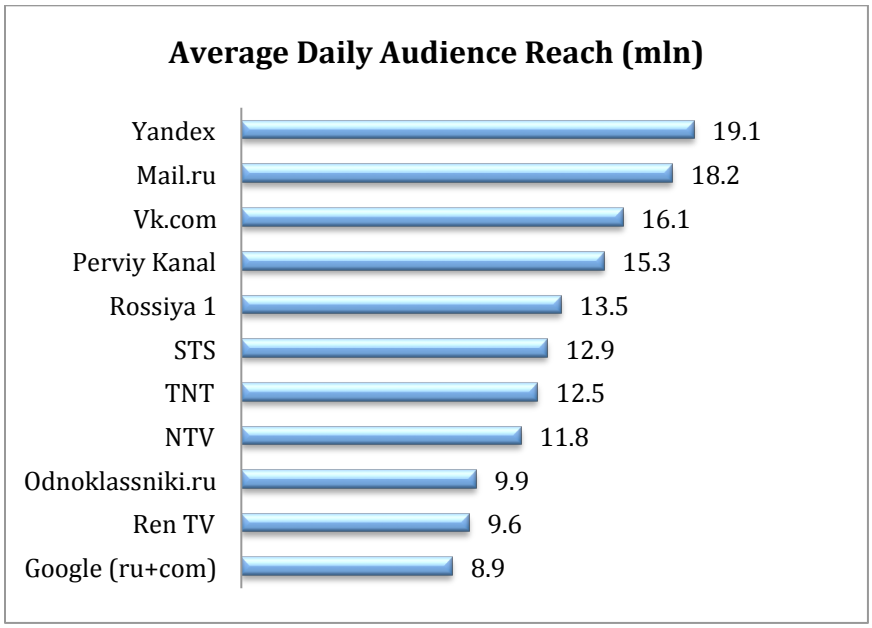
As the chart below shows, the increase of the internet share has been quite dramatic. In 2007, the share of internet of the Russian media market did not exceed 3 percent, while by 2012 it has amounted to 19 percent. Over the same period, the share of the print press dropped by 9 percent, and radio—by 3 percent, while the share of television decreased by 1 percent.

Structural Change of the Russian Media Market



Source: Aegis Global Report.

However, it's noteworthy that the share of internet grows not only because new users acquire access to the internet, but also because of the increase in the number of connection points. Today, every fourth internet user in Russia has three or more devices connecting them to the internet. Meanwhile, the number of Russian citizen who have access to internet hardly exceeds 50 percent[13]. But as shown at the chart below, the average daily reach of popular Russian internet resources (Yandex, Mail.ru, Vk.com) is actually higher than that of Perviy Kanal.



Source: Aegis Global Report

[13] According to Aegis Group, 75.3 million of Russian citizens (~52.5 percent of the country population) have access to internet, with 31.9 million of them based in small cities (population of 100,000 and less) and 43.4 million—in larger cities (population of 100,000 and more).

Table 6 shows the most popular websites of the Russian internet (RuNet) by their audience reach. Yandex tops the list, being the most popular Russian search engine and accumulating 34 websites on its platform. Yandex's primary competitor Mail.ru comes third, but two other websites of the Mail.ru Group (odnoklassniki.ru and Moi Mir) are rated fifth and sixth.

Popular internet media (as opposed to internet search engines and social media) are at the bottom of the Top-15 list. Rbc.ru and Qip.ru belong to a privately owned RBC Holding, while Ria.ru is an internet platform of RIA Novosti, a state-owned news agency. Kp.ru is a part of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* Holding is owned by ESN Group, associated with a state transportation company—Russian Railways.

Table 6. RuNet's Most Popular Internet Websites

	Website	**Operator**	**Monthly Audience Reach* (thousands visits)**
1	Yandex.ru	Yandex	29166.2
2	Vk.com	VKontakte	29143.3
3	Mail.ru	Mail.ru Group	27065.2
4	Google (ru + com)	Google	26036.4
5	Odnoklassniki.ru	Mail.ru Group	25264.9
6	Moi Mir (my.mail.ru)	Mail.ru Group	22830.5
7	LiveJournal.com	SUP Media	16139.4
8	Rutube.com	RuTube	15096.5
9	Avito.ru	AVITO	14552.8
10	Liveinternet.ru	Klimenko & Co	11290.8
11	Kinipoisk.ru	Kinopoisk	10634.3
12	Rbc.ru	RBC Holding	9995.7
13	Qip.ru	RBC Holding	9709.4
14	Ria.ru	RIA Novosti	9106.6
15	Kp.ru	Komsomolskaya Pravda	8823.7

Sources: TNS, Tasscom, March 2012

Today, Russian internet is quite diverse in terms of forms of ownership, which allows for greater freedom of expression and variety of information sources.

CHAPTER 4. INFORMAL PRACTICES OF THE RUSSIA MEDIA

Types of media corruption

It is difficult to estimate the scale of media corruption in Russia, since information on this subject is concealed or tabooed. However, some pieces of information are available in the public space. In 2001, the *Moscow Times* estimated hidden advertising "a multimillion-dollar industry involving nearly every publication in the country." The newspaper also pointed out that nine leading Russian publications alone were receiving a total of $25 million per year through payment for articles, often from PR agencies placing stories for their clients[14]. According to Alexander Pankin, one of the leading media experts in Russia, these estimation is much too low.

One of the reasons for the unprecedented growth of corrupt practices in the media in the 90s was acute financial crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russian economy was in chaos. Old Soviet and emerging new elites were fiercely fighting for the welfare and political power. During this period political consulting industry rapidly formed and started booming. "One simply cannot ignore the proliferation of public relation firms, training programs, university courses and degrees, literature and an army of "craftsmen" specializing in "electoral technologies. By calling themselves imagemakers, politologists, PR men, and political consultants, they introduce new terms to the post-Soviet discourse."

Some of these terms were:

- "black PR" and "grey PR" as applied to formation of a negative opinion of someone or something;
- *zakakukha* (paid articles) that referred to bribes in exchange of publication of materials aimed at changing public opinion in favor of or against an individual, a party or a company;
- *kompromat* (ocompromising materials) that mean discrediting information used strategically for political, legal, media, or business purposes.

[Ledeneva].

As the main means of mass communications, the media serve as tools of "black" and "grey" PR." There are various interpretations of the terms and the differences between the two. To sum up, "black PR" is an illegal and unethical act that leads to criminal charges, while "grey PR" can be either illegal, but ethical, or legal, but unethical. Examples of "black PR" are: manipulation of the results at the polling stations, cutting

[14] Russian journalism's 'dirty little' not-so-secret—charging for stories. Freedomforum.org, June 12, 2001 http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=14128 (accessed on November 18, 2013).

the cable of a local TV station to block a competitor's campaign, or introducing the so-called *dvoiniki* (doubles)—candidates with similar sounding names to confuse voters [Ledeneva]. As a rule, "grey PR" exploits legal loopholes and manipulates the law (refusal to register a candidate for trivial offenses and not giving him or her a chance to resolve these minor issues); or engage in illegal, but "justifiable" practices for the greater good (publication of the compromising material to expose "an evil competitor").

Black and grey PR operate through the media, in which case *zakazukha*, or *jeansa*[15] (another Russian term used to describe a paid editorial article), and *kompromat* can be used as the concrete instruments of the PR campaign.

Kompromat was a Russian media phenomenon that dominated press, television, and radio in the 90s. Some research suggests that there was a large market of *kompromat* services in Russia that operated to satisfy the demand of various political groups, corrupt businesses, and other interested parties. While in the 90s, as all of these groups were struggling for power and welfare, the so-called *kompromat wars* were regular in the media. The 1996 presidential campaign and the 1999 parliamentary elections are considered to be the dirtiest in terms of the amount of compromising materials leaked to the media. During this time the media were constantly subject to manipulation and use for agenda hidden from the public [Ledeneva].

After Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, *kompromat wars* declined. There can be two reasons for this change. First, a former KGB agent who knew how to efficiently accumulate and use information, Vladimir Putin consolidated *kompromat* market in a way that he was the key person who had access to all the existing compromising materials and services and was the only person who could use this data as leverage against his enemies. Second, the abundance of fabricated materials released during the *kompromat* wars in the 90s caused Russian public to lose trust for the media and to become immune and insensitive to the amount of "dirt" spilled over the news.

Consolidation of power in the hands of Vladimir Putin eventually made political discourse a controlled and homogenous space with one dominant player—the president. Starting from 2000s, Russian media switched from serving as tools of *kompromat wars* to serving as tools of the state propaganda, while also engaging deeper into other corrupt practices, now mostly related to business and corporate issues.

Pricelists of Russian Media Corruption

In 2001, a St. Petersburg PR agency, Promaco PR, conducted an experiment to test which of the Russian media outlets are engaged in corruption. The agency sent out a press-release to twenty one Moscow-based publications requesting them to publish it

[15] "Jeansa" is a Russian slang word for "jeans." One of the explanation of the etimology of this term refers to an early 90s case involving Perviy Kanal, in which the a jeans store in Moscow paid to the editorial team for producing a positive news piece about the store with actual jeans merchandise.

as an editorial article. The story described in the press-release was fake: a nonexistent company called *Svetofor* was allegedly introduced to the market.

After receiving response from all the publications, Promaco came clean about the experiment, and the story was consequently detailed in the *Kommersant* article titled "The Russian Press Turned Out to Be for Sale."[16]

The experiment showed that only one publication, *Klient* magazine (produced by the *Kommersant* publishing house) ran the press release for free. Three more, *Izvestia, Sevodnya* and *Itogi*, said they could only publish the press release if it was marked as an advertisement. Another four, *Kommersant-Dengi, Expert, Kompaniya* and *Vedomosti*, said the information in the press release was not sufficient to run a story. The rest thirteen media outlets (*Moskovsky Komsomolets, Vremya Novostei, Novye Izvestia, Ekonomika i Zhizn, Vremya MN, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Obshchaya Gazeta, Vechernyaya Moskva, Tribuna, Profil, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, and Argumenty i Fakty*) agreed to publish the story as an editorial article after they received payments from the firm.

Some of those payments are listed below:

- *Moskovsky Komsomolets*: 26,800 rubles ($950[17]) for "advertising"
- *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*: 57,320 rubles ($2,000) for "producing a media product"
- *Komsomolskaya Pravda*: 15,687 ($550) rubles for "information material"
- *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: 14,340 ($500) rubles for "preparation of an article"

After running the story, Promaco called a press-conference to explain the experiment. According to Promaco's director Kirill Semenov, when his agency tried to enter Moscow media market, it was intending to work by the rules determined by the Law on Mass Media. But it turned out that the agency was losing against its competitors, because "no one in Russia worked that way [by the rules—O.K.]." Promaco pointed out that corrupt practices, such as prepaid editorial articles, or "*jeansa*," damage public trust and cause losses in advertising profits due to redistribution of the profit sources in favor of PR. "The mass media have ceased to be free channels of communication," added Raniya Ibatullina, head of the Promaco Moscow office.

Promaco story, even though it created a great stir at the time, did little to change the situation. Over the last decade, despite the boosting growth of the Russian media and its incorporation into the global media market, convergence of the media and development of the new technologies, Russian media still follow the same pattern of publishing prepaid editorial articles on a regular basis.

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[16] Pianykh, Gleb, Kadik, Lev. 'The Russian Press Turned Out to Be for Sale.' *Kommersant*, February 24, 2001 http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/169551 (accessed on November 18, 2001).
[17] At the 2001 exchange rate.

In 2012, Openspace.ru (now Colta.ru) published a story detailing price tags for paid articles in Russian media[18]. The article's title—"Xerox Boxes Rule and Will Rule For a Long Time"—referred to the infamous "Xerox box scandal" in 1996 when Arkady Yevstafyev and Sergei Lisovsky, members of Boris Yeltsin reelection campaign team, were detained while trying to bring out a Xerox paper box allegedly filled with over $500,000 in cash from the Moscow government's headquarters (White House). "Xerox box scandal" is often referred to as a symbol of illegal financial operations in Russia.

According to Openspace.ru's investigation, most of the media do not receive money for the paid editorials directly, but rather work through specialized PR agencies. For examples, some of the payments that *Trud* newspaper received for paid articles were channeled through *Tainy Sovetnik* (*Secret Advisor*) PR agency that specializes on integrated campaigns, including traditional advertising, GR, and "jeansa." Most of the clients paying for "*jeansa*" are regional governors who need to have national publicity for self-promotion, or smaller companies that are interested in favorable articles about themselves "to show off in front of their vane owners." Another example is *Uspekh* (*Success*) PR agency that offered "a systematized press-support," including control over articles prepared for publishing, and proof-reading the layout.

Openspace.ru cites a prominent Russian media analyst Vassily Gatov, who said that it would be impossible to start working with such an agency without a personal recommendation from an existing client: "It's a reputation market… its work is based on trust."

Another type of media corruption practices is the so-called "passive jeansa," or "blocking." This is a more expensive service, popular with large Russian companies, like Gazprom, Sberbank, Russian Mail. It means that for a certain amount of money, the company can "block" an article containing negative or potentially damaging information about the company from being published. Usually, the money goes to the managing editor who can notice such an article and either "correct" the negative information or remove the article completely. This practice can create additional risks, because it can encourage the editor to blackmail the company and extort more money for the services. In case if the company's competitor comes to the same publication with a request to "block" a topic that the first company wanted to promote, the gambling begins, and the price for "blocking" can increase manifold.

As some PR specialists admit, removing a story that is being prepared for publishing (broadcasting) is almost impossible only in very few media outlets, such as *Kommersant, Vedomosti* and *Ekho Moskvy*. These outlets invested a lot of efforts in their reputation. They built up their audience based on trust and therefore loss of credibility over "jeansa" is too high a price to pay. Also, in case of *Kommersant*, advertising is usually sold out a few months upfront. Besides, a story, before it gets published in

[18] Bykhovskaya, Polina, 'Xerox Boxes Rule and Will Rule For a Long Time' Openspace.ru, April 12, 2012 http://os.colta.ru/media/paper/details/35872/ (accessed on November 18, 2001).

Kommersant, goes through several checkpoints—editor, proof-reader, executive editor, et al. This system practically eliminates the possibility of passing a "paid article". Majority of other Russian media outlets publish paid content, as many of them are struggling for the profit.

The national press "*jeansa*" market is estimated at $130 million which is accounted for 1/10 of the advertising market in 2012, according to Gatov. Political "*jeansa*" can be paid for legally in the form of "information cooperation."

Openspace.ru provides a 2012 price list for paid articles in various publications:

- Moskovsky Komsomolets – 1/8 A2 -- $13,000
- RBC Daily – ½ A2 – $12,500
- Nezavisimaya Gazeta – ¼ D2 – starting $7,500 (positive) to $11,250 (negative)
- Novaya Gazeta – ½ A3 -- $10,500
- Argumenty i Fakty – ½ A3 -- $8,000

Comparison of the 2012 pricelist to the 2012 pricelist shows that the prices for "*jeansa*" increased at least 10 times. There are whole publishing houses at the Russian media market that earn the majority of the income from paid articles presented as editorial content. According to Gatov, in 2007-08 up to 80 percent of the budget of Rodionov Publishing House was formed by paid articles. The price tag for an article in *Profil* magazine could cost from $5,000 to $20,000. Hundreds of much less known publications with smaller circulation consider this practice as normal.

In 2012, Vladimir Pribylovsky, a well-known Russian political writer, published[19] a story in his blog, in which he detailed the price tags for paid articles about the Seliger event of the Nashi movement (pro-Kremlin youth organization). According to the copies of the invoices acquired by the blogger, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* received 690,000 rubles for a 500-words article about Vladislav Surkov's visit to Seliger, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*—520,000 rubles, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*—379,000 rubles. Later, chief editors of these publications either denied these facts or refused to comment.

In some cases, media corruption can also take place at the personal level. An interested party can approach a journalist and offer cooperation for a certain amount of money that is usually less than the editorial price list. Sometimes, corrupt practices happen in subtler ways—by inviting journalists on corporate press tours, or sending them gifts as a sign of gratification for a good article. Many journalists in Russia welcome such opportunities and sometimes even demand them upfront.

[19] http://lj.rossia.org/users/anticompromat/1661950.html

CONCLUSION

In a 2011 interview, editor-in-chief of *Moskovsky Komsomolets* Pavel Gusev said that [Russian] media are no fourth pillar of democracy. "It's a myth invented in 1991 when the media took the leading role in the absence of political parties, strong country leadership, the so-called "power vertical." In the 90s the media could be considered an authority of some kind, because they completed any political decisions and could manipulate electorate. Today, the media are the state tools." According to Gusev, about 80 percent of the Russian media are financed by the state, with regional and local media "almost fully relying on mere pittance from the state."

In 2012, in a different interview titled "*Zakazukha* is not against the law, and don't act like you are a virgin,"[20] Gusev, who is an active propagator of creating a new Journalism Ethics Chart in the country, was even more explicit about state of affairs in Russian media and its corruption practices. "I don't think *zakazukha* will disappear in the near future, but just because new principles of self-regulation are not developed. If self-regulation develops, it will become a certain obstruction for "black PR." Another problem is advertising market, compared to the West. Our advertising marker is very, very uncivilized, and wild. And it's a much bigger problem than "black PR"." According to Gusev, until Russian media develop an ethics codex, nothing will change the way the media engage themselves in corrupt practices.

Openspace.ru cited former executive director of Rodionov Publishing House Yevgeny Dodolev: "By publishing such articles [as "*jeansa"*], the media break the law, yes. But we live in the country, where it is impossible to function without breaking the law. There are thousands of laws and acts that contradict each other. Therefore you always break the law when you run any business. It's bad to lie to your readers, but what else can be done? It's still better than robbing or stealing."[21]

But still, there are other journalists in Russia who consider the current state of affairs a disgrace.

In 2011, Leonid Parfyonov, one of the leading Russian TV journalist was awarded the Vladislav Listyev Prize—a prestigious television award. While accepting the prize, Parfyonov diagnosed Russian media in a speech that created a stir in the media community. "After the real and imaginary sins of the 90s, in 2000s by two moves—first, for the sake of eliminating media oligarchs, and then for the sake of unity in the war on terrorism—etatization of the "federal" televised information took place. Journalists' topics were first broken down into those that could be broadcasted and those that couldn't. Later, the same breakage happened with life. Behind any politically important program, one can guess the state's goals and objective, its attitude, its friends

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[20] Pavel Gusev: "*Zakazukha* is not against the law, and don't act like you are a virgin,"' Jourdom.ru, October 29, 2012 http://jourdom.ru/news/23079 (accessed on November 18, 2013).
[21] Bykhovskaya, Polina, 'Xerox Boxes Rule and Will Rule For a Long Time' Openspace.ru, April 12, 2012 http://os.colta.ru/media/paper/details/35872/ (accessed on November 18, 2001).

and enemies. From the institutional point of view, it's not even information, it's the state's PR or anti-PR. … For a correspondent of a federal TV channel high-profile officials are not newsmakers, but bosses of his or her bosses. From the institutional point of view, correspondent is not a journalist at all, but rather another official who follows the logic of serving and subordinating."

Lack of freedom of speech and public accountability, subordination of the media to the state, prevail of the informal practices in the relationship between the state and the media—all of these factors preconditioned Russian media for corruption.

At the same time, some scholars argue that Russian people have always perceived the media as an essential part of the state structure. Russians traditionally see themselves as media subjects who have no rights as either media citizens or media consumers [Oates]. This attitude is the result of people's association with the state, subordination to it and at the same time alienation from it—a contradiction that dominates in the relationship between Russian citizens and Russian authorities. In that sense, the decline of the Russian media and their dereliction of duty is caused not only by the pressure put on them by the state, but also by the lack of interest in political debate coming from the public.

However, after the mass protests of December 2011, Russian political system turned towards the harder authoritarian model, which signified the beginning of the *fourth period* in the Russian media history. Over the last two years Russian State Duma (Parliament) passed restrictive amends to legislations on defamation, libel, combating extremism and terrorism, protecting personal data, banning the usage of the curse words in the media. In October 2013, new amendments to media regulation were suggested in the Duma—on restricting registration procedure for the new media[22].

All these restrictions aim at intimidating the media and getting a stronger grip on the public information. But a number of current media market trends suggest that the change might be on the way. First, the boosting media market in Russia encourages institutional development of the media. Second, the growing share of internet readership leads to greater access to the information that the state tries to control and contain (such as exposure of corruption within the government). Third, public trust for the information provided through television is declining, while the trust for internet information grows. Over time, these trends might bring the critical volume of exposure of the regime's corruption that will create the necessary level of public dissent to bring political change to the country. As Aidan White, head of International Union of Journalists, pointed out, "courageous reporters risk life and limb every day to defend press freedom and human rights. We cannot stand by while bribery mocks those sacrifices, anywhere in the world."

[22] One of the restrictions that raised concerns within the media community is that people who have been convicted of crimes against the public order or state security (i.e. defendants in the Bolotnaya Square case) are not allowed to found and register a media outlet.

APPENDIX

Ownership Structure of the Russian Media Market (2013)

Television

TV Company	Key Assets	Ownership
ForMedia	25 regional TV-stations	Bazovy Element (Oleg Deripaska[23])
Moskva Media	TV Center (merged with Moskoviya—Channel Three) Moskva 24 Moskva Doveriye (Moscow Trust)	Government of Moscow
NKS Media (National Cable Network)	Mat i Ditya (Mother and Child) 24 Techno 24 Doc (Documentaries) Nastoyashchee Strashnoye Televideniye (Really Scary Television) Park Razvlecheniy (Entertainment Park)	Rostelekom (state-owned company)
NTV Media	NTV NTV Plus +over 170 other TV-channels TNT	Gazprom Media Holding (state-owned corporation)
Perviy Kanal (Channel One)	Channel One (Russia) Channel One. Global Network (International) --Dom Kino --Muzyka Pervogo --Vremya --Telekafe	Rosimushchestvo (state) National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk[24]) Roman Abramovich
Prof-Media	MTV Russia TV3 2x2 Pyatnitsa!	Interros Holding Company (Vladimir Potanin[25])
Public Television of Russia	--	Russian government
Pyatiy Kanal (Channel Five)	--	National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk)
RBC-TV	--	Oneksim Group (Mikhail Prokhorov[26])
REN TV	--	National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk)
STREAM Television Company	Okhota i Rybalka (Hunting and Fishing) Zdorovoye TV (Healthy TV) Drive Retro Usadba (Country Real Estate) Psikhologuiya24 (Psychology24) Voprosy i Otvety (Questions and Answers) Domashniye Zhivotniye (Pets) Stream Russian Life	AFK Sistema (Vladimir Yevtushenkov[27])
STS Media	STS Domashny Perez 31 Channel (Kazakhstan) TeleDiksi (Moldova). STS Region (27 regional TV stations)	Modern Times Group AB (Sweden); National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk); Surgutneftegaz (via Telcrest Investments, Ltd., Cyprus)

[23] Oleg Deripaska is owner of Basic Element; he comes 16th in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($8.5 billion), according to *Forbes*.
[24] Yuri Kovalchuk is Chairman of the Board of *Rossiya* Bank, one of the largest banks in Russia, and Vladimir Putin's personal friend.
[25] Vladimir Potanin, head of Interros Holding, comes 7th in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($14.3 billion), according to *Forbes*.
[26] Mikhail Prokohorov is Vladimir Potanin's former partner in Interros Holding. He comes 10th in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($13 billion), according to *Forbes*.
[27] Vladimir Yevtushenkov is Chairman of the Board and owner of AFK Sistema; he comes 23rd in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($6.7 billion), according to *Forbes*.

TV Rain	--	Natalia Sindeyeva[28]
VGTRK (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company)	Russia 1 Russia 2 (Sport) Russia K (Kultura) Russia 24 (Vesti 24) Russia-Planeta (International) +11 more +94 regional TV stations	Rosimushchestvo (state)
YuTV Holding	Disney Yu Muz-TV	Alisher Usmanov[29]; 49% share of Disney belong to The Walt Disney Company; 25% share of Muz-TV belongs to Igor Krutoy[30]
Zvezda (Star)	--	Ministry of Defense

Radio Stations

Radio Company	Key Assets	Ownership
Baltic Mediagroup	Radio Baltic	Oleg Rudnov[31]
European Media Group	Radio 7 Melodiya (St. Petersburg) Eldorado Retro FM Europa Plus Keks FM Radio Record Radio Sport	"Siberean Business Council" Holding Company (Vladimir Gridin, Mikhail Fedyayev)
Gazprom Media	City FM Relax FM Ekho Moskvy Comedy Radio Detskoye Radio	Gazprom (state-owned corporation)
Moskva Media	Moscow FM Govorit Moskva	
Prof-Media	Autoradio Yumor FM Energy Radio Romantika	Interros (Vladimir Potanin)
Russian Media Group	Russkoye Radio Maximum Monte Carlo Hit FM DFM	Sergei Kozhevnikov ; IFD Capital (Vagit Alekperov, Leonid Fedun[32])
Serebryany Dozhd (Silver Rain)	--	Natalia Sindeyeva, Dmitry Savitsky
StyleMedia	Radio Classic Radio Jazz	Arnold Uvarov, Elena Uvarova
VGTRK	Radio Rossii Mayak Kultura Vesti FM Yunost (Youth)	Rosimushchestvo (state)

[28] Natalia Sindeyeva is a well-known businesswoman, media manager, publisher, and producer. One of the co-founders of Silver Rain radio stations, and founder of Rain. Optimistic Channel TV network.
[29] Alisher Usmanov, owner of Metalloinvest Management Company, comes 1st in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($17.6 billion), according to *Forbes*.
[30] Igor Krutoy is a well-known Russian music producer.
[31] According to *Kommersant*, Oleg Rudnov is one Yuri Kovalchuk's business partners
[32] Vagit Alekperov is President and co-owner of Lukoil oil company. He comes 5th in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($14.8 billion), according to *Forbes*. Leonid Fedun is Vice President of Lukoil oil company. He comes 21sr in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($7.1 billion), according to *Forbes*.

Print Press

Press Company	Key Assets	Ownership
Argumenty i Fakty (Arguments and Facts) Publishing House	*Argumenty i Fakty* AiF PRO	PromSvyazCapital Group (Aleksei and Dmitry Ananyev)
Axel Springer Russia	Forbes Russia OK! Gala Biografia GEO	Axel Springer AG (Germany)
Bauer Media Group	*Planeta Zhenshchin* (Planet of Women) *Zvyozdy I Sovety* (Stars and Advice) + 14 more newspapers and magazines	Bauer Media Group (Germany)
Bonnier Business Press	*Delovoy Peterburg* (Business Petersburg) Delovaya Gazeta Yug (Business Newspaper South)	Bonnier AB (Sweden)
Burda Publishing House	Burda Playboy +15 more magazines	Hubert Burda Media (Germany)
C-Media Publishing House	Hi-Fi Empire + 2 more magazines	Oleg Chamin[33]
Conde Nast Publishing House	Vogue GQ +5 more magazines	Conde Nast (United States)
Delovoy Mir (Business World) Publishing House	Extra M Media Publishing House --Extra M --Extra M Regions +3 more magazines	Leonid Eshchenko[34]
Edipress Conliga	*Mama, Eto Ya!* (Mom, It's Me!) *Pokhudei!* (Lose Weight!) + 12 more magazines	Edipressa Group (Switzerland)
Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta (Economic Newspaper) Publishing House	*Ekonomika I Zhizn* (Economics and Life) *Rossiysky Ekonomichesky Zhurnal* (Russian Economic Magazine) +11 more newspapers and magazines Journalist Publishing House (4 magazines)	Editorial Board
Expert Media Holding	Expert Expert Auto Russian Reporter	Basic Element (Oleg Deripaska); Vnesheconombank (state-owned bank)
Forward Media Group	Hello! Story + 2 more magazines	Basic Element (Oleg Deripaska)
Gameland Publishing House	*Svoi Biznes* (Own Business) Total Football + 5 more magazines	Dmitry Agarunov[35]; Troika Capital Partners; Mint Capital
Gudok	--	Russian Railways
Heart Shkulev InterMediaGroup	Marie Claire Psychologies + 7 more magazines	Hachette Fillipacchi Medias (Lagarde SCA, France); Viktor Shkulev[36]
Independent Media Sonoma Magazines Publishing House	Business News Media Publishing House --*Vedomosti* (with The Wall Street Journal) United Press --The Moscow Times --Men's Health +8 more magazines	Sonoma Independent Media (Finland)

[33] Oleg Chamin is a Russian businessman, record producer, and publisher.
[34] Leonid Eshchenko is a founder and Chairman of the Board of *Delovoy Mir* (Business World) Publishing House
[35] Dmitry Agarunov is a Russian businessman, founder and CEO of Gameland Publishing House
[36] Viktor Shkulev is one of the leading Russian media managers; president of Hachette Filipacchi Shkulev

	Neva Media --St.Petersburg Times Fashion Press --Cosmopolitan --Esquire + 5 more magazines	
Kommersant Publishing House	*Kommersant* *Kommersant* (regional) *Kommersant* Vlast *Kommersant* Dengi + 4 more magazines	Kommersant Holding (Alisher Usmanov)
Media Partner Group	*Komsomolskaya Pravda* Publishing House --*Komsomolskaya Pravda* --Teleprogramma --Express-Gazeta --Sovetsky Sport RZhD Partner (Russian Railways Partner) +Metro (with Metro International)	ESN Group (Grigory Berezkin[37])
Moskovsky Komsomolets Publishing House	Moskovsky Komsomolets MK Regionalny Ezhenedelnik (MK Regional Weekly) MK-Bulvar +5 more newspapers and magazines	Pavel Gusev[38]
News Media Publishing House	Izvestiya Zhizn (Life) Tvoy Den (Your Day)	National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk); Aram Gabrelyanov[39]
Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper)	--	Konstantin Remchukov
Novaya Gazeta	--	Editorial Board; Aleksander Levedev (39 percent) Mikhail Gorbachyov (10 percent)
Pronto Moskva Publishing House	*Iz Ruk v Ruki* *Avtogid* (Autoguide) +2 more magazines Impress Media Publishing House (4 magazines)	Trader Media East (the Netherlands)
RBC Media Holding	RBC CNews Nashi Dengi (Our Money)	Oneksim Group (Mikhail Prokhorov)
Rodionov Publishing House	Profil (Profile) Kompaniya (Company) + 6 more	Sergei Rodionov[40]
Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper)	*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* *Rossiyskaya Business Gazeta* *RG Nedelya* (RG Week) *Zarubezhnye Vkladki* (International Supplements) *RG v Regionakh* (RG in Regions) Yurist speshit na pomoshch (Lawyer to the Rescue)	Rosimushchestvo (state)
Russkiy Pioner (Russian Pioneer)	--	Andrei Kolesnikov
Sem Dney (Seven Days) Publishing House	*Itogi* (Results) 7 Days TV Program + 3 more magazines	Gazprom Media Holding (state-owned corporation)
SK-Press	In Style PC Week/RE + 7 more magazines	Yevgeny Adlerov[41]

[37] Grigory Berezkin is a Russian businessman and owner of ESN Group. *Forbes* estimate his assets worth of $830 million. In 2007, ESN Group acquired *Komsomolskaya Pravda* from Prof-Media Holding. According to *Kommersant*, ESN Group is associated to Russian Railways.
[38] Pavel Gusev is Editor-in-Chief *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, CEO and owner of *Moskovsky Komsomolets* Publishing House. He is head of the Moscow Union of Journalists, member of the Presidential Human Rights Council, and member of the Russian Public Chamber.
[39] Aram Gabrelyanov is a Russian publisher, chairman of the board of *Izvestia* and News Media Publishing House. He is known for creating a number of scandalous, but popular tabloids, such as *Zhizn* (Life) and *Tvoi Den* (Your Day).
[40] Sergei Rodionov is a Russian businessman, founder and Chairman of the Board of Rodinov Publishing House
[41] Yevgeny Adlerov is a founder and publisher of SK-Press.

The New Times	--	Yevgeniya Albatz
Trud (Labor) Publishing House	*Trud* *Trud-7* (Weekend)	Institute of Free Journalism (Sergei Tsoi, Valery Simonov, Yuri Ryazhsky[42])
Za Rulyom (Behind the Wheel) Publishing House	*Za Rulyom* *Za Rulyom* – Region +3 more magazines	Valery Pushkov[43]
Zhivi! (Live!) Media Group	Snob	Oneksim Group (Mikhail Prokhorov)

Internet

Internet Company	Key Assets	Ownership
Baltinfo.ru	--	Baltic Media Group (Oleg Rudnov)
Bonnier Business Press	Dp.ru Fontanka.ru	Bonnier AB (Sweden)
C-Media Publishing House	Newsland.ru Maxpark.com +2 more	Oleg Chamin
Finam.ru		Finam Group
Gazprom Media Holding	Rutube.ru Now.ru	Gazprom (state-owned corporation)
Gzt.ru	--	Vladimir Lisin[44]
Mail.ru Group	Mail.ru Odnoklassniki.ru ICQ Facebook Vk.com	New Media Technologies (Alisher Usmanov); MIH Group (South African Republic); Tencent; Dmitry Grishin; Yuri Milner; Grigory Finger
News Media Publishing House	Lifenews.ru Marker.ru	National Media Group (Yuri Kovalchuk)
Rambler Media Group	Afisha.ru Lenta.ru Rambler.ru Begun.ru + 2 more	Interros Holding (Vladimir Potanin) (in 2013, Rambler Media was merged with SUP Media under Aleksander Mumut's management)
RBC Media Holding	Rbc.ru Utro.ru Quote.ru Cnews.ru Autonews.ru + 4 more	Oneksim Group (Mikhail Prokhorov)
Russian Media Group	Station.ru Muz.ru	IFD Capital (Vagit Alekperov, Leonid Fedun)
Slon.ru	--	Natalia Sindeyeva
SUP Media	Gazeta.ru Livejournal.com +4 more	Aleksander Mamut[45]
Yandex	Yandex.ru Yandex.Dengi MoiKrug,ru Ya.ru	Arkady Volozh[46]; company's management; Baring Vostok Capital Partners, ru-Net Holdings; Sberbank (state bank)

[42] Sergei Tsoi is Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of RusHydro; previously served as spokesperson of the former mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov. Valery Simonov is Editor-in-Chief of *Trud* (Labor). Yury Ryazhsky is Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Trud*.
[43] Valery Pushkov is a General Director of *Za Rulyom* (Behind the Wheel) Publishing House
[44] Vladimir Lisin is chairman and majority shareholder of Novolipetsk (NLMK). He comes 8th in the 2013 Top-200 richest businessmen in Russia ($14.1 billion), according to *Forbes*.
[45] Aleksander Mamut is a Russian businessman, owner of SUP Media, and Chairman of the Board of the merged Afisha-Rambler-SUP.
[46] Arkady Volozh is Yandex CEO. *Forbes* estimates his assets worth of $1.15 billion.

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