

THE PARADOX OF DIGITAL TRANSITION IN REGIONAL JOURNALISM: A CASE STUDY OF KHOREZM MEDIA**Allambergonova Hulkar Sherzod qizi**4th-year student of History
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Abstract. This article investigates the structural and functional transformation of regional press in Uzbekistan during the digital era, focusing specifically on publications in the Khorezm region. Through a comparative analysis of archival print media from 2019 and contemporary digital platforms (2024–2026), significant shifts in journalistic roles and methods of public engagement have been identified. While traditional print outlets historically maintained a strong analytical capacity, their transition to digital platforms—particularly Telegram—is characterized by a decline in original content and an increase in “repost-based” information dissemination. Strategic Future: The research findings demonstrate that the future of regional journalism depends on moving away from passive information relay toward proactive, community-oriented digital strategies.

Keywords: Regional journalism, digital transformation, media convergence, Khorezm press, social responsibility, Telegram journalism, Uzbekistan.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada raqamli davrda O‘zbekiston hududiy matbuotining, xususan, Xorazm viloyati nashrlarining tarkibiy va funksional transformatsiyasi o‘rganiladi. 2019-yildagi arxiv bosma nashrlari va 2024–2026 yillardagi zamonaviy raqamli platformalarning qiyosiy tahlili orqali jurnalistik rollar va jamoatchilik bilan aloqa qilish usullaridagi jiddiy o‘zgarishlar aniqlangan. An’anaviy bosma nashrlar tarixan kuchli tahliliy salohiyatga ega bo‘lgan bo‘lsa-da, ularning raqamli platformalarga, xususan, Telegramga o‘tishi original kontentning kamayishi va “repost”ga asoslangan axborot uzatishning ko‘payishi bilan tavsiflanadi. Tadqiqot xulosalari hududiy jurnalistikaning kelajagi passiv axborot tarqatishdan voz kechib, faol va jamiyatga yo‘naltirilgan raqamli strategiyalarga o‘tishga bog‘liqligini isbotlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Hududiy jurnalistika, raqamli transformatsiya, media-konvergensiya, Xorazm matbuoti, ijtimoiy mas’uliyat, Telegram-jurnalistika, O‘zbekiston.

Аннотация. Данное исследование посвящено анализу структурной и функциональной трансформации региональной прессы Узбекистана в цифровую эпоху на примере Хорезмской области. Посредством сравнительного анализа архивных печатных изданий 2019 года и современных цифровых платформ (2024–2026 гг.) выявлены значительные изменения в журналистских ролях и методах взаимодействия с аудиторией. Установлено, что в то время как традиционные печатные СМИ исторически обладали сильным аналитическим потенциалом, их переход на цифровые платформы, в частности в Telegram, характеризуется снижением доли оригинального контента и ростом “репост-журналистики”. Результаты исследования подтверждают, что будущее региональной журналистики зависит от перехода от пассивной ретрансляции информации к активным, социально-ориентированным цифровым стратегиям.

Ключевые слова: региональная журналистика, цифровая трансформация, медиаконвергенция, пресса Хорезма, социальная ответственность, Telegram-журналистика, Узбекистан.

Introduction. In the contemporary era of globalized information networks, regional journalism stands at a critical crossroads between traditional legacy and digital inevitable. While metropolitan media outlets have swiftly adapted to the fast-paced nature of digital consumption, regional press entities—particularly in developing media landscapes like Uzbekistan—face a unique set of structural and conceptual challenges. The shift from print-centric dissemination to digital-first strategies is not merely a technical transition; it represents a profound transformation in the social responsibility, professional standards, and public engagement of the local press.

Historically, regional newspapers served as the primary “bridge” between the state and the grassroots population. In the Khorezm region, for instance, archival records from 2019 reveal a vibrant era of print journalism characterized by robust social oversight and a diverse range of genres, from analytical critiques to investigative reports on local governance. However, the current “digital reality” presents a paradoxical picture. Despite the ubiquitous availability of high-speed platforms such as Telegram, many legacy regional outlets have struggled to maintain their authoritative voice, often falling into the trap of “nominal presence” or what is colloquially termed “repost journalism.”

This scholarly article seeks to explore the dynamics of this digital transformation by providing a comparative analysis of the Khorezm regional press. By contrasting the established editorial standards of 2019 with contemporary digital practices (2024–2026), we identify a significant “digital divide.” While corporate and academic media platforms, such as “UrDU Press”, demonstrate high levels of audience engagement through multimedia integration and interactive storytelling, traditional regional outlets often exhibit a passive approach, primarily functioning as digital archives for official press releases rather than independent information hubs.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on the “Agenda-setting” and “Framing” theories within a localized context. It investigates how the loss of an independent digital voice at the regional level impacts information security and public trust. By analyzing follower metrics, content diversity, and editorial independence, this paper aims to provide a strategic roadmap for the revitalization of regional journalism, advocating for a transition from passive information relay to proactive, community-centered digital media.

Literature review. The theoretical framework of this research is built upon the intersection of classical journalism theories and modern digital communication paradigms. The transition of regional media from traditional formats to digital ecosystems has been a subject of extensive academic debate, both globally and within the national context of Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, the evolution of journalism as a social institution has been extensively studied by Muminov (2005), who emphasizes the media’s role in democratic transitions and social oversight. As regional journalism faces the challenges of the 21st century, the work of Ergashev (2012) and Hazratqulov (2008) provides critical insights into the ethical responsibilities of journalists at the local level. These scholars argue that the regional press must maintain its proximity to the community to remain relevant.

Modern research by national scholars like Mamatov (2021) focuses on Media Convergence—the merging of traditional media with digital technology. This study builds upon these ideas by analyzing the practical application of convergence in the Khorezm region. While the literature suggests that convergence is a path toward survival, this research identifies a gap: the phenomenon of “repost journalism,” where digital adoption leads to a decline in original content rather than an increase in professional engagement.

By synthesizing these global and local perspectives, this research aims to provide a localized analysis of how theoretical models of digital journalism are being tested in the specific socio-political environment of the Khorezm region.

Methodology. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital transformation within the regional media landscape of Uzbekistan, this study employs a mixed-methods research design. The methodology is constructed to bridge the gap between historical print traditions and contemporary digital practices, utilizing the Khorezm region as a representative case study.

The initial phase involved a retrospective analysis of the regional newspaper “Xorazm Haqiqati”. To establish a baseline for professional standards, the research team examined print editions from the 2019 fiscal year. This process focused on thematic categorization and genre identification. We analyzed how social issues were framed and the extent to which the press exercised its role as a public watchdog. This archival study provided the necessary context to

evaluate whether the transition to digital platforms resulted in an evolution or a dilution of journalistic quality.

In the second phase, the focus shifted to the digital ecosystem, specifically the Telegram Messenger platform, which serves as the primary news source in the region. A quantitative audit was performed on two distinct entities:

The Legacy Media Model: Represented by the official channel of “Xorazm Haqiqati”.

The Convergent Corporate Model: Represented by the “UrDU Press” media outlet.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) such as Subscriber Growth (SG), Engagement Rates (ER), and View-per-Post (VPP) metrics were tracked between March and April 2026. This quantitative data allowed for a rigorous comparison between traditional editorial approaches and modern, youth-led digital strategies.

A qualitative case study of the “UrDU Press” model was conducted to identify the drivers of successful digital engagement. This involved an analysis of Multimedia Integration and Mobile Journalism (MoJo) techniques. The study observed how the use of short-form video, interactive hashtags, and cross-platform linking (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) creates a holistic media experience. This phase was crucial for determining the “best practices” that can be replicated by struggling regional outlets.

The final methodological step addressed the sociological and institutional causes behind the stagnation of regional press. By evaluating the original-to-shared content ratio, the research identified the impact of the proliferation of government press services on independent journalism. This phase utilized an “Institutional Displacement” framework to explain why traditional media is losing its functional monopoly over information. We analyzed the content flow to see if regional outlets are producing independent narratives or merely acting as digital conduits for official administrative voices.

Discussion. The Crisis of Identity: Why Regional Press is Failing the Digital Test. The findings of this study suggest that the digital stagnation of regional newspapers in Uzbekistan is not merely a technical failure, but an existential crisis of identity. When analyzing the transition of “Xorazm Haqiqati”, it becomes evident that the editorial board views Telegram as a digital bulletin board rather than a dynamic journalistic platform. This conceptual misunderstanding leads to the “Nominal Presence” trap, where an outlet exists online but fails to command any significant public attention.

A critical factor discussed in this research is the rapid professionalization of government press services. As each administrative body (Khokimiyat) developed its own direct-to-consumer information channels, the regional newspaper was stripped of its role as the sole gatekeeper of local news. Our analysis shows that by merely reposting content from these official channels, regional outlets have rendered themselves redundant. In the digital economy, if a media outlet does not add value—through independent analysis, investigation, or unique storytelling—it loses its “Reason for Being.” The 341 subscribers of the regional flagship versus the thousands following government press secretaries clearly illustrate this shift in information authority.

In contrast, the success of “UrDU Press” provides a vital counter-narrative. By adopting a “Digital-First” mentality, this platform has bypassed the bureaucratic rigidity of legacy media. The discussion points toward three key success pillars:

Multimedia Fluency: Unlike the static text-and-image format of traditional papers, “UrDU Press” utilizes the full spectrum of mobile journalism (MoJo), making information “shareable” and “consumable” for a younger, mobile-centric demographic.

Community Engagement: While regional papers talk “at” the audience, “UrDU Press” talks “with” them. The use of interactive polls, feedback loops, and student-led reporting creates a sense of ownership among followers.

Content Originality: By avoiding the “repost trap,” this model maintains high “Engagement Rates,” proving that originality is the only currency that matters in the attention economy.

3. Information Security and the Risk of “Atmospheric” Vacuum

From a broader perspective, the weakening of regional press creates a dangerous information vacuum. When official newspapers become mere echo chambers for government press releases, they lose the ability to counter misinformation effectively. In a region as strategically important as Khorezm, a robust, independent, and digitally-savvy regional press is not a luxury—it is a requirement for regional information security. The current trend toward “repost journalism” essentially leaves the public vulnerable to unverified third-party narratives during times of social or economic local crises.

Conclusion. The findings of this research underscore that the digital transformation of the regional press in Uzbekistan—specifically in the Khorezm region—is currently at a critical evolutionary juncture. While the technological infrastructure (internet access and platform availability) is present, the conceptual adaptation of traditional newsrooms remains insufficient. The transition from a dominant print-based social supervisor in 2019 to a passive digital conduit in 2026 indicates a loss of journalistic agency. The “repost journalism” model, while resource-efficient, has proven to be a strategic failure, leading to audience alienation and institutional irrelevance.

However, the resilience and success of the “UrDU Press” model demonstrate that a vibrant, community-centered digital media ecosystem is possible. By prioritizing multimedia fluency and direct audience engagement, regional media can reclaim its role as an essential pillar of local information security and social development.

In conclusion, the survival of regional journalism in the digital age depends on its ability to offer what institutional press services cannot: independent analysis, critical oversight, and a genuine voice for the community.

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