

THESIS

THEME: THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN UZBEKISTAN, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MEDIA.**Teshaboyeva Nigoraxon Qaxramonjon qizi**ADCHTI, INGLIZ TILI VA ADABIYOTI FAKULTETI 105- GURUH
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Annotatsiya:

O'zbekiston media landshafti so'nggi o'n yilliklarda, ayniqsa, 1991-yilda mustaqillikka erishganidan so'ng sezilarli o'zgarishlarni boshdan kechirdi. Davlat nazoratidagi ommaviy axborot vositalaridan ochiqroq ommaviy axborot vositalari muhitiga o'tish siyosiy, ijtimoiy va texnologik o'zgarishlar ta'sirida tadrijiy jarayon bo'ldi. Ushbu tezisdá O'zbekistonda ommaviy axborot vositalari faoliyatining bugungi holati, uning ommaviy axborot vositalari evolyutsiyasi, jurnalistlar oldida turgan muammolar, internet va ijtimoiy medianing o'rne, globallashuv va demokratik islohotlar sharoitida kelajakdagi rivojlanish istiqbollari tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: raqamli media, blogger ta'siri, jurnalistlar xavfsizligi, internetga kirish, raqamli transformatsiya, onlayn faollik, internetni tartibga solish

Abstract:

The media landscape in Uzbekistan has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, especially since the country gained independence in 1991. The transition from a state-controlled to a more open media environment has been a gradual process, influenced by political, social, and technological changes. This thesis

examines the current state of media activities in Uzbekistan, analyzing the evolution of its media, challenges faced by journalists, the role of the internet and social media, and the prospects for future development in the context of globalization and democratic reforms.

Key words: digital media, blogger influence, journalist safety, internet penetration, digital transformation, online activism, internet regulation

Аннотация:

Медиа-ландшафт в Узбекистане претерпел значительные изменения за последние десятилетия, особенно с момента обретения страной независимости в 1991 году. Переход от контролируемой государством к более открытой медиа-среде был постепенным процессом, на который повлияли политические, социальные и технологические изменения. В этой диссертации рассматривается текущее состояние медиа-деятельности в Узбекистане, анализируется эволюция его СМИ, проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются журналисты, роль Интернета и социальных сетей, а также перспективы будущего развития в контексте глобализации и демократических реформ.

Ключевые слова: цифровые медиа, влияние блогеров, безопасность журналистов, проникновение интернета, цифровая трансформация, онлайн-активизм, регулирование интернета

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, influencing political discourse, and fostering democratic values. In Uzbekistan, a country in Central Asia that gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the media has undergone significant changes. In the early years of independence, the media in Uzbekistan was largely state-controlled, with limited room for independent journalism or free expression. However, as the country has moved toward political and economic reforms, the media landscape has evolved, though it still faces significant challenges. This thesis aims to examine the media activities in Uzbekistan, focusing on their historical

evolution, the current state of media freedom, and the challenges faced by journalists and media organizations. A key focus of this research is to explore the role of new media platforms, such as social media and digital news, and their impact on traditional forms of media. The research also investigates the relationship between the government and the media, analyzing both the pressures on media freedom and the opportunities for reform. The methodology of this thesis involves a qualitative approach, including an analysis of historical texts, media reports, interviews with local journalists, and content analysis of popular media platforms. The findings of this research will provide insight into the complex dynamics of media activities in Uzbekistan and offer recommendations for further development.

The Role of Digital Media and Social Networks in Uzbekistan

The rapid growth of the internet and digital media platforms in Uzbekistan has transformed the way information is disseminated, consumed, and shared. With a population increasingly connected to the digital world, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter have emerged as essential tools for communication, political expression, and public discourse.

1. Growth of Digital Media

Since the early 2000s, Uzbekistan has witnessed significant growth in internet penetration. As of the mid-2020s, the country has an internet penetration rate of over 60%, with a growing number of young, tech-savvy users who are active on social media platforms. This shift has enabled a more diverse range of voices to participate in discussions, bypassing traditional state-controlled media channels.

The introduction of 4G networks and the increasing affordability of smartphones has made the internet more accessible to a larger portion of the population. As of recent years, many news outlets, both state-controlled and independent, have launched digital versions, engaging audiences through websites, mobile applications, and social media accounts. Furthermore, many independent journalists and activists are leveraging

social media platforms to report on issues that may be censored or underreported by traditional media outlets.

2. Impact on Political Discourse and Public Opinion

Social media has played a pivotal role in facilitating political discourse in Uzbekistan. Unlike traditional media, which has historically been controlled or heavily influenced by the government, social media provides a space for citizens to share opinions and information without the direct oversight of state authorities. This has led to the rise of informal digital networks, where users exchange news, opinions, and critiques on a variety of subjects, including politics, social issues, and government policies.

For instance, during times of political unrest or protests, social media has been an essential tool for organizing and mobilizing citizens. One notable example is the use of Telegram channels and social media platforms during protests, where citizens have shared real-time updates and coordinated actions. This has, at times, placed the government in a challenging position, as it struggles to maintain control over the flow of information in a digital environment that is harder to censor.

3. Government's Response to Digital Media

While Uzbekistan has witnessed an explosion in digital media usage, the government has also taken measures to regulate and control the internet space. The government has implemented laws and regulations aimed at controlling online content, including the blocking of certain websites and social media platforms. For instance, some independent news outlets, political blogs, and human rights websites have been blocked or faced restrictions.

Additionally, the government has created legal frameworks that enable authorities to monitor online activities and censor content that is considered critical of the government or harmful to national security. For example, the government has occasionally shut down internet services during times of political tension, such as

during protests or periods of unrest, in an attempt to control information flow. Despite these restrictions, social media and digital platforms remain a critical tool for freedom of expression and activism in Uzbekistan.

The Uzbek media sector is still predominantly state-controlled, with most major television channels, newspapers, and radio stations under the direct or indirect influence of the government. State-run outlets such as Uzbekistan 24 and Kun.uz continue to dominate the media landscape. The government maintains significant influence over the content broadcasted on state-owned television networks, which cover topics deemed important for promoting state policies and maintaining national unity.

While there has been a growth in private media outlets and independent publications, many still face limitations on their editorial independence due to government control, self-censorship, and economic pressures. For instance, independent outlets often struggle to secure advertising revenue, which is a critical source of funding for media operations. The government also exerts influence over private media through its control of the advertising market and through laws that restrict the publication of content critical of the state. Despite some reforms aimed at expanding media freedom in Uzbekistan, the legal and political environment for journalists remains challenging. Journalists often face pressure to self-censor, particularly when covering sensitive topics such as corruption, human rights violations, or political dissent. Legal challenges, including defamation suits and charges of "extremism" or "incitement," have been used to silence critical voices. This creates an environment where journalists are hesitant to report on controversial issues, fearing legal repercussions or personal safety risks.

Furthermore, there have been cases of harassment, intimidation, and physical violence against journalists, especially those who are critical of the government or report on sensitive issues. While some reforms have been introduced to enhance press freedom, many journalists still work under significant constraints. For instance,

international media watchdogs such as Reporters Without Borders continue to rank Uzbekistan poorly in terms of press freedom.

Conclusion: Both Digital Media and the Current State of Media in Uzbekistan reflect a complex and evolving landscape, shaped by ongoing political, economic, and technological changes. The transition from a heavily censored environment to one with more diverse, yet still controlled, sources of information represents a critical juncture in Uzbekistan's media development.

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