Domestic scientific media discourse in academic journals: Structural analysis

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Abstract
The article presents the results of meta-research devoted to the study of domestic scientific discourse in academic journals in the field of journalism and mass communications. The empirical basis of the study was formed from an array of articles published in journals indexed in the RSCI and Web of Science Core Collection (WoS CC) databases in the period of 2015–2021. The authors analyzed more than 18 thousand articles, determined the quantitative indicators of published materials; marked the most significant research centers engaged in academic research in the field of journalism and mass communications (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University); and reviewed the largest number of publications (Elena Vartanova, Olga Smirnova, Andrey Vyrkovsky). The most relevant thematic clusters in domestic media studies were also identified. For journals indexed in the RSCI, these are the digital media environment, the history of Russian journalism and literature, and media linguistics. For journals indexed by WoS, this is the digital media environment, as well as political topics, media linguistics and media theory.

Keywords
Scientific communication, scientific journal, citation rate, scientific discourse, Web of Science, eLibrary.

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Introduction

The increasing number of publications related to media is, on the one hand, a completely natural phenomenon due to the changes taking place in this area and the corresponding transformations in society under the influence of media. On the other hand, such an array of data leads to questions about the problems covered in such publications, the most popular journals on these topics and the quality of materials in general. Thus, in this study, an attempt was made to characterize such academic activity and amass a bank of research in the field of journalism and communications over the past 7 years by assessing the scientometric and quantitative indicators of articles in this area.

Significant interest in such meta-studies has been clear for a long time. Increasingly, the number of publications and citation rates serve as a measure of the significance and volume of a researchers' contribution, although such an interpretation is rarely valid without the use of qualitative evaluation methods (Zitt, & Bassecoulard, 2008).

The most popular tools for analyzing publication activity are international databases, primarily WoS, which, on the one hand, offers quite a broad set of data and, as a result, parameters for analysis and, on the other hand, allows for comparison of indicators for different countries, organizations and authors. A "classic" version of an article based on WoS data, as a rule, involves an analysis of the evolution of a particular discipline, including the dynamics of changes in thematic areas, methods used, etc., in some cases covering the entire history of the formation of a particular research field (Ouyang et al., 2021). Another common approach is to analyze articles about a phenomenon within a clear time frame (e.g. digital journalism studies, see Salaverr a, 2019).

The main source of information about publication activity in the Russian-language segment of scientific journals is, first of all, the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) as the most complete database of domestic scientific publications. During the formation of the joint project of eLibrary and WoS to create a regional Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI), the latter attracted close attention from researchers. Both of these bodies assess the level of journals differently, and notable serious discrepancies are especially prevalent for the sector of the humanities and social sciences (Mazov, Gureev, & Kalenov, 2018). In this article, the object of research is scientific journals indexed by the RSCI and WoS, and the focus is on publications that study various aspects of the functioning of the media sphere.

Theoretical background

The use of scientometric tools for science management contributes to the emergence of numerous articles devoted to indicators of publication activity within certain scientific fields at the national level, including those with the involvement of interdisciplinary and cross-country comparative analysis (Zhang, Shang, Huang, & Sivertsen, 2021; Shaposhnik, 2020; Kademani et al., 2007; Cano, 1999). Such studies often involve additional data from national or regional digital libraries and projects.

One of the popular sources of bibliographic information for such research is the SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) platform, the largest database of journals from Iberoamerican countries (Meneghini, Mugnaini, & Packer, 2006). Many studies are to some extent related to the so-called 'Matthew effect' in scientific communication. Although the phenomenon was first described as early as in the second half of the 20th century (Merton, 1968), the question of how articulated this effect is for various countries and disciplines still attracts the attention of researchers, including Russian ones (Pislyakov, & Dyachenko, 2009).

A number of Russian authors combine ISDB data with information from the Russian Science Citation Index, with the main focus on comparing the citation rates of articles by Russian researchers and authors from Western Europe and North America (Kirchik, 2011; Muravyov, 2009), as well as the impact factors journals (Mikhailov, 2017) with consistently disappointing results for domestic publications.

Another issue that has been actively studied with the help of scientometric tools over the past two decades is the extent to which open access is widespread and what impact it has on citation within certain disciplines (Piwowar, Priem, Larivi re, Alperin, et al., 2017; McCabe, & Snyder, 2015; Wohlrabe, 2014; Lawrence, 2001). Research using WoS data shows that there is a clear correlation between citations and social media sharing of academic articles (Repiso, Castillo-Esparcia, & Torres-Salinas, 2019), with open-access materials being generally cited more frequently (Schultz, 2017) and downloaded more actively (Makeenko, & Trishchenko, 2018) compared to the subscription articles.

All these approaches have been applied to the sector of scientific journals devoted to media and communication, both when analyzed as part of other disciplines, and when considered independently. For example, assessing research activity in the field of media and communication within individual countries, such as China (Yan, 2014), or on particular issues, related to social media (Yunan, 2020), the phenomenon of influencer bloggers (Chang,

Wang, & Kuo, 2020) or social media propaganda (Chaudhari, & Pawar, 2021).

The problem of correlation of publications of Western scientists and representatives of the countries of the Global South in leading scientific journals, the peculiarities of their citation and the mentioned 'Matthew effect' take an important place in a number of articles devoted to publications on media and communication. One of the first studies focused on national diversity in journals indexed by WoS in 1998–2002. The results showed that most of the major international communication publications are almost exclusively American and few include articles from other countries (Lauf, 2005). Other studies have repeatedly confirmed the conclusion that this scientific field is dominated by articles of Western authors published in Western journals (Demeter, 2018, Connell, 2007; Katz et al., 2003).

The results of another study (Moreno-Delgado, Gorraiz, & Repiso, 2021) also confirm the dominance of English-speaking countries in scientific discourse and the noted importance of ESCI for European countries such as Spain and the Netherlands. It is also interesting that at least 30% of scientific publications in the case of most states are based on international cooperation, and most often researchers from the USA participate in joint projects.

A separate block of studies focuses on the peculiarities of citing articles by authors from the BRICS countries (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2020; Ai, & Masood, 2021; Shi-xu, 2022; Darong, 2022). As it turned out, the degree of integration of domestic and 'Western' science in the BRICS countries varies significantly although, in general, the dominance of the West in the field of journalistic research on a global scale remains undeniable (de Albuquerque, 2023). This is also proved by the fact that BRICS researchers themselves prefer to cite European and American colleagues, rarely referring to the publications of scientists from the Global South. At the same time, unlike representatives of other countries, Russian and Chinese researchers are more inclined to cite Russian literature and remain within the national pool of sources.

These studies complement works that address network analysis and, for example, make it possible, on the basis of scientometric data, to understand how authors who publish in leading journals are connected, what kind of groups they form, and what role editorial boards play in the formation of such communities around publications (Goyanes, & de-Marcos, 2020). Conclusions about the presence of so called "elite groups" and the dominance of authors from the English-speaking countries are partially confirmed by the results of another study on the influence of the geographic diversity of editorial board

members on the geographic diversity of authors of scientific articles (Goyanes, & Demeter, 2020), which also continues the tradition of studying links between journals in the communication field (Feeley, 2008).

Some studies based on scientometric data go beyond the use of scientometric tools and use methods that are more typical of social sciences, which makes it possible to rely on more than just statistical data and, as a result, to come to broader generalizations than are usually possible when using exclusively quantitative methods. In this context, it is necessary to mention meta-research based on the content analysis of articles in specialized scientific journals. The first notable works of this kind appeared at the end of the last century. Their result, in particular, was the concept of three paradigms in the study of media (Potter, Cooper, & Dupagne, 1993) and the classification of methodological approaches to the study of mass communication (Fink, & Gantz, 1996) and, somewhat later, a classification of the most actively used scientific schools and theories (Bryant, & Miron, 2004).

Among the first meta-studies of Russian scientific journals, the work related to the study of the activity of Russian scientists in the field of media management and media economics should be mentioned (Vyrkovsky, 2016), as well as a number of studies by representatives of the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonosov Moscow State University, produced as part of the implementation of the research project of the Russian Science Foundation 'Development of the fundamental foundations of domestic media theory in the context of the transformation of social practices and digitalization of the media' (ed. Vartanova, 2019; Makeenko, 2017, 2018). The results of the research have demonstrated the minimal involvement of representatives of the domestic research community of different generations in the global research context and the limited use of foreign sources, which is consistent with the results of the previously mentioned studies.

In this work, we focused on the study of the domestic media discourse in journals indexed by the RSCI and WoS, identifying several questions at the beginning of the study: first, whether we can talk about the formation of certain 'elite groups' in the Russian segment of magazines on media and in the foreign segment; and second, what the place of Russian media research in journals indexed in WoS is. We are also interested in learning whether the subject of articles published in the Russian segment of WoS and foreign ones differ, and if it is similar to the topics in the RSCI journals.

Research methodology

The study involved several stages: data collection, preparation and analysis. At the first stage, we decided to use materials indexed by the largest electronic

scientific library for publications in Russian, eLibrary, as well as the foreign abstract database WoS. The choice of these platforms was driven by several key factors. Both platforms are interdisciplinary, which makes it possible to conduct research based on materials published in the journals, both specializing in journalism and mass communication, and in related fields of knowledge. The eLibrary database includes more than 38 million publications from more than 74 thousand scientific journals. In turn, WoS contains data on more than 161 million records in 254 subject areas. The combination of these parameters allows for the most detailed meta-study.

Each source has its own characteristics, which requires creating separate algorithms for collecting and analyzing the relevant information. One of the features of working with eLibrary data is that, despite providing open access to materials and bibliographic data, the portal completely lacks tools for exporting the data obtained, which makes it difficult for researchers to study the academic activity of domestic scientists. There are also technical features in the operation of the resource. When the results of a search query exceed 10 thousand records, the system does not provide the possibility of obtaining information over the specified limit. According to preliminary estimates, more than 60 thousand works fell into the scope of our search, which, taking into account the foregoing, makes it impossible to work using the built-in functionality of the digital library website. Therefore, the process of collecting primary data was carried out in two simultaneous directions: working directly with journals and processing the results of an extended search query. In the first case, the authors singled out publications classified according to the upper level of SRSTI under the heading *Mass Communication. Journalism. Mass media*. As an additional filter, we excluded journals that are not indexed in the RSCI. The preliminary sample included 12,128 articles from 38 publications, which were analyzed *de visu* to compile a database on the topics we analyzed.

In order to form the most complete corpus of articles that would maximally cover interdisciplinary research in the field of journalism, we additionally collected materials using the built-in eLibrary search service, within which data was recorded on articles published in journals related to SRSTI headings. At this stage, filtering was carried out using keywords that covered such basic concepts as “mass communication”, “mass media”, “media”, “journalism”, “newspapers”, “magazines”, “television”, “TV”, “radio”, and “social networks” in various combinations, as well as morphological forms. The authors decided to exclude the generated database materials from publications not indexed in the RSCI. The search was conducted on such structural elements

of scientific articles as the title, abstract and keywords. The preliminary sample included 48,931 articles. Given the multidisciplinary nature of some of the keywords we use, it is clear that this dataset required additional *de visu* processing.

Unlike eLibrary, the WoS abstract database allows data collection, as well as more precise filtering of the results, including such a criterion as the author's affiliation, with subsequent export of the obtained data to generated files for further analysis. Extracting from the WoS database was carried out in the "Communication" category, taking into account the type of materials ("article") and the author's affiliation by country (Russian Federation).

As a part of the second stage, the received materials were filtered: materials not related to the subject of this study were excluded from the sample and a corpus of materials was formed, consisting of 18,267 articles, of which 1,266 were published in thematic journals on journalism and mass communications, 16,165 articles – from publications on related topics, as well as 835 articles – from journals indexed by WoS (130 of them in the foreign segment of WoS, 705 in the Russian one). For detailed analysis, the authors identified 11 criteria, which include the year of publication, the title of the article, the author and his affiliation, the name of the journal and its rubric according to the State Rubricator of Scientific and Technical Information (SRSTI, for materials obtained from the eLibrary), keywords, abstract, number of citations, etc.

Results

Dynamics of publication activity

At the first stage of our study, we examined the dynamics of the publication activity of the authors of articles in the field of media from the eLibrary and WoS databases (Russian and foreign segments) over seven years. Quantitative analysis of articles from the eLibrary database showed that the peak of the publication activity of Russian authors was observed in 2018, when more than three thousand articles were published (see *Chart 1*). In our opinion, this is primarily due to the implementation of the state scientific policy – the expansion of grant support (see *Chart 2*), the allocation of additional funds to increase the remuneration of scientists and the implementation of the 'May decrees'.

Chart 1

Number of publications in Russian journals from eLibrary database

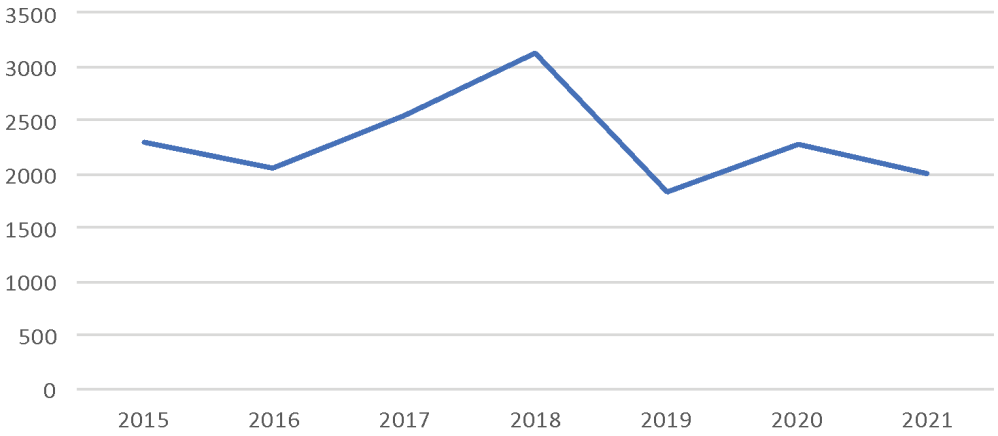
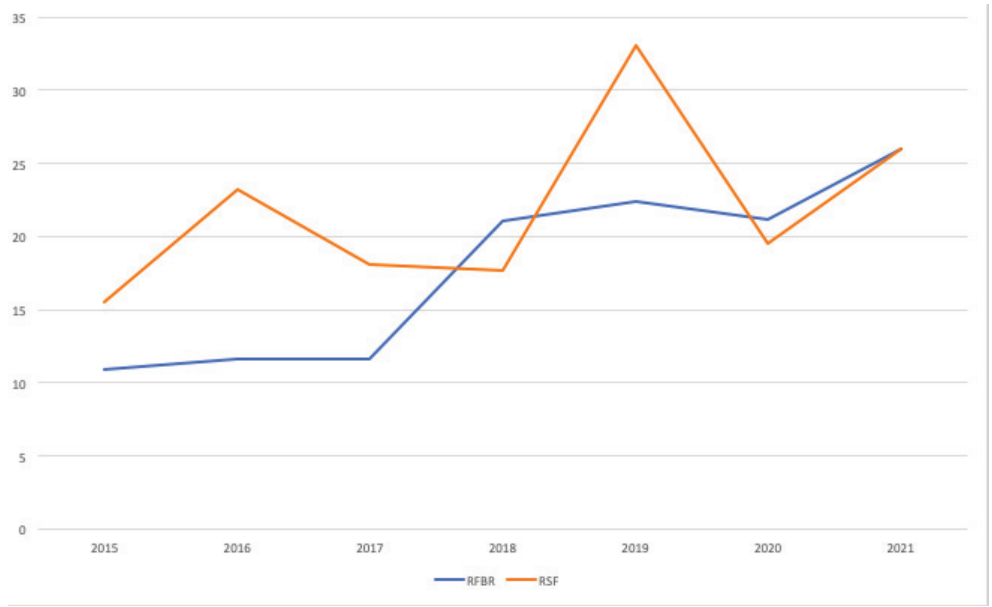


Chart 2

The amount of funding for scientific projects of the Russian Science Foundation (RSF) and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), billion rubles

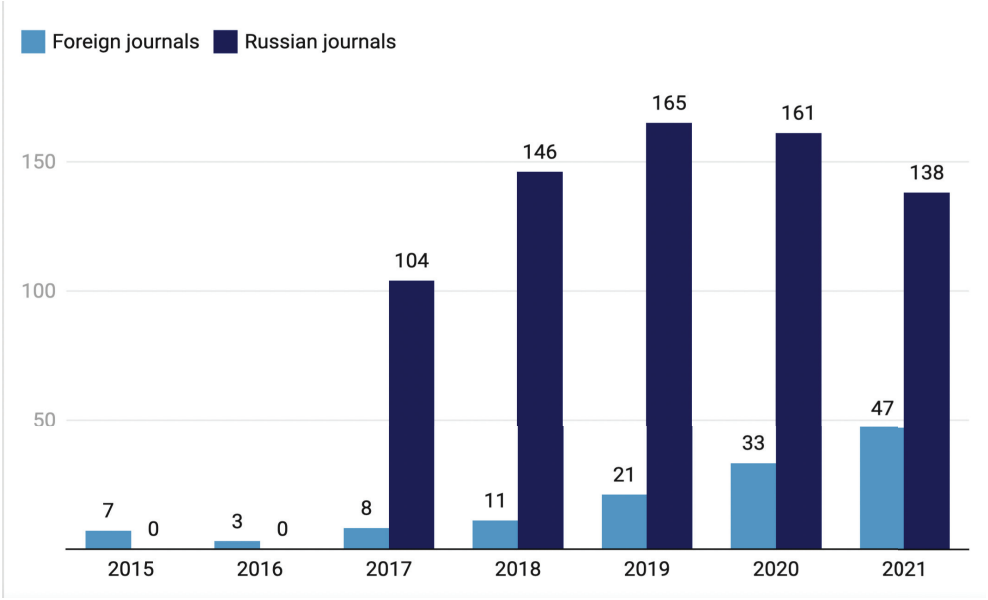


The data on WoS journals clearly shows that there is a predominance of materials in the Russian segment, despite the fact that the first issues were

indexed only in 2017, and the decision to include at least some of the journals in WoS was even made later (see *Chart 3*). At the same time, before the launch of the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) in 2015, it was virtually impossible for journals in Russian to be included in the database. At the same time, in recent years there has been a linear increase in the number of publications in the foreign WoS segment. This is due, in particular, to grant funding and state scientific policy; in particular, the implementation of the President's order to increase the number of publications in journals indexed by WoS. Thus, in 27% of articles that were written for foreign journals, the source of grant funding was indicated. In the Russian segment, only 16% of such articles were included. An increase in the number of scientific articles by Russian researchers was recorded in a similar study – thus, according to the WoS CC system, the number of publications increased by 34.9% in 2020 compared to 2016.

Chart 3

Number of publications in journals indexed in WoS



The results of the study showed that the highest publication activity of journals from the eLibrary emanates from Moscow based universities (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Higher School of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow

State Pedagogical University) and Saint Petersburg State University. Thus, we can talk about a high degree of heterogeneity in publication activity: most of the articles are published in the largest Russian centers with a high concentration of scientific organizations (Moscow and Saint Petersburg).

If we take the top 10 universities in terms of the number of publications, Lomonosov Moscow State University accounts for 36% of all top publications, Saint Petersburg State University – 25%, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – 8.6%, Chelyabinsk State University – 8.4%, other universities – 22% (see *Table 1*). At the same time, changes in the publication activity of universities (growth or decrease in the number of publications) occur primarily from two universities – Lomonosov Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University. For the rest of the universities, the publication activity over the past six years has remained approximately at the same level.

To determine the degree of concentration of publication activity in key research centers (out of the top 10), the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) was calculated. The result of 2167 shows a moderate concentration in the Russian scientific 'market'. Considering the dynamics in the number of publications attributable to each of the top 10 universities for a particular year, we note that most of the publications also come from 2018. At the same time, such a surge is observed to a greater extent, again, typical for Lomonosov Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University. At other universities, the picture has not changed much over the years.

Table 1

Top universities by the number of publications in journals from eLibrary database

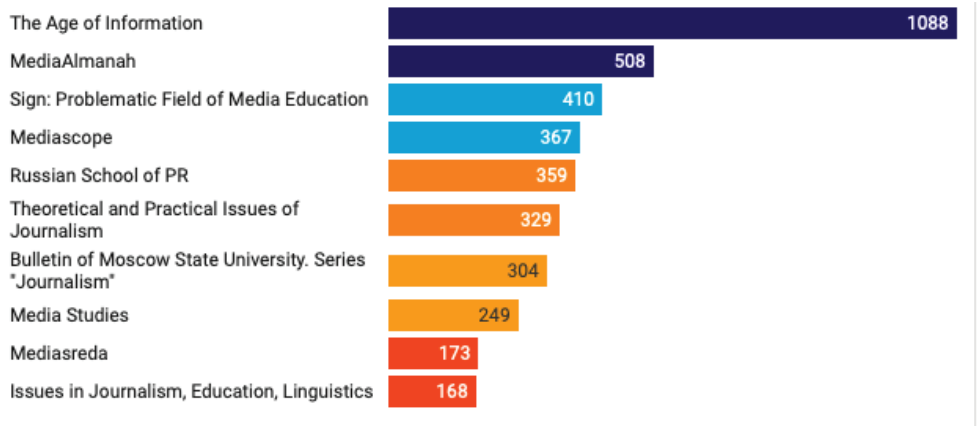
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lomonosov Moscow State University	274	312	274	341	215	236	181
Saint Petersburg State University	153	151	214	301	133	162	120
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia	73	51	68	75	59	49	53
Chelyabinsk State University	57	61	72	57	55	67	55
Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration	40	38	45	67	39	40	41
Ural Federal University	29	28	34	44	25	33	32
Russian State University for the Humanities	38	14	9	38	18	38	39
Moscow State Pedagogical University	16	24	33	28	27	35	30
Voronezh State University	40	23	30	27	22	23	18

The most productive organizations in terms of the number of articles from the WoS database were not only Moscow based universities (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration) and Saint Petersburg State University, but also regional universities.

Further, in the course of the study, we analyzed the publication activity in journals from the databases in question. If we look at the top 10 journals in eLibrary's database, we find that a significant proportion of them are from the metropolitan area (see *Chart 4*).

Chart 4

Top journals by the number of publications in journals from eLibrary database



It is quite natural that the top authors in terms of publication activity represent the "school of Moscow University" (Elena Vartanova, Olga Smirnova, Andrey Vyrkovsky, and others). One of the essential indicators of the "weight" of publications in scientific communication is citation. In the course of the study, we compared the leading journals by publication activity with the list of journals with the highest number number of citations. In this case, first place was taken by the journal *Bulletin of the Tver State University. Series Philology* (an edition from the list of the Higher Attestation Commission, each issue is dedicated to one particular humanitarian direction: linguistics, journalism, translation, intercultural communication, etc.). Next comes the *Bulletin of Moscow State University. The series 'Journalism'* published by the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonosov Moscow State University, indexed in RSCI, WoS, Scopus and included into the list of the Higher Attestation Commission. The aforementioned *The Age*

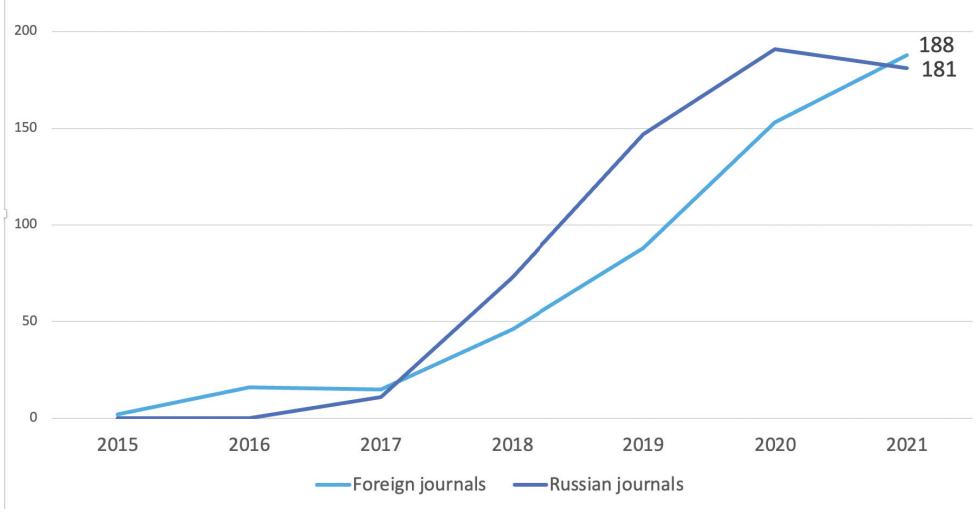
of Information takes the third place. A similar discrepancy between publication activity and citation rate is also confirmed by foreign studies: according to WoS, the largest number of publications does not fully correlate with their significance, which is understood as citation (Moreno-Delgado, Gorraiz, & Repiso, 2021).

An analysis of data in WoS journals showed that three publications are leading in terms of the number of publications in general and in the Russian segment in particular: *Media Education* (published in the USA since 2022), *Theoretical and Practical Issues of Journalism* (Journal of Baikal State University), and *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 10. Zhurnalistika.* For the foreign segment, the following situation: *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies* (Mert Bastas, no quartile), *Journalism* (SAGE, Q1), and *Media and Communication* (Cogitatio Press, Q1). The most active authors whose papers appeared in journals included in the WoS database are representatives of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Volgograd State University, and Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

If we look at the number of citations, we will notice a significant increase in this indicator both in relation to Russian journals and foreign ones (see *Chart 5*). This dynamic is primarily related to the number of articles published, the cumulative effect of earlier publications and, at least in the case of Russian journals, self-citation opportunities.

Chart 5

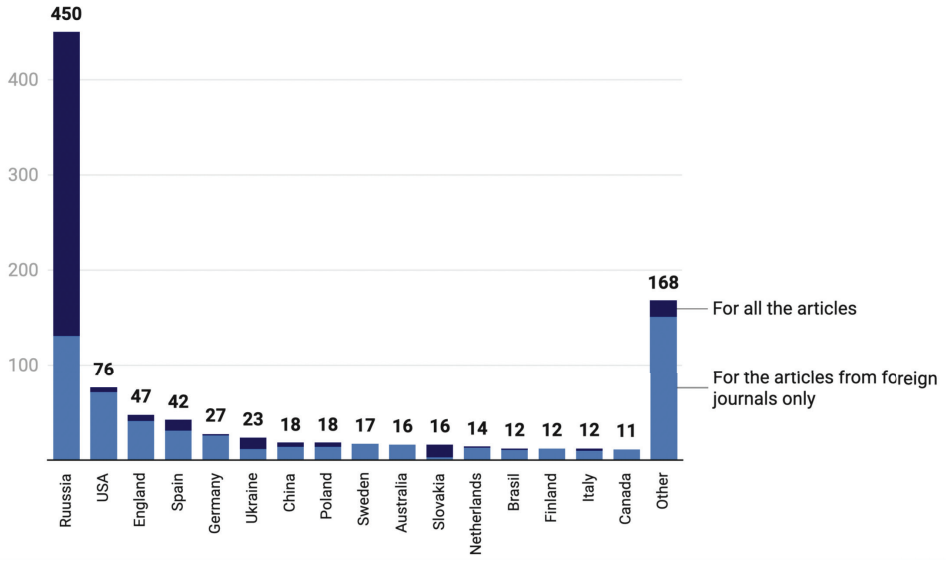
The number of citations of journal articles indexed in WoS



More detailed analysis of citations by countries of affiliation shows that the articles from Russian WoS journals receive the largest number of citations in works of Russian scholars (see *Chart 6*). Thus, among articles citing publications in Russian, 96% refer to Russia (92%, if self-citations are excluded). If we talk about publications in Russian journals in English, then this figure will be somewhat different: 82% of citations are from Russia (and only 65%, if self-citations are excluded).

Chart 6

The number of citing publications for articles from journals indexed in WoS, by country of author's affiliation



If we look at the average values of citations and usage counts in WoS for each of the groups of articles, the difference between articles in foreign and Russian journals and in English and Russian will also be obvious (see *Table 2*).

Table 2

Average scores for articles published in 2017–2018

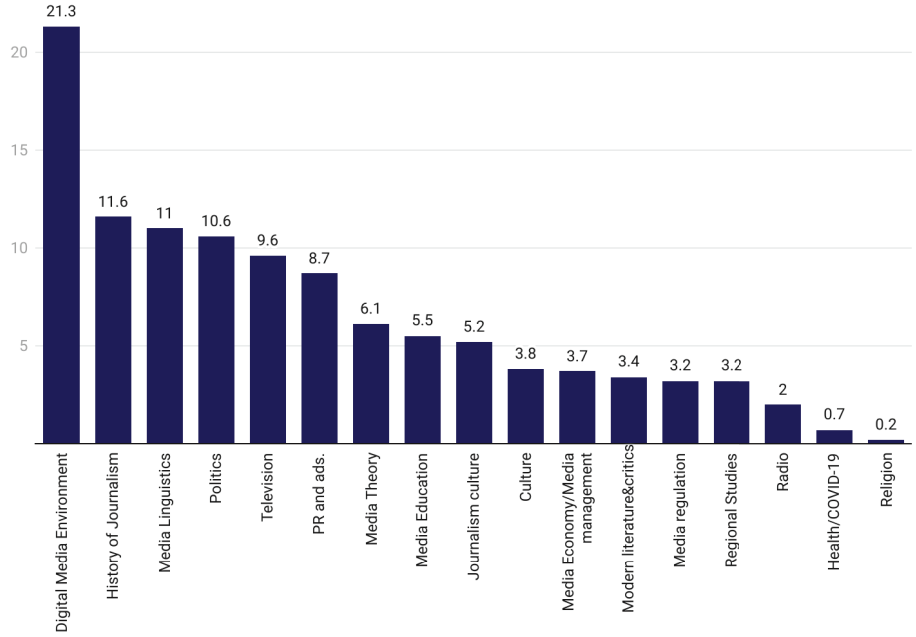
The type of articles	WoS CC Times Cited Count	Total Times Cited Count	Usage Count (Last 180 Days)
Articles from Russian journals	1,3	1,4	0,9
Articles from Russian journals in the Russian language	1,0	1,0	0,8
Articles from Russian journals in the English language	2,1	2,2	0,9
Articles from foreign journals	7,1	7,5	1,9

Thematic priorities

Finally, based on the corpus of keywords and annotations, using clustering tools, thematic areas of the analyzed publications were identified, after which a frequency analysis was carried out (see Chart 8).

Chart 8

Topics of publications in journals from eLibrary database, in %



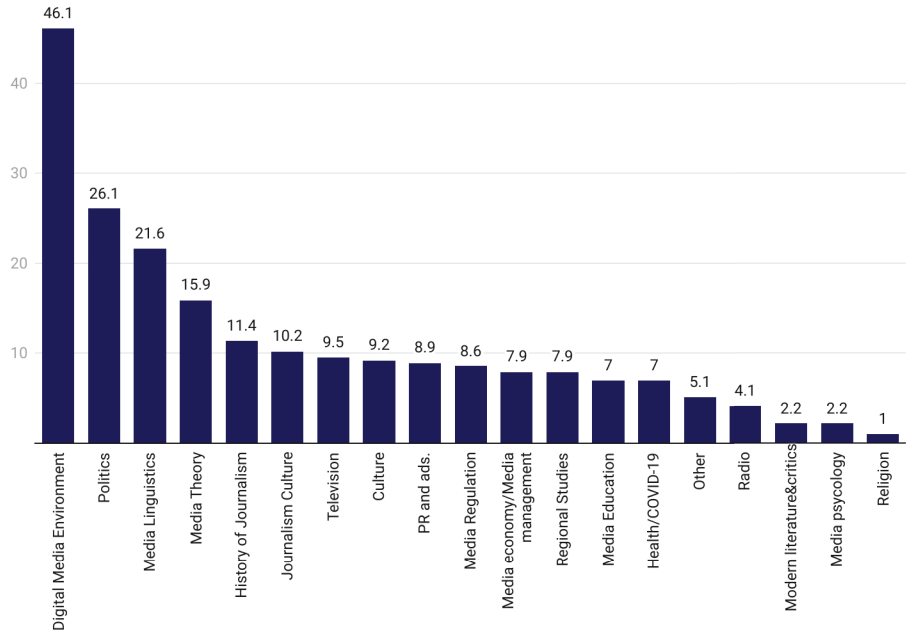
The results showed that most of the articles from the Russian scientific database were devoted to the study of the digital environment (the transformation of traditional means of communication, the use of new media in political communication, educational practices, marketing communications, etc.). A significant proportion of publications was devoted to historical topics – the study of Russian journalism of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the history of the Soviet print media and literature. At the same time, we found a large number of works related to the study of the history of regional journalism. We also noticed a large layer of research devoted to the study of the linguistic features of modern discourse in the media.

In terms of the topics of articles from WoS journals in the Russian and foreign segments, they are often similar (see *Chart 9*). Articles related to

the digital environment are also in the first place in terms of the number of publications. However, in the second place are articles devoted to political topics (studies of political communication, conflicts, images of political leaders in the media, etc.).

Chart 9

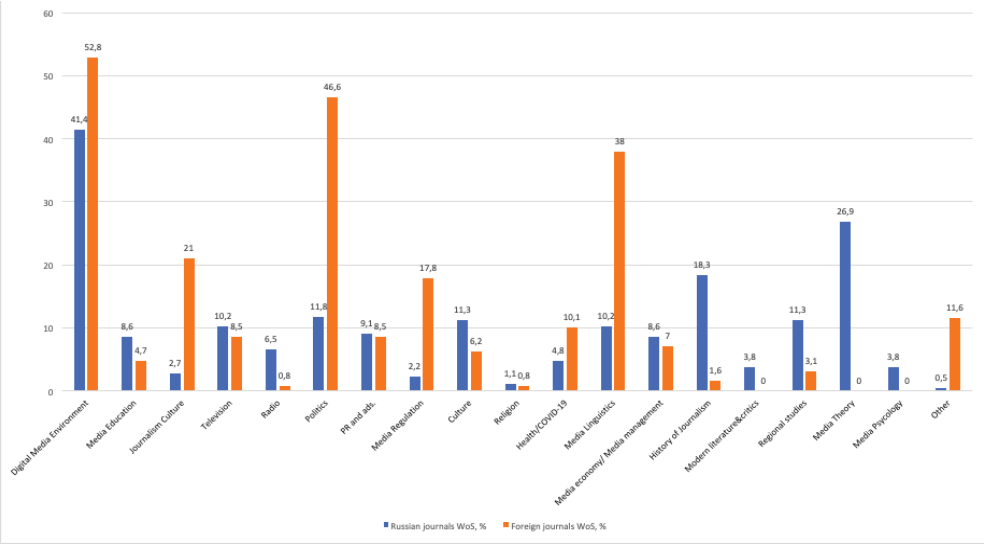
Topics of publications in journals indexed in WoS, in %



The greatest differences are observed in the thematic section between publications in the Russian segment of WoS and the foreign segment. Thus, the topics of Russian articles in addition to studies of the digital environment include the theory of journalism and communications, the history of Russian journalism and literature, and regional issues. The topics of publications in the foreign segment include political and linguistic areas, as well as works devoted to the study of journalistic cultures and the legal regulation of the media (see *Chart 10*).

Chart 10

Topics of publications in journals from the Russian and foreign segments of WoS



Studies related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on journalistic practices, electoral behavior, student satisfaction with learning during distance learning were also identified. Given the fact that the pandemic actually began in 2020, over the past two years it has taken one of the main places in research in the field of communication.

Discussion and conclusion

Our study shows the significant activity of Russian researchers in relation to topics connected with the study of journalism and media communications in general. At the same time, the concentration of such interest is distributed extremely unevenly, given the increasing volume of publications. Key journals in terms of publication activity, citations and, accordingly, authors, are published in just a few Russian scientific centers.

Most of the articles, even in the foreign WoS corpus, are aimed primarily at the Russian audience. Thus, it is typical for Russian scientists to turn mostly to the domestic literature, while the scientific community pays very little attention to publications in the Russian journals. This is also proved by the number of citations. Although the share of citations from abroad is growing, it is happening quite slowly. Thus, “echo chambers” appear in scientific communication which,

on the one hand, can increase citation in its cluster and, on the other hand, moves away from the global context and leads to the limitation of scientific discourse.

If the list of leading journals by key research centers is approximately similar in terms of publishing activity in eLibrary and WoS journals, then the lists of key authors are noticeably different. Russian scholars who publish in eLibrary indexed journals rarely publish in WoS journals and when it happens it is usually Q3-Q4 journals or no quartile at all. Thus, today we can identify only a small group of Russian scientists who have the necessary resources to conduct high-quality research and are primarily focused on publishing articles in Q1 and Q2 journals of the foreign WoS segment. This is partly due to the change in the grant policy of scientific foundations. In 2014, to participate in many grant contests, a project manager was required to have at least three articles in indexed journals. Three years later, in 2017, five publications in five years was a requirement. Finally, in 2021 the number was increased to eight publications (Zheleznov, Guba, & Chechik, 2021). On the other hand, the publication of articles in high-ranking journals is often carried out precisely in line with available grant funding.

Another aspect that stands out between different databases is the topics. The thematic areas of articles from eLibrary are often focused on "descriptive" analysis of theoretical aspects of the media functioning, linguistic features of media discourse, the history of journalism and literature, which is generally typical for Russian tradition of studying media (Makeenko, 2018), as well as the study of media "in digital" (communicators, environment, channels, content, audience). The latter aspect was also observed in WoS publications.

However, studies using original methods are presented to a greater extent. The emphasis in the thematic direction is on the study of the influence/role of media and technologies on the current context (primarily political). This approach is noted mainly in the foreign cluster of publications in WoS journals. Thus, even without any in-depth analysis of texts, we notice the uneven correlation of a significant number of publications in quality. This applies to a greater extent to Russian eLibrary journals. This aspect needs to be studied in more detail in the course of future research.

We believe that further attention should be focused on a deeper analysis of the relationship between quantitative scientometric indicators and the qualitative characteristics of publications (the use of theoretical approaches, methods, tools for collecting and analyzing data), which will determine the most promising areas of research in the field of media. The second question for

further research is the applicability and practical significance of academic works in this area in the industry.

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