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Online media monitoring and evaluation: comparative approaches

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ABSTRACT

In a globalizing information society, the development of mechanisms for more efficient use of online media resources is increasingly important. Such mechanisms are significant for the effective management of information flows, formation of public opinion and safeguarding of national information security. In terms of digital transformation, the rapid dissemination and constant evolution of media content require continuous monitoring and evaluation. In this context, monitoring of media resources plays a significant role in identifying the social situation of society, public opinion trends, as well as political and economic dynamics of a country. The article explores the technological capabilities and functional advantages of modern tools used for monitoring online media resources, including automated monitoring systems. It also examines existing conceptual and methodological approaches to monitoring online media, and assesses their areas of application and effectiveness. Furthermore, the article provides insight into the capabilities of online media monitoring systems, and presents the structural components of the monitoring system, which include the collection, processing, classification and visualization of data for systematic information analysis. The article also reviews measures undertaken to improve the media environment in Azerbaijan and enhance its competitiveness, alongside legislative framework. Taking into account international experience, the article proposes the establishment of a monitoring center for assessing online media activities in Azerbaijan and gives recommendations regarding the activity and potential capabilities of this center.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies applied in online and social media, which play a crucial role in shaping public opinion in the modern era, offer wide opportunities for analyzing audience behavior models, responding promptly to user demands, and building communication strategies. The operative and accurate understanding of the target audience enables media organizations to implement more effective

information policies and to establish communication with the audience to the maximum extent. The collection and analysis of user behavior data on online platforms plays a vital role in determining the strategic development of the site. In this context, media monitoring systems and tools provided by specialized organizations are widely applied to assess the effectiveness of online media activities.

Monitoring online media resources enables to obtain systematic and reliable information on a specific topic, while also providing insights into the reputation of media organizations within the society and the region. In addition to determining the direction of data flows, this process also reveals the real power of the media on society. As an integral part of media management, the objective of media monitoring is not only to gather information, but it also lays the foundation for analytical processing, comparative analysis of results and decision-making.

The acceleration of digital transformation, as well as dynamic differences observed in the behavior of information consumers have significantly increased the requirements for monitoring systems. In this context, evaluating the activities of online media entities, not only technical indicators, but also social, political and data security factors should be considered.

Monitoring conducted through analytical systems and software is a significant factor in tracking the dynamics of political dynamics, public sentiment trends and shifts in mass psychology, identifying harmful developments at an early stage and determining public reaction. Monitoring is also strategically important for assessing the effectiveness of media entities and developing recommendations for institutions engaged in this activity. Given the structural and functional diversity of current information systems, it has become even more relevant.

Particularly in an environment vulnerable to information manipulation, it is impossible to form an effective information strategy without monitoring. In this regard, several interconnected areas with online media are of great importance: the development of political culture, promotion of civic involvement in democratic processes, strengthening relations between journalism and public opinion, the necessity to consider the relations between mass media and social institutions and the mass audience in state information policy (Shevchenko, 2006). A comparative analysis of approaches in all these areas requires the establishment of conceptual foundations for more effective monitoring and evaluation of online media platforms.

2. Related work

The recent studies in the field of monitoring and evaluation of online media resources demonstrate its multidisciplinary nature. The problems of monitoring and evaluation of media resources are at the intersection of information technologies,

journalism and media management. Indicators such as the efficiency, content quality, audience and reliability of online media, particularly news sites, portals and agencies, are considered as key indicators in this area.

In his work, Napoli P. proposes a multidimensional approach to assessing the performance of online media resources, through the analyses of audience fragmentation in media platforms and the influence of emerging technologies on media consumption. Such approach is important for evaluating the societal impact of media resources and the effectiveness of web resources (Napoli, 2011).

(Trilling, et al., 2017) examines the “sharing value” of news portals and assesses their dissemination across social media using statistical methods. This approach indicates how the level of media resources in terms of attracting audience attention can be measured through public reactions.

(Alguliyev et al., 2020) introduce a method based on the pairwise comparison algorithm for evaluating websites based on multi-criteria decision-making approaches. The article examined the complex evaluation of web resources according to a number of criteria (functional, informational, etc.). This approach, applied to online media resources, is one of the important sources for providing objective monitoring and evaluation.

(Pavlik, 2011) analyzes the role of technologies in the structure of digital journalism, as well as in the news production. He proposes approaches to content strategies and user-oriented transformation of online media resources.

Several international media monitoring platforms (Media Impact Project, Alexa, Media Cloud, etc.) also offer evaluation methods based on metrics such as website traffic, average reading time, bounce rates, and user behavior. These approaches have formed the basis for contemporary online media monitoring (Media Impact Project, 2025, Fast Results with Targeted Digital Marketing, 2025, Media Cloud Search, 2025).

Given the transformative changes of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the growing impact of online media on society, the need to adopt new approaches for monitoring and evaluating these resources is becoming increasingly important.

The widespread dissemination of information, user-oriented content strategies, and increased competition between media entities has made it more difficult to measure media quality and reliability indicators. Unlike traditional media resources, online media is characterized by greater

dynamism, rapid content generation, structural and functional diversity, interactivity and wide accessibility. These factors necessitate the application of diverse methodological approaches in this area.

An analysis of the available scientific literature indicates that researchers have evaluated online media monitoring in terms of technical indicators, audience behavior, content quality, and social impact. However, the absence of opportunities to adapt the proposed approaches to the national information environment and the lack of a single conceptual framework have created a need for comprehensive scientific research in this field.

The goal of this study is to comparatively analyze existing approaches to online media monitoring and evaluation, identify their advantages and disadvantages, and ultimately provide recommendations for the development of optimal evaluation mechanisms in this field.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research methods

This study presents a systematic analysis of current theoretical and methodological approaches to monitoring and evaluation of online media entities, especially news websites, portals, and agencies. The research work refers to existing theoretical approaches related to monitoring media resources, and analyzes the methodologies of media monitoring platforms.

The research focuses on comparing media resources based on evaluation criteria such as technical, content, audience, reliability and social impact and determining their advantages and disadvantages.

Theoretical and comparative analysis and structuring methods are applied within the framework of the study. The research reviews scholarly articles published in international journals and Azerbaijani journals, as well as conference proceedings. The article also analyzes methodological approaches presented by well-known media monitoring platforms (Media Impact Project, Alexa, Media Cloud). Through comparative analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of various methods are identified, and evaluations are made on methodological differences. The criteria systems, rating mechanisms and media monitoring tools developed for assessing the quality of online media are revised.

This research does not include an applied phase. Instead, its primary objective is to compare and systematize theoretical and methodological models

and to provide a synthesis of existing approaches with scientific foundations.

3.2. Problem solution

Global approaches to monitoring and evaluating of online media reveal the relevance of multi-criteria, automated and intelligent methods in this field. Contemporary research, along with technical indicators, semantic content analysis, audience reaction evaluation, and joint assessment of social impact factors and reliability criteria act as a core methodological approach.

One of the models applied to address the problem is a multi-criteria evaluation system based on the pairwise comparison algorithm of alternatives (Alguliyev et al., 2020). This approach presents comprehensive comparison of web resources based on functional, technical and information indicators. Meanwhile, international platforms such as Media Cloud and Media Impact Project utilize monitoring mechanisms that assess content quality through content analysis, fact accuracy, social sharing values and public impact indicators.

The conducted studies indicate that although no single and universal model exists for media evaluation, more adaptable and effective evaluation mechanisms can be developed by generalizing methodological principles and considering the features of the local information environment. In this regard, the integration of various evaluation criteria and the implementation of automated analysis technologies act as a key priority.

3.3. Factors necessitating online media monitoring

In the modern era, the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT), the automation and digitalization of production and management processes, as well as the increasing impact of information and knowledge flows on society, are among the main indicators of the formation of an information society (Pashayeva, 2025). In this context, the increase in information intensity in the media space and the dominance of digital platforms necessitate continuous monitoring and systematic analysis of online media. Online media, which emerged as a result of the opportunities provided by ICT and the Internet, has evolved into a distinctive media tool by combining the capabilities of all other traditional media tools due to its nature and functions. According to the

“Digital 2025” global report, jointly compiled by the organizations “We Are Social” and the “Meltwater”, Internet users over the age of 16 currently spend an average of 58 seconds per day on online media platforms (Digital 2025: Global Overview Report, 2025). This constitutes 14.5 percent of the total time spent online.

Fig. 1 demonstrates the average time (in minutes and seconds) spent on the Internet (social and online media) per day by users over the age of 16:

TIME SPENT BY USERS ON THE INTERNET, SOCIAL AND ONLINE MEDIA DAILY (MINUTES/SECONDS)

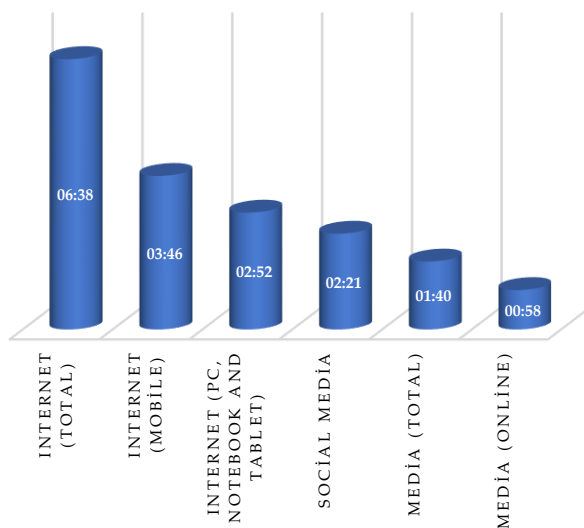


Fig. 1. Time spent by users on the Internet and media resources around the world daily

Users online media resources have increasingly become the primary choice for the readers due to their accessibility and distinctive features, including openness, efficiency, convenience, evaluation, individual approach, interactivity, archiving capabilities, and multimedia features. Media, which have a significant impact on people, possess the power to influence, persuade and control consciousness not only through certain mechanisms and methods, but also through opportunities such as periodicity and circulation of information. The rapid spread of computer technologies and global communication networks is fostering new models and methods for shaping public opinion, greatly expanding opportunities for data sharing. While, traditional media tends to influence on a “single majority”, online media is an interaction of the “multiple on the many”. This environment enables all forms of data sharing and interactive response (Makarets et al., 2019).

The capabilities of online media resources, which are considered a strategic asset of the state, surpass those of traditional media. The development of versatile media platforms includes several key stages: setting goals and objectives, planning; designing, implementing, providing information; implementing a marketing program to improve the website’s performance; evaluation of quality and effectiveness of the resource (Alguliyev et al., 2017).

Following the full development, functional integration, and deployment of an online media resource, evaluating its quality and effectiveness becomes essential for determining its competitiveness within the information ecosystem, its alignment with user needs, and its ability to fulfill intended functional objectives. Utilizing digital monitoring tools to understand the existing opinions about the media organization through digital platforms and make decisions accordingly allows for the assessment of the activities of online media and ensuring proper management.

Along with the creative capabilities of online media, in-depth study of its technological capabilities is a crucial and practically significant aspect of evaluating media resources. In this regard, media monitoring is carried out to enhance the performance of online media platforms, broaden their audience reach, compete with other media companies, identify and eliminate website shortcomings, and establish an effective marketing strategy for the media organization, etc. Consequently, media monitoring includes the identification of information sources and continuously observation over them, data collection and storage, selection of the most appropriate information through categorization and filtering, and analysis of the collected data. Systematic data collection through media monitoring enables the acquisition of accurate, reliable, and objective information on specific topics. This approach also facilitates the analytical evaluation of the reputation of media entities operating within a given country or region and provides a structured overview of the channels through which information flows are disseminated. The assessment of monitoring results is essential not only for evaluating the effectiveness of current activities, but also for identifying gaps in information policy, forecasting audience behavior, assessing potential risks, and optimizing the strategic decision-making processes of media organizations.

Online media monitoring is based on several principles (Zhang et al., 2014):

- resolving the problem before it arises;
- applying new programs, methods, and tools;
- searching for the best solutions to problems for the successful website operation.

Online media monitoring can be conducted in various areas, including evaluating website performance, tracking the activities of competing media organizations, reviewing market innovations, archiving and analyzing yearly activities of competing media organizations, (comparing competitors' advertising budgets, monitoring distributors' promotional activities), etc.

Regardless of the specific focus, media monitoring plays a critical role in identifying issues and their root causes within an online media organization. It helps uncover potential solutions, refine the organization's strategic direction, influence decision making, and establish an effective information policy. According to Alguliyev et al. (2017), research shows that effective online media monitoring significantly contributes to improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of a media organization's activity.

3.4. Approaches to online media monitoring

Based on the synthesis of criteria applied in online media monitoring and evaluation systems, Table 1 classifies approaches to media evaluation.

Table 1. Classification of approaches to online media evaluation

Evaluation categories	Indicators
Technical criteria	technological indicators of the site (compatibility with the mobile version, etc.)
Content criteria	website update frequency, objectivity, relevance of topics to the site's activity trends, presentation of facts
Audience evaluation criteria	traffic volume, number of page views, user retention
Reliability criteria	fact checking, compliance of content with the editorial office's internal policy
Social and public impact criteria	sharing on social media, public opinion, links to the website

The proposed structure can be independently adopted by online media resources, including as a framework for integration into automated monitoring systems.

Several approaches can be applied to monitor online media and assess a web resource:

- Keyword search
- Thematic and sentiment analysis
- Combination of methods

Web analytics is one of the methods used to evaluate the websites' performance, including online media resources. It forms the basis of Internet marketing and plays a vital role in predicting the marketing strategy of media organizations, analyzing the market, monitoring users' attitudes towards the site, etc.

Web analytics, which generates critical data to enhance the online media performance, leverages web statistics tools to identify website weaknesses. By assessing the site using real-time keyword-based analytics, problems can be detected and addressed promptly by preventing potential disruptions. This analysis provides valuable insights, such as the number of page views and user interactions, while also highlighting possible technical or content-related problems. Accordingly, online media organizations gain new opportunities to strengthen their reputation and competitiveness in relation to other media platforms.

Many solutions available for analyzing data from social networks and online media are primarily designed for marketing research and identifying target audience. Examples include platforms such as "Yandex. Direct", "Google AdSense", "Bing Ads" (Yandex. Direct, 2025, Google AdSense, 2025, Bing Ads, 2025).

The key method used in media evaluation is thematic or sentiment analysis, which plays a crucial role in studying public opinion in online media. Sentiment analysis involves the automated detection of an author's emotional attitude toward an object through content analysis methods. When conducting sentiment analysis online, actions are guided by internal rules and protocols established by the organization. Following these guidelines typically leads to more effective results.

The analyses indicate that integrating the programs offered by the above-mentioned systems can significantly enhance the development of a comprehensive media monitoring software complex great benefit for building a media monitoring software complex and support management decisions.

Moreover, in some cases, combining multiple monitoring methods can also be an effective approach for analyzing online media resources.

Media Impact Project, Alexa and Media Cloud are also widely used as international media monitoring platforms. These platforms employ various technologies and methodologies to support media monitoring and evaluation. All of the three platforms are used to assess the impact and accessibility of media resources on the audience.

Additionally, they use digital monitoring tools for automated data collection and its analysis.

The Media Impact Project focuses on assessing how media affects the public opinion, audience behavior, and broader social change, while also evaluating the effectiveness of media content (Media Impact Project, 2025). Alexa specializes in analyzing web traffic, monitoring online media activity, tracking user behavior, counting page views, ranking websites, and measuring the amount of time users spend on a site (Fast Results with Targeted Digital Marketing, 2025). Media Cloud analyzes the structure and content of news streams, and performs text-based monitoring. This platform uses evaluation systems based on the accuracy of facts and source transparency.

3.5. *Advantages of implementing monitoring systems in online media*

The implementation of a monitoring system in online media enables a thorough assessment of a media organization's activities. A key benefit of such a system lies in its potential to utilize analysis results from online media and social networks as an additional source of information for management decision support systems (Gubarev et al., 2014).

Table 2 demonstrates the process of step-by-step analysis and management of data flow in media resources.

Table 2. Structure of the system for monitoring and analyzing online media resources (Belousov et al., 2015):

Stage	Description
Data collection, processing and storage	Tools are used to obtain information from online and social media. Information is collected, processed, processed and stored from web resources. In this regard, the number, dynamics, topics and tonality (overall emotional tone or sentiment) of entries are analyzed.
Data analysis	An assessment of the current situation and a forecast of future development prospects are implemented. Hazardous data sources and motives that may lead to disinformation are identified.
News formation	Information is prepared to be published in online media.
Information space formation	Methodological recommendations for the dissemination and placement of information are developed.

The structure of the system for monitoring and analyzing information published in online media resources combines the following 4 stages:

Stage 1. Collection, processing and storage of information from Internet resources

Information from internet sources includes

textual content, visual materials, and official metrics associated with the content. In the context of social media, this also encompasses user-generated metrics. The initial stage of the system involves a subsystem dedicated to the collection, processing, and storage of data from online sources. In this phase, content is gathered and evaluated based on specific criteria, such as sentiment analysis, topic identification for both text and images, and various statistical measures.

All collected data is then stored in a centralized data warehouse. Importantly, the system archives not only data that meets predefined criteria but also data that does not. This comprehensive approach enables the development of a retrospective dataset for deeper, long-term analysis.

Stage 2. Analysis of information from online resources

This stage is intended for the analysis of information from various resources for the evaluation.

Assessment of information combines the following areas

- Assessing the current information tonality (negative, positive, increased social tension, government intervention required, etc.)
- Forecasting the development of the environment formed being affected by various factors.

Stage 3: Formation of news material for an online media resource

At this stage, the system functions as a decision support tool in shaping the information landscape. It serves as an advisory resource, helping decision-makers develop an effective media information strategy. In other words, it assists operators or journalists in accurately reaching and engaging their target audience.

Stage 4. Information generation technology on the Internet

This stage includes a set of agreed steps in the preparation of news material obtained through stage 3.

3.6. *Recommendations for increasing the efficiency of online media activities in Azerbaijan*

In recent years, consistent and systematic reforms have been implemented in Azerbaijan to modernize media organizations in terms of structure and content and ensure their integration into the global information environment. Recent changes to the country's media legislation have

aimed to adapt it to ICT (Abdullaeva, 2023).

Examples of well-known news portals and agencies operating in the country and covering the latest events in the country include day.az, lent.az, modern.az, Azerbaijan State Information Agency (Azertag.az), Trend information agency (Trend.az), Report information agency (Report.az), APA information agency (APA.az), etc.

The Media Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated January 12, 2021, ensures the implementation of a systematic strategy for enhancing the quality and efficiency of media organizations within the framework of journalistic principles and professional ethics ("Decision of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Deepening Reforms in the Media Sector in the Republic of Azerbaijan", 2021).

The formation of the Media Registry in our country is also one of the key measures contributing to the improvement of the media environment in Azerbaijan and increasing its competitiveness (Ismayilov, 2022).

Furthermore, companies that provide media monitoring services (Mediatrends, Kalibri, Media Monitoring Center, etc.) operate in Azerbaijan (Media Trends, 2025, Kalibri Media Monitoring Tools, 2025, Media Monitoring Center, 2025). These companies provide opportunities for monitoring the media, as well as registering and classifying all news and advertisements published on social media, reporting, transferring the results to the relevant organization and archiving. However, the lack of a unified methodology in this area and the absence of national statistical mechanisms create a number of challenges.

Conducted research indicates that the above-mentioned efforts are insufficient to assess the activities of online media resources from all perspectives. Therefore, there is a need to establish a dedicated institution in Azerbaijan responsible for the assessment of media resources. This initiative can be realized by adapting conceptual approaches and analytical methods used in the field of media monitoring to online media resources in Azerbaijan. The development of national statistical mechanisms for media resources in Azerbaijan and the establishment of a Media Monitoring Center that meets the national and spiritual interests of Azerbaijan, including the traditions of national statehood, can make a significant contribution to solving the aforementioned problems and ensure the resolution of the following issues (Abdullayeva, 2022):

- Coordinating the activities of all country's media structures involved in monitoring;
- Developing a single framework and relevant methodologies for organizing the activities of media organizations;
- Establishing the necessary monitoring infrastructure and application of its results to relevant public, private and governmental institutions;
- Applying the expert assessment in media system;
- Determining the key indicators for media assessment, with consideration for national goals, cybersecurity problems and the globalization process taking place in the world;
- Assessing the current state of the media in Azerbaijan;
- Providing methodological support for the training of personnel involved in media monitoring.

A dedicated Center intended for monitoring the media can operate with specific focus area depending on the content of the research object and support a comprehensive assessment of the Azerbaijani media system as a whole.

4. Discussion

The results of the conducted studies indicate that various approaches are used to monitor and evaluate online media. Although most of these approaches are based on technical indicators and web-statistical mechanisms that are part of web analytics, there is a growing emphasis on qualitative factors such as content quality, credibility and societal impact. In particular, the Media Cloud platform stands out for its assessment systems, which prioritize factual accuracy and the transparency of information source.

The comparison of distinct methodological approaches—such as impact-based assessment of public opinion (Media Impact Project), technological performance analytics (Alexa), and content quality analysis (Media Cloud) revealed that there is no universally accepted methodology for online media monitoring, as each approach has its own specific context and area of application. The absence of systematic methodological framework and national web-statistical mechanisms in this area in Azerbaijan necessitates the adaptation of existing international practices to the country's media landscape. Furthermore, the development of an assessment mechanism considering the characteristics of the national

media environment can provide significant benefit.

The article contributes to the establishment of an effective and high-quality online media monitoring in Azerbaijan.

5. Conclusion

The conducted studies highlighted the importance of monitoring online media resources, particularly for assessing and forecasting the evolving dynamics of political events, public sentiment and collective behavior, as well as identifying potentially harmful content. Online media monitoring acts as an integral part of a complex of measures aimed at improving the operational efficiency, development, and overall effectiveness of media organizations.

The research demonstrated that approaches to monitoring and evaluating online media are diverse and multifaceted. Methodologies built around criteria such as technical performance, content quality, audience engagement, credibility, and societal impact offer significant benefits.

This study provided a comparative analysis of existing monitoring approaches, investigated key issues in the evaluation of online media, and explored the capabilities of current monitoring technologies. It outlined the advantages of implementing an integrated media monitoring system and presented a detailed breakdown of each stage within the proposed framework for analyzing data from online media sources.

Additionally, it proposed the establishment of a National Media Monitoring Center in Azerbaijan, which would evaluate online media performance across multiple dimensions by adapting proven international methodologies. It also offered recommendations on the center's strategic focus areas.

Further studies are to develop evaluation mechanisms adapted to Azerbaijan's national media context, as well as enhance automated monitoring systems by incorporating artificial intelligence and natural language processing technologies.

Thus, this study underscored the necessity of adopting a scientific and systematic approach to the objective evaluation of online media, laying a foundation for further investigation in this important field.

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