

EXPLORING THE PRE-ELECTION MEDIA ENVIRONMENT: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND OUTCOMES IN GEORGIA

Sopho Kherkheulidze
University of Georgia,
Georgia

Abstract

This article presents the findings of a doctoral dissertation and offers an in-depth examination of Georgia's pre-election media environment, analyzing its key trends, challenges, and risks.

Media influence is particularly strong during election periods, as it shapes voters' attitudes, disseminates information about candidates and political parties, and contributes to the construction of public discourse. The findings show that Georgia's pre-election media environment is often exposed to political influence, sharp polarization, and risks of disinformation. These factors pose significant challenges for maintaining media impartiality and professional ethical standards. A polarized media landscape undermines voters' ability to access objective information and make informed choices. The study demonstrates that trust in media outlets varies significantly according to political preferences, which further exacerbates social polarization.

The media's role in a democratic society is pivotal, as it provides citizens with essential information, facilitates public debate, and holds those in power accountable. The research relies on a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches: in-depth interviews with media experts, a survey of 350 voters, and an analysis of secondary data (international and local media-monitoring reports, as well as academic literature). This complex design makes it possible to present a comprehensive picture that integrates professional perspectives with public perceptions and lived experiences. The study also compares Georgia's media environment with European standards and practices, which significantly increases the relevance and broader value of the analysis.

The article has two main goals. First, it identifies the factors shaping media performance during the pre-election period, including ownership transparency, editorial independence, funding sources, and political interference. It analyzes how these factors contribute to a polarized and often biased media system. Second, it assesses the challenges these dynamics create for democratic processes and public trust, with particular emphasis on the risks of disinformation, manipulation of public opinion, and their ultimate impact on voter attitudes and electoral outcomes. Against this background, the article underlines the need to strengthen media independence and professional standards as a key precondition for fair and transparent elections.

Keywords: media environment, pre-election communication, polarization, disinformation, European practice.

Introduction

In contemporary democratic societies, the media plays a crucial role in electoral processes, as it determines the quality of information flow, shape public opinion, and significantly influences voters' decisions.¹ The media is not only a tool for disseminating information but also one of the principal mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability in political processes. Therefore, media independence and professionalism during pre-election periods constitute a key factor in the stability of democratic systems.²

¹ McQuail, D., „Mass Communication Theory“, Sage Publications, London, 2010. p. 23.

² Norris, P., „A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies“, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000. P.57.

In recent years, Georgia's media landscape has faced multiple challenges arising from both technological developments and increasing political and economic pressures. Intensified polarization, the widespread spread of disinformation, constraints on editorial independence, and weak regulatory mechanisms have created an environment in which the quality of public information has significantly declined. According to international observation mission reports, during the 2024 parliamentary elections, Georgia was characterized by a "highly polarized political and media landscape," which created uneven conditions for media outlets and political actors.³

Such an environment underscores the need for a systemic analysis of the media sector. This article discusses the findings of a doctoral research project that aims to assess how the media operates during pre-election periods, how information channels influence public opinion, and how reliable and objective the information context is within which voters make decisions. To achieve this aim, the study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining factual data, in-depth interviews with experts, and survey results from voters.

At the initial stage, a secondary data analysis was conducted, covering reports and assessments produced by local and international organizations such as ISFED⁴, Transparency International Georgia, the Media Development Foundation (MDF),⁵ OSCE ODIHR⁶ and other authoritative sources. Their findings made it possible to evaluate Georgia's media environment within a systemic framework. This analysis identified both strengths and weaknesses of the existing regulatory and structural setting and enabled comparison of the identified trends with internationally recognized standards, thereby providing a clear analytical foundation for the study.⁷

Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with media experts and journalists, which was crucial for capturing professional experiences and perceptions of political influence on the media. These interviews generated empirically rich material that clearly illustrates the multiple forms of political and institutional pressure on internal media processes. Respondents pointed to problematic issues such as external control over editorial policy, the pre-determination of the news agenda, politicization of programming grids, and the entrenchment of self-censorship—all of which directly restrict journalistic freedom. According to their assessments, selective control over which materials reach the airwaves and deliberate omission of critical topics directly undermine public trust and make it more difficult to uphold professional standards. The analysis of the results suggests that the experiences described in the interviews go beyond isolated cases and reflect systemic trends that affect both informational balance and the multi-faceted, objective coverage of political processes.

The data obtained from the interviews substantially enrich the analytical basis of the study. They provide deeper insight into the mechanisms of editorial decision-making, daily newsroom practices, the selection and editing of broadcast content, and the principles governing news production. As a result, a complex picture emerges of how external pressure levers shape internal professional practices and how this, in turn, affects the impartiality, accuracy, and objectivity of media content.⁸

The quantitative component of the study consists of a survey conducted among 350 registered voters, aimed at assessing trust in the media, use of information sources, and the effectiveness of political messaging. The results indicate that a significant portion of voters view media objectivity with skepticism and tend to place greater trust in social networks than in traditional media outlets. This attitude reveals a shift in the structure of trust, directly reflecting growing public polarization and rising media skepticism. The quantitative findings provide an empirical basis for understanding how political

³ Freedom House, „Freedom in the World 2022: Democracy after the Russian Invasion”, Freedom House, 2022. p. 57. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/democracy-after-russian-invasion> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

⁴ International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), „Official Website“, <https://isfed.ge/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

⁵ OSCE/ODIHR, „Election Observation Mission Final Report”, OSCE/ODIHR, 2024. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, „Election Observation Mission Final Report: Parliamentary Elections, Georgia, 26 October 2024“, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 2024. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/6/584029_0.pdf [L.s. 20.11.2025].

⁷ Transparency International Georgia, „Media Environment in Georgia”, Tbilisi, 2024. <https://transparency.ge/en> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

⁸ Creswell, J., W., & Plano Clark, V., L., *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, Sage Publications, 2017. p.109.

communication influences decision-making and information-seeking strategies across different social groups.

The mixed-methods design makes it possible to integrate expert interpretations and public perceptions within a single analytical framework, which enhances both the depth and reliability of the research. Data triangulation, cross-checking, and comparison of different sources significantly increase the scientific value of the study.

At the first stage, secondary sources were selected according to strict criteria of credibility and recognition at both local and international levels. Only reports and studies from organizations with transparent and reliable research⁹ practices were used.

For the in-depth interview component, a detailed discussion guide was developed with thematic blocks and targeted questions to enable journalists and media experts to present the internal dynamics of media processes fully. Their narratives particularly highlighted issues such as attempts to influence editorial policy, external determination of the news agenda, different forms of interference in programming content, and the conditions under which self-censorship emerges. Based on the collected material, a clear cause-and-effect chain was identified: external pressure weakens editorial independence; reduced independence leads to the growth of self-censorship; self-censorship results in selective coverage; and this sequence directly contributes to declining public trust in the media.

For the quantitative component, an extensive and complex questionnaire was constructed. The responses show that experiences of interacting with the media and levels of trust are closely shaped by the broader environment in which media operate. Selective coverage and high levels of polarization undermine audience perceptions of reliability.

Overall, the research goes beyond mere description of existing trends; it aims to analyze the root causes of the problems in a systematic manner. The results confirm that polarization and the trust crisis in Georgia's media environment are related not only to political pressure but also to institutional weaknesses that hinder the consistent application of professional standards.

1. Georgia's Pre-Election Media Environment

The pre-election media environment is one of the key elements of any democratic country, directly affecting public awareness, political choice, and the overall formation of political culture. In the Georgian context, the media sector attracts particular attention during election periods because of its influence on public opinion, political pluralism, and the provision of credible information.

At the same time, the media structure in Georgia is not fully independent or financially sustainable. Various studies show that both state and private interests exert significant influence over editorial policies, which is especially critical in pre-election periods. Media independence, editorial impartiality, and financial robustness not only determine the quality of information but are also closely linked to the level of public trust.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a complex analysis of Georgia's pre-election media environment by systematically examining the structural, advertising, and financial factors that affect media pluralism, editorial independence, and the quality of public information. To achieve this, the study draws on multiple reliable sources, including reports of local and international organizations, academic literature, civil society monitoring results, and practical data. This makes it possible to construct an integrated, objective, and well-argued picture of the pre-election media environment.

The article thus offers a systemic analysis of Georgia's pre-election media context and outlines its principal characteristics and challenges. The findings contribute to a better understanding of media functioning and identify key directions for strengthening media independence and quality.

⁹ Flick, U., „An Introduction to Qualitative Research“, Sage Publications, London, 2018. p.384.

1.1 Media Independence and Pluralism in Georgia

In theory, Georgia's media environment is multipolar: the country hosts a variety of television channels, radio stations, and online platforms that reflect the interests of different social and political groups. In practice, however, media independence and pluralism face multiple obstacles and challenges. Most channels belong to a few large media holdings, resulting in high levels of ownership concentration. Consequently, editorial freedom is frequently constrained, and the diversity of viewpoints is limited.

Media independence is generally assessed through the freedom of information dissemination, which should not be dependent on political or business interests. In reality, the content produced by some media outlets often reflects the perspectives of particular political groups, highlighting the lack of pluralism. This is especially visible in pre-election periods, when the risks of editorial interference and pressure significantly increase.

Beyond ownership concentration, the practical safeguarding of editorial independence represents a serious challenge. Journalists frequently experience restrictions on their professional autonomy, which impedes the dissemination of objective information. International monitoring reports indicate that media independence has remained problematic in Georgia's major national broadcasters for years, despite new regulations introduced in the sector.

Systemic monitoring also reveals significant differences between regional media and outlets based in the capital. Regional media are more dependent on local political actors due to financial and political pressures, which diminishes their editorial independence. Channels based in Tbilisi, although better resourced financially, remain vulnerable to the political and business interests of their owners.

The degree of media independence is determined by several systemic factors: ownership structures, access to financial resources, protection of editorial autonomy, the extent of political pressure, and the effectiveness of existing regulations. Despite some progress, financial and political influences remain the most serious threats to independent media, limiting their freedom to operate and negatively affecting both the completeness of public information and the preservation of diversity of opinion.

1.2 Political Advertising and Its Effect on Public Awareness

In Georgia's pre-election media environment, political advertising plays a major role in the overall quality of the electoral process. The balanced distribution of advertising is often disrupted, giving an advantage to particular parties or candidates.

During election campaigns, advertising does more than simply disseminate party messages; it also shapes civic attitudes and affects the level of public awareness. Given the specificities of Georgia's media system, the allocation of advertising time and resources on television is often not based on clear normative criteria. As a result, political positions and viewpoints are not presented in an equal or fair manner.

Furthermore, access to advertising space is closely linked to financial capacity, which directly affects the fairness of distribution. Although the public broadcaster provides an equal amount of airtime for all political entities, the purchase of advertising on private channels depends entirely on financial resources. Parties with larger campaign budgets can therefore advertise more intensively, including in prime-time slots, which facilitates broader dissemination of their political messages and reinforces inequality in information exposure.

In this context, the role of the public broadcaster is particularly important. Its mandate is to uphold political neutrality and ensure editorial balance. However, in practice, its resources are often limited, making it difficult to provide comprehensive and equal representation of the viewpoints and interests of multiple parties.

1.3 Financial and Legal Environment

Financial transparency is one of the key challenges in Georgia's media regulation framework. Political advertising expenditures and the revenues of media outlets are often not fully disclosed. International research highlights that insufficient financial oversight increases the risk of media-political manipulation.

Reports indicate that political advertising funds are frequently channeled to media outlets that are less committed to independent journalism, further strengthening the interests of certain groups.

It should be noted that a legal framework does exist, and Georgian¹⁰ legislation provides mechanisms for regulating media activity. However, in practice the enforcement of these regulations is often insufficient. The existing instruments require more effective monitoring and independent auditing. Only then can political advertising, financial documentation of media outlets, and audit results become transparent and accessible to the public.

2. The Pre-Election Media Environment in European Countries and Its Comparison with Georgia

Compared to Georgia, the pre-election media environment in many European countries differs sharply. In Europe, media independence is protected by clear legal frameworks that guarantee editorial freedom and minimize party-political pressure.

Pre-election advertising is strictly regulated. For example, in France the conditions for placing electoral advertising are fully defined in law, while budgetary limits and transparent reporting are closely monitored by state oversight bodies.

Financial structures in European media systems tend to support pluralism. Small media groups and regional broadcasters often receive independent or public funding, which allows them to operate without excessive political dependency and maintain media pluralism.

In Georgia, by contrast, large media companies have strong influence over the media agenda, while regional outlets are more vulnerable to pressure from local political actors. These problems become particularly acute during pre-election periods, when both editorial independence and pluralism come under strain. Examining European practices suggests several important recommendations for Georgia: strengthening editorial independence, improving the effectiveness of political advertising regulations, and ensuring financial transparency.

2.1 The Pre-Election Media Environment in European Countries and Comparison with Georgia

Despite differences in political and economic context, European¹¹ countries generally exhibit high levels of media independence. This chapter discusses the practices of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, where management of the pre-election media environment is based on clear regulatory frameworks, strong and independent regulatory authorities, and well-functioning public service broadcasters with high professional standards.

In the United Kingdom, the BBC is the public service broadcaster known for its robust editorial independence. During elections, it ensures multi-party coverage, strictly regulates political advertising, and does not rely on commercial advertising. The independent regulatory authority Ofcom¹² oversees compliance with journalistic ethics and provides external supervision over broadcasters.

¹⁰ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), „Georgia - Country Profile“, <https://rsf.org/en/country/georgia> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹¹ European Broadcasting Union (EBU), „Public Service Media in the Baltic States“, Geneva, 2023. <https://www.ebu.ch/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹² Ofcom, „Broadcasting Code and Electoral Coverage“, London, 2023. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

In France, the media system is characterized by a high degree of informational pluralism. The public service broadcaster France Télévisions¹³ and a number of independent radio stations offer balanced and extensive coverage. During election periods, national legislation strictly regulates the visibility of political advertising and sponsorship, thereby helping to limit the spread of disinformation.

In Germany, public service broadcasters (ARD, ZDF)¹⁴ are the main institutions providing balanced information. Their work is regulated by independent regulatory commissions that monitor risks of editorial interference. During elections, all political parties receive equal airtime on public service channels, which enhances transparency and fairness.

In smaller states such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, maintaining media pluralism remains a challenge. Nevertheless, regulations clearly define the rules for political advertising and help ensure balanced pre-election coverage. Public service broadcasters (LRT in Lithuania, LTV in Latvia, and ERR in Estonia) provide equal coverage for political actors, while regulatory commissions oversee commercial advertising and monitor the influence of party interests.

The experience of European countries indicates that independent regulatory authorities, strict rules on political advertising, and effective public service media significantly increase editorial independence, reduce the risk of disinformation, and strengthen public trust in the media.

Research Methods

Based on a thorough review of existing literature and relevant scholarly work, a quantitative research design was selected to examine the pre-election behavior of voters living in Georgia's major cities (ethnic Georgian citizens and ethnic minorities residing in the country), N = 350.

The questionnaire covered four main thematic areas:

1. Media use and information sources

- 45% of respondents indicated that television is their primary information source, although the internet, social networks, and online media resources are used even more extensively (by over 60%).
- 35% reported that they often rely on recommendations from family and friends. These data suggest that people tend to combine different channels, enabling them to access information from multiple perspectives.

2. Political advertising and public communication

- 55% of respondents believe that pre-election advertising significantly influences their views.
- 40% think that campaign advertising is more propagandistic than informative.
- 30% state that they trust advertising only after independently verifying the information. This indicates a relatively critical attitude toward pre-election messages.

3. Perceptions of information reliability and media bias.

- 42% of respondents think that the media operates in favor of specific political forces.
- 38% report that it is difficult to identify propaganda during the pre-election period. These results underscore the central importance of media reliability for voters.

4. Regulation, awareness, and civic education.

- Half of respondents (50%) indicated that they are not familiar with political advertising expenditures and state regulations.

¹³ Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), „Media Pluralism and Election Coverage in France“, Paris, 2022. <https://www.csa.fr/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹⁴ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, „Media Landscape and Political Coverage in Germany“, Bonn, 2023. <https://www.bpb.de/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

- 60% believe that the state should improve voter awareness and increase transparency in media regulation.

The analysis suggests that urban voters actively use multiple media channels, but assessing information reliability and conducting independent verification remain a challenge. These findings underline the need for the state to prioritize media regulation and voter education during election periods.

3. Georgia and the Media: Challenges and Resilience

In recent years, the media in Georgia has developed rapidly, yet serious risks remain. One of the most significant challenges is media polarization. This means that media outlets often disseminate information aligned with political interests, prompting audiences to interpret news through the lens of their own pre-existing views. As a result, different social groups develop divergent perceptions of reality, and accessing independent, objective information becomes more difficult.

Another key issue is the financial independence of media organizations. Many outlets are financially vulnerable and dependent on commercial advertising or the preferences of their owners, which often affects editorial policy. Smaller media organizations frequently lack sufficient resources to produce high-quality journalism, upgrade equipment, or attract experienced staff.

Deficiencies in professional standards and qualifications also remain problematic. While some outlets strive to adopt international standards, in many cases journalists lack opportunities for regular training and professional development. This concerns both ethics and basic skills such as accurate fact-checking and verification.

On the other hand, expectations for sustainable development in the media sector are gradually growing. Online platforms and social media enable media organizations to reach wider audiences, which can strengthen editorial independence by diversifying revenue sources. Outlets that effectively use multiple channels and formats are less dependent on a single financial source, allowing them to pursue a freer and more independent editorial policy.

In summary, the media in Georgia has consolidated its position but remains vulnerable to political, economic, and technological challenges. Strengthening media sustainability requires the development of independent financial models, support for professional staff, and consistent implementation of legal standards. Together, these measures can foster a more stable, diverse, and high-quality media environment.

Scientific Novelty

Following a detailed review of the existing literature and analysis of authoritative scholarly contributions, the research hypothesis was formulated as follows:

Pre-election behavior among voters living in major cities is significantly influenced by differentiated levels of trust in the media, the diverse use of information sources, and specific ways in which political advertising is perceived.

To test this hypothesis, a quantitative research design was selected, based on a specially developed questionnaire through which empirical data were collected from 350 voters (ethnic Georgian citizens and ethnic minorities residing in Georgia).

At the research design stage, strict criteria were established for selecting secondary sources: only those reports and studies were included that are widely recognized in both academic and monitoring circles (OSCE ODIHR,¹⁵ MDF¹⁶, ISFED,¹⁷ Transparency International Georgia, among others)¹⁸. This approach ensured a highly reliable contextual framework and strengthened the scientific grounding of field data interpretation.

¹⁵ Transparency International Georgia, „Official Website“. <https://transparency.ge/ge/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹⁶ Media Development Foundation (MDF), „Official Website“. <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹⁷ International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), „Official Website“. <https://isfed.ge/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

¹⁸ Transparency International Georgia, „Official Website“. <https://transparency.ge/ge/> [L.s. 20.11.2025].

The scientific novelty of the study is particularly evident in its innovative approach of integrating a qualitative in-depth interview component alongside the quantitative survey. This mixed-methods strategy is still rarely used in the study of Georgia's pre-election media environment. Guided by a specially developed interview protocol, the in-depth interviews captured processes such as externally driven agenda-setting, indirect influence on editorial policy, selective control over programming content, and the emergence of various forms of self-censorship.

These findings made it possible to articulate a clear sequence of cause-and-effect relationships: external political and financial pressures reduce editorial independence; restrictions on independence foster self-censorship; self-censorship, in turn, produces selective coverage; and these processes ultimately erode public trust in the media.

The quantitative questionnaire covered four core themes: practices of interaction with the media, attitudes toward political advertising, assessment of information reliability, and knowledge of regulations. The responses reveal key tendencies: the majority of respondents (more than 60%) use the internet and social networks; 45% still rely on traditional television; and 35% depend on recommendations from close acquaintances. This points to a multi-channel information environment, while simultaneously highlighting the difficulties of critical evaluation.

Perceptions of political advertising show that 55% of respondents view such advertising as influential, 40% associate it with propagandistic elements, and 30% trust it only after independent verification. This indicates that assessing information reliability is a complex process and underscores the need for strong critical thinking.

A separate challenge concerns information reliability more broadly: 42% of respondents believe that the media serve the interests of particular political forces, while 18% note that it is difficult to identify propaganda and biased content during pre-election periods. These results fully resonate with the practices described by journalists and media experts in the interviews, indicating that the media trust crisis is not merely a matter of subjective perception but a systemic problem rooted in the operational logic of the media environment.¹⁹

Regarding regulations, half of respondents are unfamiliar with the rules governing political advertising, while 60% call for more proactive communication from the state. The data suggest that regulatory ambiguity and information gaps directly affect voter behavior.²⁰

The analysis shows that urban voters actively use diverse media channels, yet evaluating reliability and verifying information remain major challenges. Consequently, general recommendations evolved into specific directions:

- Strengthening mechanisms for protecting editorial independence;
- Establishing higher standards of transparency for political advertising;
- Enhancing the capacity of the public broadcaster to provide balanced coverage;
- Systematically introducing media-literacy programs for voters.

Thus, the study not only describes existing problems but, through an innovative mixed-methods approach, reveals their underlying causes and articulates the steps required to improve Georgia's pre-election media environment.

Conclusion

In recent years, Georgia's media environment has undergone significant changes driven by technological progress and by political, socio-economic, and legal factors. The study finds that the Georgian media sector operates within a complex and multi-layered context in which media independence, financial sustainability, and public responsibility remain pressing challenges.

¹⁹ Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T., „The Elements of Journalism”, Crown Publishing, New York, 2014. P.98.

²⁰ European Parliament, „Media Pluralism and Media Freedom in the European Union (Resolution 2017/2209(INI))”, Brussels, 2018. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0005_EN.html [L.s. 20.11.2025].

The data show that media organizations are frequently exposed to political and commercial pressures. This is particularly visible during pre-election periods, when some outlets adjust their editorial policies to the interests of specific political groups. As a result, for a large segment of the public, the primary sources of information are characterized by reduced objectivity and high levels of subjectivity.

Economic factors represent another major challenge. The financial fragility of small and medium-sized media organizations often prevents them from maintaining stable newsrooms, employing professional journalists, or investing in professional development. The study indicates that many respondents believe media financial strength is directly linked to adherence to professional standards and the maintenance of public trust. Dependence on a single owner or on large-scale advertising revenues increases the risk that media outlets will fall under the influence of various interests, ultimately distorting public awareness and diminishing the objectivity of information.

Professional standards and ethics form yet another critical dimension of media sustainability. The findings demonstrate that some media organizations are unable to provide regular training, continuous professional development, or effective editorial oversight. This is particularly important during election periods, when media outlets must balance information provision, analytical depth, and critical perspectives. Weak ethical standards increase the risk of disinformation, making it more difficult to create a trustworthy information space.

Technological infrastructure and limited use of digital resources also remain problematic. While residents of large cities increasingly rely on digital platforms - online media, social networks, and mobile applications—many organizations struggle to produce fast, high-quality, and interactive content. This directly affects media competitiveness and audience engagement.

Despite these challenges, the study also identifies substantial potential for media development and sustainability. Online media, social networks, and digital platforms provide access to diverse and often independent information, which enhances media pluralism. Legal frameworks, including guarantees of access to information and mechanisms for protecting journalists, are important pillars of media stability. Some respondents emphasize the need for clear and consistent regulations that can promote both high-quality and independent journalism.

The findings indicate that a significant portion of the population actively seeks reliable and objective information and is willing to support the development of independent media. At the same time, many citizens perceive certain segments of the media as acting subjectively, which strengthens demands for greater financial and editorial transparency.

Overall, the sustainability of the media environment should be viewed as a complex process that simultaneously involves the refinement of legal frameworks, adherence to professional standards, financial support, and technological development. Only the combination of these components can ensure genuine media independence and help restore public trust. This is particularly important in pre-election periods, when the media bears heightened responsibility and plays a decisive role in shaping public consciousness.

Although Georgia's media environment still faces multiple and complex challenges, the study shows that there are real resources and potential for its development and long-term sustainability. The key directions emerging from the research include strengthening financial and structural support, reinforcing professional standards and ethics, improving legal frameworks, and advancing digital technologies. Implementing these measures will substantially promote media independence and reliability and enable the provision of information that better meets the needs of society.

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