TRANSFORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION PRACTICES UNDER CONDITIONS OF DIGITALISATION

TRANSFORMACIÓN DE LAS PRÁCTICAS COMUNICATIVAS DE LOS JÓVENES EN CONDICIONES DE DIGITALIZACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

The active entry of digital technologies into everyday life entails qualitative changes in many spheres of society. The long-term and continuous process of digitalization is the basis for the formation of new communicative practices in everyday life. The article contains a study of modern communicative practices in the information society. The aim is to identify the peculiarities of modern communication practices of young people, as well as to identify the most common patterns of behavior in the conditions of scaling Internet communications. The empirical base of the work is represented by the materials of secondary analysis and the author's research on the example of the city of Kazan - one of the sixteen large cities with millions of inhabitants in the Russian Federation. The research was conducted in the framework of qualitative-quantitative approach, the methods of online questionnaires and focus groups were used. The article summarizes the results of the analysis of the results of empirical information collected in the course of questionnaires and focus groups, revealing the identified features of transforming communication practices. The hypothesis that for the young generation life with the use of gadgets is habitual and to some extent necessary is confirmed. It is also noted that with the emergence of information technologies, communication is transforming not only in virtual space, but also changes in real space. Sometimes one reality flows into the other, there is a mixing of the two.

Keywords:

Communicative Practices, Information Society, Digital Environment, Virtual Reality, Social Networks, Internet Space, Youth.

RESUMEN

La entrada activa de las tecnologías digitales en la vida cotidiana conlleva cambios cualitativos en muchas esferas de la sociedad. El proceso continuo y a largo plazo de digitalización es la base de la formación de nuevas prácticas comunicativas en la vida cotidiana. El artículo contiene un estudio de las prácticas comunicativas modernas en la sociedad de la información. El objetivo es identificar las peculiaridades de las prácticas comunicativas modernas de los jóvenes, así como identificar los patrones de comportamiento más comunes en las condiciones de escalada de las comunicaciones por Internet. La base empírica del trabajo está representada por los materiales de análisis secundario y la investigación del autor sobre el ejemplo de la ciudad de Kazán - una de las dieciséis grandes ciudades con millones de habitantes en la Federación Rusa. La investigación se llevó a cabo en el marco del enfoque cualitativo-cuantitativo, se utilizaron los métodos de cuestionarios en línea y grupos de discusión. El artículo resume los resultados del análisis de los resultados de la información empírica recogida en el curso de cuestionarios y grupos de discusión, revelando los rasgos identificados de la transformación de las prácticas de comunicación. Se confirma la hipótesis de que para la generación joven la vida con el uso de gadgets es habitual y hasta cierto punto necesaria. También se observa que con la aparición de las tecnologías de la información, la comunicación se está transformando no sólo en el espacio virtual, sino que también cambia en el

espacio real. A veces una realidad desemboca en la otra, hay una mezcla de las dos.

Palabras clave:

Prácticas comunicativas, sociedad de la información, entorno digital, realidad virtual, redes sociales, espacio internet, juventud.

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, there were just under 2.5 billion internet users, out of a world population of 7 billion. And social media users were 26% of the world's population, that's 1,720,000,000,000 people (Kemp, 2023). In 2023, the number of internet users reached the figure of 5.16 billion people, and people on social networks became - 4.8 billion. Thus, in ten years, the world's population has grown by 1 billion people and internet and social media users have grown by 2.7 billion and 3.1 billion more, respectively. The period of strong growth in digital engagement was from the 2000s to the late 2010s, since the early 20s the rate has been slowing down - growth in the number of internet and social media users has started to be around 2% per year. On average, now more than 6 out of 10 people are Internet users (Kemp, 2023).

The number of smartphone owners has grown by over 20% in the last 5 years, this is fueling people's engagement in the online space (Poushter et al., 2018). GWI data also shows that people are actually spending more time on social media than ever before. The company's latest wave of research shows that the typical working-age internet user now spends more than 2.5 hours a day on social platforms, which is the highest figure, over the entire research period (Kemp, 2023).

The growing role of gadgets intensifies information processes that lead to qualitative changes in communication and social practices (Wolfson & Volchina, 2017; Partsvaniya & Khupeniya, 2018). The fact that communication is one of the most important and its accessibility one of the determining factors of Internet access is confirmed by statistical facts. The main reasons for using the Internet are searching for information, communicating with friends and relatives, as well as being aware of news and events (Sboychikova, 2023; Eflova et al., 2024). But among the platforms, chat rooms and messengers, as well as social networks take the leading positions and only in third place are search engines (Kemp, 2023). It can be said that communication remains an important component in the life of every person, but with the development of technology it takes a different form, more convenient, impersonal and diverse, externally and materially manifested in the form of smartphones, laptops, tablets and other gadgets (Novikov, 2008; Podgorecki, 2015).

Sociological theory has always endeavored to respond promptly to changes in society, to understand their causes and peculiarities. At the beginning of the twentieth century, sociological theories explaining and studying the information society were still under development. Thus, the theories of classical sociology, represented by K. Marx, M. Weber, O. Comte, H. Spencer, E. Durkheim and G. Simmel, and later the modernist theories of P. Sorokin and A. Schütz, laid the foundation for the development of future theories. Changing social structures, institutions, values and norms, moving towards new forms of post-industrial society, became a challenge for postmodern theorists (J. Baudrillard, F. Jamieson, M. Foucault). Their works not only formed an even stronger foundation for subsequent theories of information society, but also became predictive in some aspects.

The digital society, referred to by modern researchers as such, which is developing and forming in our everyday life, was presented as the society of the future within the framework of the theory of post industrialism, the author of which is Bell (1973). The main postulates of his theory are the ideas that society is in crisis and requires a new structure. According to his theory, post-industrial society combines people and theoretical knowledge, which is the main resource of power in all socio-economic relations. D. Bell defined the information society as one of the stages of development of post-industrial society, accordingly, the new structure of social life should be classless, privilege in which depends only on the level of education and qualification. Moving from the sphere of production, which is becoming increasingly automated, to the dominance of the sphere of services, information becomes a collective commodity that is not depleted or physically consumed (Bell, 1973). Post-industrialists gave basic characteristics of the emerging society, in which information and knowledge were seen as the cause and resource of a society transitioning to a post-industrial way of life. They did not consider the problems of digitalization, but pointed to the process of restructuring the rhythms of society's life to the dominant role of information and knowledge in it. In general, the information society is considered as one of the variants of the post-industrial society, and it is, accordingly, a continuation of the industrial society, with its inherent capitalist economy, but with the condition of its modernization in the volume of information dissemination. As a result, regardless of the theoretical differences among post-industrial theories, the approach itself represents a certain abstract model of the future society under construction. Providing a relevant and applicable theoretical and methodological basis, post-industrialism represents two ideological trends: the first is the idea that the future represents the subsequent stage of industrial development, and the second is the idea that the new society is

based on the dominance of information in all spheres of life.

The beginning of the development of the theory of information society and popularization of the term "information society" belongs to Professor Y. Hayashi of the Tokyo Institute of Technology. He believed that in such a society there would be a high level of automation of production and people would get rid of routine work due to computerization (Hayashi, 1970). Masuda (1983), expressed similar ideas in his book, he spoke about the leading role of intellectual production in all sectors of the economy. The main ideas of the theory are aimed at studying the changes in social values under the influence of information technology. Computerization will lead to optimization of the economy, access to reliable sources of information and a new type of production, according to the supporters of this theory, should lead to classlessness and conflict-free society. The value of consumption of goods, inherent in industrial society, will be replaced by the importance of intellectual capacity of the product, i.e. the attention will shift to the time of consumption and production of information products and services. Such changes will provoke a restructuring of society, interactions in it and its structure.

Another significant work in the theories of information society is the work of M. Castells, which presents a critical analysis of the place of information in modern society. The main feature of the new era is the creation, not the use of knowledge. He considered the dynamics of development of the modern world through its network organization, i.e. M. Castells understood society as a society of network structures. In his opinion, information networks linking structural elements of society, from an individual to entire states, play a significant role in understanding and considering social changes. Information penetrates into all spheres of society and thus transforms society. Belonging to one or another network or its absence is an important aspect in understanding and solving such a problem of modern society as the gap between social division and growing globalization (Castells, 2010).

DEVELOPMENT

A qualitative-quantitative approach was applied in the research. The methods of questionnaires and focus groups were implemented. The study was conducted in 2023 among young people in Kazan (Russian Federation). The sample population totaled 400 people. To ensure the highest level of representativeness, a quota selection was made according to such socio-demographic characteristics as: gender and age of people living in Kazan. The sampling for focus groups was made by the "snowball" method, with 8 participants in each group. The groups of informants were formed according to the following characteristics: the first focus group only with student youth,

the second - working youth, the third - mixed. Such distribution of informants was created in order to reveal similarities and differences of people's viewpoints depending on their main activity.

Results and discussion

The results of the survey confirm the global trends regarding the time spent and purposes of using the Internet. Thus, the main purposes of using the Internet are socializing in social networks - 88.5% of respondents, watching films and TV series (58.5%), searching for information (43%), studying (42%), working (33%) and online shopping (16%). These are the main and most popular answers among Kazan youth, almost in the same order in the Global Digital 2023 report (Kemp, 2023). Also, the global average time spent online is about 6 h 30 minutes, according to our research, respondents spend between 4 and 9 hours a day online.

There is no correlation in the number of social networks used in relation to age among young people and depending on the type of activity, the distribution is normal. However, the fact that men use the largest number of social networks and messengers than women turned out to be remarkable. That is, the absolute majority (66% of respondents) of girls use 1-3 applications for communication. In response options corresponding to the number of messenger and social network usage greater than four, men are outnumbered by 3-4% in each category. When asked in what cases a person turns to a gadget, there are no special differences depending on gender. Basically, the reasons for turning to the smartphone are the need to find out the weather or news (everyday things); the need to "kill time"; moments when one gets bored; during rest or meals. There is also a peculiarity that is statistically visible, but the reason for it is obvious, depending on whether a person is working or studying, they will have an increase in the amount of time spent on the corresponding activity. These results are also confirmed by the statements of focus group informants:

I go to YouTube while I am eating, but only at that moment I can also go to YouTube and relax while I am eating. (male, 20 years old).

I'm resting on my phone, guys. I'm on a new level. (female, 21 years old).

It's like a habit. When I got bored, I took out my phone. (female, 23 years old).

When asked about the reasons why a person might get distracted during a conversation, three main reasons were identified: "an urgent call, something urgent", "I am afraid of missing something important" and "if there is an awkward silence". Women are more afraid of missing important information online. Men are 10% more worried

about missing an important urgent call than women, and 32% of the men surveyed relieve stress and fatigue online. One vivid example is the statement of a focus group participant:

I have an addiction to funny videos on my phone, so I don't limit myself to that. (male, 21 years old).
According to the results of the questionnaire, 1/8 of respondents believe that there is no addiction, although they spend more than 4 hours a day on the phone, but it should be taken into account that the goals may be mainly work, study and other basic activities in a person's life, not only entertainment. Those who spend more than 9 hours in the smartphone and think that there is no addiction - 5 people. The rest are quite realistic, i.e. 57 people who spend more than 9 hours on the Internet think that they are addicted. Thus, many people tend to believe that they are addicted to gadgets. To a greater or lesser extent (Table 1).

Table 1: Ratio of the amount of time the phone is used and feelings of dependence on it, in %.

Number of hours per day on a smartphone	Do you believe you have an addiction from your phone and other gadgets?					
	Certainly not	Absolutely, yes	I can't answer that	It's more like yes	Rather not	Total
4-9	6	43	9	123	54	235
More 9	0	36	0	21	5	62
Up to 4	11	9	0	48	35	103
Total	17	88	9	192	94	400

Source: Prepared by authors

The informants' statements at the focus groups confirm the results obtained during the questionnaire survey. The most profoundly reveals the cause-and-effect relationships of the patterns that we identified during the questionnaire survey. Thus, the position of young people regarding their awareness of their dependence on gadgets is confirmed:

I just accepted the fact that I use my phone very often. (female, 19 years old).

Well, I can only judge from myself, because I know that I, for example, have become addicted to information. I need to consume something every day, not necessarily even something new to learn - something I may have forgotten, but I just want to repeat it. For example, I had a habit for a long time, somewhere, probably, that every day, I read an article... And I realized that at one moment the brain, well, as it were, refuses to perceive so much information, and you still load that I, for example, read one article - interesting, the theme, I want more and more, and then at the end your brain just shuts down and you think that it's just rubbish, because a lot of the same type of information. The brain doesn't want to memorize it and the next day - aha, what was it yesterday, what did I read about? (male, 22 years old).

So, you have to learn, you have to develop. The main thing is to remind not only children, but also yourself, because sometimes you don't notice that you go into this steppe, let's say. So, here, specifically addiction, it's bad for us. (male, 20 years old).

To complement and confirm the quotes from the focus group, when analyzing the questionnaire results we noticed this pattern: among those who consider themselves gadget addicts, they believe that their attachment to their smartphone manifests itself in the following ways: "I put the phone so that it is in plain sight", "I pay attention to the phone longer than necessary" and "I feel anxious when the phone is not around". Thus, among the respondents only 1/3 puts the phone with the screen down when talking to other people, half of the respondents notice that they use the phone longer than necessary. Approximately equal proportion of respondents are concerned that they will miss something important without looking at the phone, while the degree of their agreement with this statement is not absolute. 67% of respondents leave their phone in plain sight. Half do not agree that they cannot leave their phone alone, but at the same time people get worried if the phone is not around. This is also confirmed by the statements of informants:

I'm not particularly panicked that I don't have my phone in my pocket. I just have to have it with me somewhere, just in case, because I need it for work, mostly. You can put it away later, basically. Well, or a girl calls, because I can not answer in messengers. (male, 20 years old).

Basically, I have my phone in my pocket and that's fine. (male, 22 years old).

Well, there is already a habit of having it in my hand (female, 27 years old).

Comparing the result of the questionnaire and informants' answers, we can say that young people do not have a direct dependence on gadgets themselves, there is a need to carry out activities via smartphone and other technical devices. And also, we see that the Internet occupies a very large share of entertainment. It turns out that if a person is attached to a smartphone, it is because of the properties contained in it, which allows to go out to interact with other people. In addition, respondents do not agree that their fascination with the phone is increasing every day.

Waiting for a traffic light or queue are everyday activities for everyone, but even these are filled with distractions on your phone:

I don't pick up my phone in any way disturbing, I wait for safety reasons. Little things, I try to be attentive at the crossing. In the queue - yes, I can (female, 22 years old).

Yeah, I feel cringe if I stand there like a moron staring at nothing. I get stuck just to pretend I'm busy. But in familiar places, yes, I can more easily not get stuck (21 years old).

It all depends on the situation, if it's at a traffic light, you can quickly look up what you need and move on, but if it's the same, say, grocery shop, where everything is familiar, then you can stick to your phone while you're waiting in line. This is a psychological disease - scrolling through the tape in search of something interesting (female, 27 years old).

In this case, we can say that if the space is relatively static and familiar to the person, they become bored and turn to the phone.

Another habit often manifested among young people is checking the time. To some extent, the smartphone has replaced the wristwatch, on the other hand, some of them have transformed into smart watches. But the peculiarity of the habit is that a person may have the need to look at the time several times in a minute.

Well, specifically about traffic lights, I've often noticed for myself that, well, there's no goal, but you just pulled out your phone, so time looked up and got excited... what did I do? I don't remember. Yeah, I got distracted, but it's literally a second of looking at the time and sticking it back in. Well, actually, it's probably at that time you're thinking, "Well, maybe someone has texted and I can, there, have a chat at that time" (male, 22 years old). Checking one's smartphone is not always an unconscious action. In particular, in this statement we see that the informant notes "... And maybe someone wrote...", which suggests that there is a permanent need to communicate with someone, and at times when you realize that you cannot talk to someone in person, you unconsciously look for an interlocutor on the Internet.

Moreover, after a minute, you don't remember what time it is (*laughter and agreement with the situation*) (female, 23 years old).

Switching the phone on and just I don't know why, but I unlocked (*shows*) just like that, everything. You just have to keep your hands busy to switch or whatever. It's unconscious - you just pick up the phone and start the menu back and forth, you go somewhere, you go to something else, you go to messenger - there's nothing, you go out... You lock it, you put it back in and you think: "What was that just now?" (male, 22 years old).

When you're bored. You just sit and sit and sit - waiting and that's it. You take your phone and shove it in and always - what, what happened between these actions? You just don't remember. (female, 18 years old).

Yes, I've had similar situations, in fact, I also go in there, switch it on and I can just switch it back off, but I would also like to point out that I often just go in for the weather forecast. (male, 20 years old).

Analyzing the informants' statements, we see that the need to switch on the smartphone screen for at least a moment and look there arises at moments of "situation stagnation", i.e. when nothing happens, and it turns out that there is a need to do something and the first thing that comes to mind is to use the smartphone. What is remarkable is that this is often done in a short period of time and, as a rule, a person doesn't really look at the information being viewed, i.e. he does it unconsciously, machine-like.

In groups of friends, personal communication is also organized through the phone - young people show, switch on or forward something in real time, being close to each other.

Well, in the company, if there comes a point where someone pulls out a phone, it turns into, let's watch memes. (*Laughs*) Well, there's usually three of us there. And so, whoever's got it out, we all go over there and watch something (female, 23 years old).

I just sometimes flip through my Komatke newsfeed and find a picture, then I throw it into a group with my friends, even if we are sitting together now (male, 20 years old).

And I really like to point my phone in my face (*group laughter*) But it pisses me off when I can't show it to everyone, because someone might not understand, someone might not care (female, 21 years old).

According to the results of the questionnaire, we can say that 97% of respondents at least once showed something on their phones to their friends. This is another ubiquitous

practice among young people - to show photos and videos during live communication (Table 2).

Table 2: When you meet friends/relatives/partner in person, do you often show each other something from your phone (photos, videos, etc.) in the course of communication?

Answer	%
It's almost always	14,8
Sometimes, every once in a while.	61,0
Rarely	21,5
No	2,3
I can't answer that	0,4
Total	100,0

Source: Prepared by authors

This incorporation of digital technologies into live communication is a favorite practice of many people. The important thing is that it is not phubbing, but it can provoke it, for example, if a person is so engrossed in matching a video or photo to the situation that he or she completely "drops out" of the conversation.

Still, we cannot deny the importance of the phone in the lives of the younger generation. At first, smartphones and other digital appliances were valuable because they were new and expensive, but over time, the value of smartphones has shifted to the meaningfulness of what the gadget is in terms of human relationships:

I used to be very fond of photographing everything, taking pictures. And sometimes there were days when I came home after a walk and when I opened the gallery I was surprised that I hadn't taken any pictures. That is, I was so immersed in the process that I didn't even photograph anything (female, 22 years old).

When I was a little kid, when I fell in a big puddle, I was worried not that I would get wet and sick, but that my phone would break and I would be scolded for breaking my phone. So I was using the rice life hack to soak up the moisture (female, 22 years old).

All the information is there, and I couldn't even find out about a change of plans or something like that, or a bank card account, and there is nothing to do in the hostel, so I don't know what I would do (male, 20 years old).

The smartphone is our constant companion in the modern world, it gives us a lot of opportunities, and we are used to building relationships using digital technology - there is a lot of things about work or any other activity, everything is automated. The virtual environment is familiar to young people, and they see its potential better than others:

Well, personally, my phone is always with you - always in my pocket. I only put it aside at night, I keep it next to my bed (male, 20 years old).

It's just that more people can be contacted, because our personal connections they are limited, but on the phone the connections are much wider. In the same messengers, in the same social networks. You can't go to a person in another city, but you can call them and arrange something (female, 21 years old).

It's more efficient, plus we have to say that we don't know of another time when cases were decided in person, so to speak. We can't compare it exactly (female, 27 years old).

The digital space offers many benefits, but it takes up a significant percentage of our lives and our attention, causing fatigue and a sense of mental overload:

And in social interaction, I'm really glad I left student council because now I don't have most of these chat rooms that were always bursting with messages and annoying me. So, like, freshman and sophomore year, I was like, "Man, this is cool. I'm chatting to a lot of people like that," at the end of my second year, I deflated and realized that I was pissed off, that I was fed up with it (female, 21 years old).

Komatke is absolutely packed with work-related stuff. I'm thinking, "Please don't post." It takes a lot of time; it takes a lot of energy. You just get tired and at some point, you get tired and you can't answer anyone (female, 25 years old).

I have such chats connected with work, and because of this I did not answer any of my friends and ignored my mum for several hours, because I just either did not see it, or I did not have the time and did not have the desire and energy to say anything to anyone. I'd come home and that was it - don't talk to me, please. And I, when I quit my job, I got out of these chats and my Telegram became so clean in dialogues. It's so good! (female, 21 years old).

Overload and fatigue from interacting in virtual space often leads to ignoring even the people closest to a person.

There is such a state when you get very tired of gadgets, phones and just come home, to everyone "goodbye, I am absent today", I just throw the phone to the other end of the room and do not touch it at all, that is, there is a need, not to touch it even (female, 22 years old). Each of the informants highlighted the point that the presence of a large number of chat rooms for work or study depressed them, and when leaving the overloaded information field one felt light.

CONCLUSIONS

Digitalization is a global process, penetrating deeper into everyone's life and consciousness every day. The Internet opens up unlimited possibilities for everyone who has access to it. The virtual is available to us inside material media: phones, laptops, computers, smart watches and much more. All this appears, develops and transforms into new forms faster than we realize it. For the younger generation, it is a familiar part of the world in which they were born, grew up and live. The value of digital technologies from material, consisting in the cost and novelty of devices, has become semantic, meaningful. For young people, the smartphone is security, entertainment, a friend. Virtual reality is a product of our mind, and at the same time, a place "where you can escape to" in an awkward situation or at the bus stop, waiting for the bus. The Internet is becoming another reality in which a person lives in parallel with the offline world.

The penetration of the virtual into the real world and their intertwining in everyday human practices has provoked the emergence of new patterns of behaviour and social problems. The new practices are only partly such. They are still the same discussions of photos or stories with friends, only the object in question is not an object, but a device containing a digital copy of it. We still wake up in the morning and turn on our phones instead of reading the newspaper or watching television. In situations of waiting in a queue or being in a lecture. The distinctive feature of these practices in their "new" manifestation is not that they are mediated by digital technologies, but - the possibility of continuing to communicate continuously. Gradually, especially among the younger generation, we develop the habit of being "in touch", of being "included" in events and changes both globally and locally. It turns out that we are expanding our communication capabilities, and there is more communication in our lives. But in actually interacting with each other, this becomes a limitation.

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