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LEAD ARTICLE

Theorizing Russian model of the digital divide¹

Elena Vartanova²

Anna Gladkova

Daniil Lapin

Elina Samorodova

Olga Vikhrova

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

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Abstract

The paper approaches digital divide as a complex multi-dimensional and multi-level problem, not being limited to the Internet access only. We argue that regardless of some universal trends previously identified by scholars, every country retains its national specifics in ICT access, skills and benefits people can get from using ICTs. In this vein, we theorize Russian model of the digital divide, approaching it through three main angles: state regulation of digitalization processes in Russia on federal and regional levels; different modes of the digital technology use in a cross-regional comparative perspective; and specific mechanisms for the analysis and further overcoming digital divide in Russia. For the latter point, we propose a ‘digital passport’ of the Russian regions that allows for better understanding of the digitalization progress in particular regions of the country and for more efficient policy-making on site. Lastly, we test a ‘digital passport’ model on eight federal subjects of Russia to show its applicability of the study of the digital divide in different regional contexts.

Keywords

Digital divide, digital passport, Russia, media, ICTs, digital literacy, regulation.

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² **Corresponding author:**

Elena Vartanova, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Journalism, 9, Mokhovaya st, Moscow, Russia.

Email: eva@smi.msu.ru

Introduction

The continuing and ever deepening social injustice, reflected in a high number of global, social and individual inequalities in the digital society, has become one of the most widely debated problems in media and communication studies worldwide (van Dijk, & Hacker, 2003; Ragnedda, & Muschert, 2013). The digital divide itself has been often considered a global problem, consisting in unequal access and the consequent unequal use of digital technologies, with special attention given to benefits of easy access to digital technologies and consequences of digital deprivation (van Deursen, & Helsper, 2015).

For a long time, discussions over digital inequalities have been framed mostly around the digital divide. The studies focused on the degree of access to computer technologies and Internet, and examined computer literacy, basing on abilities to use Email, search for information online, download music, etc (van Dijk, & Hacker, 2003). However, the introduction and widespread use of machine learning and artificial intelligence in different decision-making processes, related to citizens' life (health, justice, policing), shifted the research on digital divide (Hargittai, 2002; van Deursen, & van Dijk, 2014, 2018). Reason for that being more complex issues, arising from the inequalities and concerning aspects of how digital technologies work and what influence they could have (Carmi, & Yates, 2020). In this context, much has been written on digital inclusion of various social groups: children and young people (Livingstone, & Helsper, 2010), disabled people (Goggin, Ellis, & Hawkins, 2019), elderly people (van Deursen, & Helsper, 2015) and others. Furthermore, research has been made on theorizing and measuring digital capital (Ragnedda, Ruiu, & Addeo, 2019; Gladkova, Vartanova, & Ragnedda, 2020), 'a bridge capital between offline and online life chances' (Ragnedda, 2018), which is becoming increasingly important in digital reality of today.

The problem of digital divide in different national contexts has been thoroughly analyzed by researchers across the world (Chipeva, et al. 2018). However, little attention has been given to the problem of digital inequalities in Russia, specifically from an interregional perspective. This appears surprising given that Russian Federation is a unique example of a multiethnic and multicultural nation that can hardly be found elsewhere in the world, with a total population of 146 million people, including over 190 ethnic groups speaking more than 170 languages (most recent data provided by the all-Russia census in 2010). Moreover, it is the largest country in the world, spanning over 11 time zones and covering over 17 100 000 square km. Russia consists of eight federal districts divided into 85 federal subjects, 22 out of which are national republics within Russia (ibid). Peculiar character of Russian society is also reflected in the way federal districts –

while being parts of the same country – differ from each other geographically (e.g. territorial differences, distance from the large cities and the two main megapolises, Moscow and St. Petersburg, etc.), economically (e.g. average salaries rate, GDP, size and efficiency of economy, etc.), technologically (poorly developed lines of communication, including both transport connection and ICT infrastructures, first and foremost due to the sheer size of the country), socially (population density, size of urban/rural population, differences in education, employment opportunities in the labor market, etc.), as well as ethnically and linguistically (e.g. the number of smaller ethnic and cultural groups residing in particular districts of Russia) (Gladkova, & Ragnedda, 2020).

Cross-regional varieties and contrasts become evident through the analysis of inequalities in Russia. Previous research on Russia showed that due to its complex and immense territory, economic and cultural development, historical traditions, professional journalistic practices, policy measures, legislation, uneven economic developments of the regions, geographical and climatic conditions (Vartanova, 2018), Russia represents an interesting case for the analysis of different kinds of inequalities. This topic has, indeed, attracted the attention of numerous scholars that, over the years, have focused on inequalities in socioeconomic development of Russian regions (Kolomak, 2010); in access to the higher education (Mikheeva, 2004); and in the quality of life in Russia (Bobkov, Gulyugina, & Odintsova, 2009).

Less research, however, exists on the development of digital inequalities in Russia (Deviatko, 2013; Volchenko, 2016). So far, most publications on the digital divide in Russia (Vartanova, 2018; Volchenko, 2016; Bykov, & Hall, 2011; Deviatko, 2013) have remained rather generic and limited to discussing digital inequalities in regard to digital economy and/or information society issues in transitional post-socialist context, aiming to conceptualize the notion of digital divide and classify theoretical approaches: from mere access problem to a deeper social issue (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019). The majority of papers on digital divide in Russia approach the problem from a technological point of view, i.e. examine the divide between those included and those excluded from the digital world and analyze a multitude of factors that might influence the divide. A number of studies addressed the phenomenon of the digital divide in Russia by discussing the three levels of the digital divide (difference in access to the Internet and ICTs; differences in skills and use of ICTs; difference in benefits people gain from using internet technologies) in a comparative and interregional perspective (Gladkova, & Ragnedda, 2020).

In this paper, we discuss the unique Russian model of digital divide, approaching it from three main angles: digital literacy and media literacy in a cross-regional

comparative perspective; state regulation of digitalization processes in Russia on federal and regional levels; and specific mechanisms for the analysis and further resolution of the problem of digital divide. For the latter point, we propose a 'digital passport' of the Russian regions that allows for better understanding of the digitalization progress in particular regions of the country. The study explores digital divide in eight federal subjects of the Russian Federation (Moscow, Republic of Crimea, Primorsky Krai, Altai Krai, Kaliningrad Region, Republic of Tatarstan, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Republic of Dagestan) but we argue that the methods and the approach employed in the present research can be used for the analysis of similar processes in other regions of Russia as well.

State regulation. Overcoming digital divide in national and municipal programs

Despite the obvious advantages of digitalization, the process entails a number of problems and contradictions, and the digital divide is central among them (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019). Measures to bridge the digital gap are determined by the governments on the basis of priorities and characteristics of federal and regional policies, as well as subject to the economic conditions of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. In 2008 the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation was adopted at the state level in Russia, providing the basis for further legislative regulation of the problem of the digital divide in the country. Thereafter, in 2010, the Government of the Russian Federation signed Order No. 1815-r 'On the State Program of the Russian Federation 'Information Society (2010-2020)'. Finally, the federal law 'On Communications', which came into force in 2014, set the task to eliminate digital divide between urban residents and rural populations by creating access points in settlements with a population of 250 to 500 people.

The 'Information Technology Industry Development Strategy in the Russian Federation for 2014-2020 and for the future until 2025' set the goal to improve information technology literacy of the population. In 2017, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree approving the second 'Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in Russia for 2017-2030', which also included the creation of a level playing field for the use of digital information technologies by the Russian citizens. The government was instructed to ensure the right of the Russian citizens to access information in the new digital environment.

Generally, it is very difficult to assess the results of the implementation of the federal strategies at the federal subject level, based on statistical data, which are sometimes not only difficult and disaggregated but also contradictory. However,

now each of the federal subjects is implementing its own program, focused on a comprehensive or phased approach to the solution of the most pressing issues of digital divide in the region. (See *Table 1*).

For subsequent frequency/content analysis, a sample of regional programs of the subjects of the Russian Federation was formed on the basis of the Order of the Ministry of Finance No. 1032 dd. November 11, 2019 'On approval of lists of the entities of the Russian Federation in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5 of Article 130 of the Budget Code of the Russian Federation'.

Entities:

- Moscow and the Republic of Tatarstan (not subsidized in 2020);
- Kaliningrad region (the share of subsidies does not exceed 10% of own revenues of the consolidated budget of the entity during two of last three reporting financial years);
- the Republics of Sakha (Yakutia) and Crimea³ (the share of subsidies exceeds 10% of own revenues of the consolidated budget of the entity during two of last three reporting financial years);
- Primorsky Krai (the share of subsidies does not exceed 20% of own revenues of the consolidated budget of the entity during two of last three reporting financial years);
- the Republics of Altai and Dagestan (the share of state subsidies exceeds 40% of own revenues of the consolidated budget of the entity during two of last three reporting financial years).

The main criterion for the inclusion of these particular federal subjects into the sample was a significantly different level of economic development. The level was determined using the Order of the Ministry of Finance No. 1032 dd. November 11, 2019 'On the approval of the lists of the subjects of the Russian Federation in accordance with the provisions of Article 130 of the Russian Budget Code'. It should be noted here that Moscow and the Republic of Tatarstan were not subsidized in 2020. In Kaliningrad region the share of subsidies from the federal budget does not exceed 10% of the amount of the consolidated budget of the subject during two of the last three reporting financial years. In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the Republic of Crimea the share of subsidies from the federal budget exceeds 10% of the amount of the consolidated budget of the subject. In Primorsky Krai the share of subsidies from the federal budget does not exceed 20% of the amount of the consolidated budget of the subject. Finally, in Altai Krai and the Republic of Dagestan the share of subsidies from the federal budget exceeds 40% of their own income.

³ With the exception of Sevastopol.

Table 1
State programs of the regions of the Russian Federation focused on overcoming the digital divide

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
Kaliningrad Region	State program 'Digital transformation in the Kaliningrad region'	2019 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of the life quality; – Building a resilient and secure information infrastructure; – Providing training of qualified personnel; – Increasing the efficiency of public administration through the digital transformation of public administration and priority sectors of the economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of the accessibility, immediacy and quality of state and municipal e-services to the population of the Kaliningrad Region; – Implementation of a set of actions aimed at the successful establishment of the digital economy in the Kaliningrad Region, ensuring the development of information and communication technologies, information infrastructure, as well as the training of qualified personnel; – Ensuring activities and efficient management of the implementation of information and communication technologies.
Moscow	State program of Moscow 'Information City' for 2012-2018 ('Smart City' for 2019-2021)	2012 – 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of the quality of life of Muscovites, creation of favourable conditions for business and other activities through the use of digital technologies; – Centralized, end-to-end transparent management of the city of Moscow, based on big data and the use of artificial intelligence technologies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determination of long-term development paths of digital technologies, formation of unified principles and standards of their implementation in all spheres of life in Moscow; – Creation and implementation of the efficient mechanisms and urban solutions using digital technologies in all urban areas;

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of efficiency of public spending, including the introduction of public-private partnerships in the field of digital technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of favorable conditions for the development of digital technologies in Moscow, reducing administrative barriers, contributing to the competitiveness and investment attractiveness of Moscow; Ensuring equitable access for individuals and legal entities, as well as Moscow's executive authorities, to modern digital infrastructure and environment; Provision of personalized public e-services, improvement of their quality and strengthening the role of digital technologies in ensuring the life of Moscow at the level of world standards.
Primorsky Krai	State Program of Primorsky Krai 'Information Society'	2020 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming a new technological basis and enhancement of efficiency of public administration for economic and social development, including increasing the level of interaction of citizens and commercial organizations with public authorities of Primorsky Krai, local authorities and budgetary institutions, carried out digitally by at least 55% by 2027; Ensuring accessibility of quality public and municipal services, providing 98% of citizens with access to public and municipal services on a one-stop basis at their place of residence, including Multifunctional Public Services Centers for public and municipal services; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a favorable legal regime for the development of digital economy and improvement of the accessibility and quality of state and municipal services through the wider use of modern information technologies; Development of the information infrastructure of social institutions, as well as public telecommunication infrastructure to improve the availability and quality of services and the living standard, create prerequisites for accelerated economic growth and increase investment potential; Development of digital skills and improvement of IT and communications training by assisting educational institutions to develop new educational programs;

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring equal access of the population to the media sphere, shaping the information space, taking into account the needs of citizens and society for quality and reliable information, increasing the share of information, including on social media, to engage a target audience of at least 300,000 followers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of research competencies and technological reserves, increasing the level of informatization of processes for the provision of state and municipal services; Development of means of electronic interaction with the authorities, business through web interfaces and mobile applications; Achieving a level of security for individuals, society and the state against internal and external information threats; Improvement of the efficiency of budget spending by pursuing a unified technical policy in the area while addressing key socio-economic development objectives of Primorsky Krai; Increasing the proportion of socially relevant information that corresponds to the state's priorities in the field of media information policy in Primorsky Krai; Development and preservation of the regional information space, taking into account new technologies of mass communication; Development of mechanisms for state support provided on a competitive basis to media projects in Primorsky Krai.

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
Altai Krai	State program 'Digital Development of the Altai Krai's Economy and Information Environment'	2020 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of conditions for the digital development of the Altai Krai's economy and information environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforming the Altai Krai's priority economic and social sectors, including healthcare, education, industry, agriculture, construction, urban economy, transport and energy infrastructure, through the adoption of end-to-end digital technologies and platform solutions; Provision of information support for the socio-economic, cultural and technological development of Altai Krai.

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
Republic of Dagestan	State Program of the Republic of Dagestan 'Development of the Information and Communication Infrastructure of the Republic of Dagestan'	2017 – 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of the public life quality through the use of information and communication technologies; – Creation of conditions to ensure equal access to information and communication technologies; – Creation of favorable environment for the development and improvement of the quality of life; – Improvement of the efficiency of public administration through digital transformation of public administration and priority sectors of the economy; – Improvement of the quality and promptness of provision of state and municipal services to citizens and organizations in the Republic of Dagestan with information and communication technologies; – Development of a national Data Centre system that provides accessible, stable, secure and cost-effective data storage and processing services to the state, businesses and citizens; – Ensuring efficient budgetary control at all planning stages; – Ensuring the achievement of objectives, indicators and results of the Russian federal projects; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creation and implementation of end-to-end digital technologies primarily based on home-grown technologies; – Implementation of regional activities aimed at promotion of regional goods and services for the benefit of regional organizations developing and implementing domestic information and communication technologies; – Ensuring a gradual transition of the state and local authorities to the use of the e-government infrastructure, which is a part of the information infrastructure of the Republic of Dagestan; – Promotion of electronic document management projects in organizations; – Creation of conditions for increasing confidence in electronic documents, identification and authentication of participants in legal relations in electronic form; – Creation of conditions to ensure the protection of state information resources and information systems; – Creation of a unified information space for the public authorities of the Republic of Dagestan that meets modern management and security standards.

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforming priority sectors of the economy and social sphere through the introduction of digital technologies and platform solutions, end-to-end technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and maintenance of the infrastructure of the interdepartmental interaction e-system; Development of mechanisms for interactive interaction with public and business community and promotion of the adoption of information technologies; Providing IT-based monitoring and analysis of socio-economic, socio-political and emergency situations in Crimea; Ensuring the protection of information in public executive authorities, local authorities of municipalities, enterprises, institutions and organizations subordinate to the public executive authorities; Ensuring effective inter-agency information exchange using the inter-agency data transfer network; Creation of conditions for the efficient operation of media outlets whose founder's authority is exercised by the Ministry of Internal Policy, Information and Communications of the Republic of Crimea; Informing the population of the Republic of Crimea through the media, ensuring accessibility to socially relevant information;
Republic of Crimea	State Program of the Republic of Crimea 'Information Society'	2018 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The benefits to citizens and organizations from the use of information and telecommunications technologies through equal access to information resources, development of digital content, application of innovative technologies, drastic improvement in the efficiency of public administration while ensuring security in the information society. 	

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Formation and promotion of a positive image of Crimea;– Formation of a modern information and telecommunication infrastructure and the provision of quality services on its basis;– Development of information and communication infrastructure;– Introduction of satellite navigation technologies using the GLONASS system and other results of space activity in the interests of socio-economic and innovative development of the Republic of Crimea;– Formation of an information space, taking into account the needs of citizens and society for quality and reliable information;– Creation and application of Russian information and communication technologies;– Formation of a new technological basis for economic and social development;– Securing national interests in the digital economy;– Implementation of priority scenarios for the development of the information society.

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	State Program of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) 'Development of the Information Society for 2020-2024'	2020 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvement of the quality of public life and availability of information resources and services through the use of modern ICT technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementation of public policy in the field of media, communications and information and communication technologies; – Expanding public access to the media environment, supporting regional media; – Ensuring equal access to information services for citizens and organizations on the basis of a well-developed telecommunication infrastructure; – Ensuring that emergency services can be called out by '112'.

Region	Name	Implementation period	Goals	Tasks
Republic of Tatarstan	State Program of the Republic of Tatarstan 'Development of Information and Communication Technologies 'Open Tatarstan' for 2014-2022'	2014 – 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Introduction and wide use of informations and communications and innovative technologies in all areas of activity, creation of a unified information society of the Republic of Tatarstan and integration of the Republic of Tatarstan into the global information society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing citizens and organizations with access to state, municipal and socially important services on the basis of information and communication technologies; – Improvement of the quality of education, housing and utilities services, culture, life safety and social protection through the development and use of information and telecommunication technologies; – Improvement of the efficiency of public administration and interaction between state and local authorities and civil society in the Republic of Tatarstan; – Information protection in public authorities and local authorities of the Republic of Tatarstan; – Formation of a modern information and telecommunication infrastructure and the provision of quality services on its basis; – Development of communication and telecommunication systems for the needs of public and municipal administration; – Increasing the role of the media in the formation of civil society in the Republic of Tatarstan, the formation of universal human values in the Republic, and the preservation and development of the national cultures of peoples living in the Republic of Tatarstan; – Promotion of the IT sector development; – Developing the system of provision of state and municipal services in multifunctional centers for state and municipal services in the Republic of Tatarstan.

Based on the analysis of the tasks of these programs, priority categories have been identified related to addressing the challenges of the digital divide in the regions. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

**Priority areas of elimination of the digital divide
in the federal subjects of the Russian Federation
(based on the analysis of state programmes of the subjects)**

At present, almost in all federal subjects analysed, the priority is to advance and improve the quality of the ‘population-executive authorities’ interaction, as well as to ensure the access by citizens and organizations to public and municipal services through ICTs. The state program of the Kaliningrad region and the current program ‘Development of Information and Communication Technologies in the Republic of Tatarstan’ are aimed at improving the quality of state and municipal government. The authorities of the Republic of Crimea⁴,

⁴ State program of the Republic of Crimea ‘Information Society’. Available from: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/446680303>

Republic of Dagestan⁵, Kaliningrad region⁶ and the Primorsky Krai⁷ are focused on these tasks as well.

The indicators of the program of Altai Krai⁸ include such criteria as ‘the level of provision of residents with local print media’ and ‘access of the population to the broadcast of the regional TV channel Katun 24’, however, the key indicators are ‘the share of interactions of citizens and commercial organizations with the executive authorities of the Altai Krai and local governments, public property organizations of the Altai Krai and municipal property, carried out digitally’ as well as ‘the number of views of the official website of the Government of the Altai Krai’⁹.

The analysis of the documents shows that the state programmes of the certain regions are fully devoted to the problem of promoting and improving the quality of interaction between the population and the executive authorities, as well as ensuring access of citizens and organizations to state and municipal services through ICT. In particular, this is the case with the documents of Altai Krai: the objectives of its current programme are to ‘increase the transparency of the activities of the executive authorities, local governments and improve the administrative and management processes in these bodies; improve the accessibility and quality of public and municipal services for the public and business through the use of modern ICT; improve the efficiency of the civil and municipal service, as well as the performance of public civil and municipal employees’¹⁰. Similar situation is observed in the Republics of Crimea and Tatarstan, where six out of nine tasks of the state programs are associated with improving the quality and accessibility of the state and municipal services, as well as the efficiency of the state and municipal government in the context

⁵ State Program of the Republic of Dagestan ‘Development of Information and Communication Infrastructure of the Republic of Dagestan’. Available from: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/445095685>

⁶ State program of the Kaliningrad region ‘Digital Transformation in the Kaliningrad Region’. Available from: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/561539248>

⁷ State program of the Primorsky region ‘Information Society’. Available from: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/561434379>

⁸ State program ‘Digital development of the economy and information environment of the Altai Krai’. Available from: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/561699005>

⁹ State program ‘Improvement of state and municipal government in the Altai Krai’. Available from: <https://www.altairegion22.ru/gov/administration/isp/uprgosslu/gosprogramma-sovershenstvovanie-upravleniya/>

¹⁰ State program ‘Improvement of state and municipal government in the Altai Krai’. Available from: <https://www.altairegion22.ru/gov/administration/isp/uprgosslu/gosprogramma-sovershenstvovanie-upravleniya/>

of digitalization. The development of information and communication infrastructure, as well as ensuring equal access of citizens and organizations to information services on its basis is a priority for most regions included into our sample – Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Republic of Crimea, Republic of Tatarstan, as well as the Primorsky Krai and Moscow.

Not to such extent, but still sufficient attention in governmental programs focused on overcoming the problems of digital divide, is given to the support and adaptation to the digital environment of the regional media in order to increase their role in informing the population and, most importantly, in the formation of civil society. Four out of eight analyzed programs include items related to the training of qualified personnel, geared towards ensuring efficient management in the implementation of ICTs and communications. In particular, in the state program of the Primorsky Krai ‘Information Society’ the focus falls on improving the system of training IT-specialists; in the Kaliningrad region – personnel training for work in the area of information and communication technologies; and in the documents ‘Development of information and communication infrastructure of the Republic of Dagestan’ and ‘State program of the Republic of Crimea ‘Information Society’– development and implementation of domestic information and communication technologies.

However, the analysis revealed that little attention is currently given to the problem of increasing the population’s media literacy at the regional level (See *Figure 1*). The only program to include this item is the state program of the Primorsky Krai ‘Information Society’ for 2020-2027, which combines it with the task focused on the training of IT-specialists. Its wording is as follows: ‘development of digital skills and improvement if the training of information technology and communications professionals by assisting educational institutions in the development of new educational programs’.

To sum up, it can be concluded that in most of the regions studied, the authorities are primarily focused on overcoming the first level of the digital divide, that is they seek to expand the citizens’ access to modern information and communication infrastructure, state and municipal digital services. However, the skills and ability to use them have not yet become priorities in the state documents of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation.

Digital media literacy: Theoretical approaches in the Russian context

The concept of media literacy, which originally emerged as a result of the spread and growing popularity of cinematography and television, together with the

awareness of the need to introduce new educational programs to understand them, has been given new meanings over the recent decades (Fedorov, 2004; Lapin, 2020). The term ‘media literacy’ has been used in the international research since 1970s, but for a long time it coexisted with concepts such as functional, audiovisual and information literacy (Houk, Bogart, 1974; Sharikov, 2013). The term ‘information literacy’ made its way into academic discourse in 1970s, when foreign scholars first underlined the importance of individuals learning a new set of skills, including the ability to identify and use information (Burchinal, 1976; Hamelink, 1976; Owens, 1976).

In 1989, the Association of American Libraries defined the basic competencies of an information literate person: the ability to locate, evaluate, recognize and effectively use the information needed to perform any task or make any decision¹¹. These skills have subsequently also been enshrined in a number of important international documents: The Prague Declaration ‘Towards an Information Literate Society’ (2003)¹², The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning (2005)¹³, Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2011)¹⁴.

The process of IT and media digitalization together with the emergence of the new types of media introduced the need for individuals to acquire new competencies that can not only give them access to information materials, but also help them create the types and formats of digital media content they need for personal and professional purposes, as well as avoid possible risks in the digital information space. In 1997, Paul Gilster coined the term ‘digital literacy’, referring to the skill to critically comprehend and analyze information produced by computer technology. Subsequently, the concept has been articulated in the academic community as the meaningful use of digital technology by humans as a tool for access, integration and synthesis of information resources, knowledge acquisition and communication (Kress, 2003; Martin, 2006; Waks, 2006).

¹¹ Evaluating Information: Information Literacy. Available from: <https://libguides.ala.org/InformationEvaluation/Infolit>

¹² The Prague Declaration ‘Towards an Information Literate Society’ (2003). Available from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/PragueDeclaration.pdf>

¹³ The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning (2005). Available from: <https://www.ifla.org/publications/beacons-of-the-information-society-the-alexandria-proclamation-on-information-literacy>

¹⁴ Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy. Available from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/news/Fez%20Declaration.pdf>

Though, at the professional level, the concepts of media literacy and information literacy have been treated independently for many years, computer literacy and technology skills served as key linking elements. In 2007, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) proposed to merge the concepts and to use them exclusively as ‘media and information literacy’ in the future. This combined notion should encompass all competencies, including digital and technological literacy. According to the IFLA Media and Information Literacy Guidelines, it is not only a fundamental human right in an ever-evolving digital, interdependent global world, but also an essential tool for bridging the information (digital) divide¹⁵.

This study focuses specifically on digital skills and competencies, which could be formed not only through the practical activities of each user, but also through the implementation of media education programs developed within the framework of media education models in Russia. In this context, media education is considered as an intrinsic instrument to overcome the digital divide at various levels by adapting the historical experience of cinema education, information literacy and embracing each of the three levels of digital inequality (Gladkova, Garifullin, Ragnedda, 2019). These include the level of access to the Internet and ICT, the level of digital competencies of users and digital literacy and the level of social benefits users gain from competent and critical use of digital technologies in social and private life.

At the first level, most users need to access the Internet and understand the basic concepts associated with the Internet use, such as traffic, speed, provider, etc.; as well as technical issues related to the use of ICT. Accordingly, it is important to introduce the existing practical-utilitarian models of media education, developed in 1935-1955 to train people in the use of technologies. At the second level, users need skills to quickly search for the necessary information on the Internet and use online resources for personal and professional purposes, which in the framework of media education could be considered as core media competencies. The third level deals with social benefits, users might gain through the implementation of sociocultural models of media education. Sociocultural model has been developing since 1986 and is in its essence the latest existing model of the Russian media education. In addition to the above said it should be noted that media education allows the user not only to effectively use the Internet and ICTs, but also to develop as a full-fledged participant in the digital environment.

¹⁵ IFLA recommendations on media and information literacy. Available from: <https://ifap.ru/ofdocs/ifla/ifla16.pdf>

However, the implementation of media education in Russia has been closely related to official government policies at the federal and regional levels. In order to identify the aims and main focus of the policies to develop media literacy, a study of the legislative documents of eight federal subjects of the Russian Federation (Moscow, Republic of Crimea, Primorsky Krai, Altai Krai, Kaliningrad Region, Republic of Tatarstan, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Republic of Dagestan) was conducted in late 2020/early 2021. A number of state official and industrial, professional documents and programs has been selected. The first group of documents includes the State Information Society Program¹⁶ and 'Strategy, goals, objectives and methods of information education for children and young people' by the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media¹⁷. The second group includes the Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy¹⁸, the RAEC Manifesto 'The Russian Internet in the 21st Century: Child Safety'¹⁹ and several other documents. This collective approach by governmental and professional organizations to developing public media literacy is a result of the co-regulatory efforts, actively used by states to combat misinformation.

The need to develop media literacy is now recognized internationally, as confirmed by official documents (UNESCO, IFLA, etc.). However, the solution to this problem in practice directly depends on the national regulation and information policy. Improving media literacy is a priority in the State Information Society Program, but limited access to ICTs and an insufficient level of citizens' skills require systematic work at all levels to achieve this objective.

During the meeting on technology development in the field of artificial intelligence on May 30, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed the need to provide digital education and introduce retraining programs in digital technologies. In December 2019, as part of the federal project 'Workforce for the

¹⁶ State Information Society Program. Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4137/>

¹⁷ 'Strategy, goals, objectives and methods of information education for children and young people'. Available from: https://rkn.gov.ru/docs/Razdel_20_konceptija_2901.pdf

¹⁸ The Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy. Available from: http://ifapcom.ru/files/News/Images/2012/mil/Moscow_Declaration_on_MIL_rus.pdf

¹⁹ The RAEC Manifesto 'The Russian Internet in the 21st Century: Child Safety'. Available from: <http://old.raec.ru/upload/files/>

Digital Economy’, an official digital literacy educational resource was launched to educate citizens on the use of digital technologies, in particular, helping them master key principles of information security²⁰. According to project objectives, 10 million people are expected to benefit from digital literacy programs by 2024.

In spring 2020, as part of the national program ‘Digital Economy in the Russian Federation’, an educational event called ‘Digital Dictation’ was held in all regions of the Russian Federation. The aim of the campaign was to test Russian citizens in two age categories (14-18 years old; 18 and over) online to identify the level of their digital skills and competences. The average level of digital literacy among participants (330,148 people) was 72.5 per cent²¹. In October 2020, a digital literacy education project was launched on the basis of the ‘Digital Dictation’ to remedy the lack of computer competencies among the population of the Russian Federation. At the professional level, Russia has also adopted draft media literacy programs, which are largely based on the UNESCO-approved Media Education concept²². The programs were implemented as part of the UNAOC (The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) international media education portal and focused mainly on media and information literacy for children and youth but were not embedded in the broader context of addressing the digital divide.

As part of the study, the texts of official documents (State Information Society Program and Strategy, goals, objectives and methods of information education for children and young people), professional documents (Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, RAEC Manifesto ‘The Russian Internet in the 21st Century: Child Safety’, etc.) and texts of federal programs (Workforce for the Digital Economy, Digital Dictation, etc.) have been studied. Based on the content analysis of the texts, we believe the following factors can be considered obstacles to the development of relevant competencies among Russians: underdeveloped digital infrastructure, remaining digital divide, insufficient attention to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Russia, which in fact is unique and can hardly be found elsewhere in the world, legal restrictions on access, ownership and dissemination of information,

²⁰ Educational resource ‘Digital literacy’. Available from: цифроваяграмотность.рф

²¹ All-Russian educational campaign to determine the level of digital literacy. Available from: <https://digitaldictation.ru>

²² Media Education – UNESCO. Available from: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1653&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

the problem of long-term storage of personal information in digital formats, lack of interagency cooperation and interdisciplinary interaction between stakeholders.

In order to examine the media literacy orientation of the regions studied, we carried out a monitoring of the media and official websites of the state institutions (Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, The State Duma of the Russian Federation, etc.). The study revealed a significant quantitative gap in the mentions of the key words ‘media literacy’ and ‘digital literacy’. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Media and digital literacy mentions in the media and on official websites of government officials

In short, the frequency analysis identified the problem of inconsistency of terminology in the texts. At the state level, the term ‘digital literacy’ is predominantly used and the objectives of federal programs are aimed at developing digital competencies of citizens, while in the professional Russian

community the term ‘digital literacy’ is seen as part of a broader concept – ‘media and information literacy’. Thus, the analysis of the texts of federal programs of developing media literacy, as well as a monitoring of the media and information from official institutions to identify the use of terminology, revealed a significant discrepancy, both in the definition of terms ‘media literacy’, ‘information literacy’ and ‘digital literacy’ and in the methods and approaches of outreach. We believe that media literacy, being a crucial tool for overcoming the digital divide in Russia, is becoming difficult to tackle due to the lack of uniform, federally approved standards and project requirements. This underlines the importance of the state policy aimed at overcoming digital divide and increasing the level of media and digital literacy, which we will examine closely in the next part of the paper.

‘Digital passport’ of the Russian regions

Having analyzed the current state of the regulatory mechanisms and media/digital literacy development trends in several federal subjects of the Russian Federation, we revealed a need for a clear and consistent tool to describe, monitor and fully understand ongoing digitalization progress in the country. We believe a ‘digital passport’, combining a number of characteristics important for each region, could be a good instrument here, allowing for inner- and cross-regional analysis and comparisons – in the digital divide context and in the broader context as well. ‘Digital passport’, as we envision it, should include the following data:

- *national demographic data* (population size; male and female population; presence/absence of titular nations; most common languages in public use)
- *legal information* (federal documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies; local documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies; reports on the implementation of digitalization programs; priority areas of digitalization; presence/absence of state or local programs of digital divide elimination)
- *digital saturation of the region* (Internet penetration rate; average cost of provider services; available Internet access speed; average daily Internet audience; data on digital resources use in the region; regional features of digitalization. i.e. main priority areas)
- *digital literacy of the region* (level of computerization; data on the appeal to the online public services of state organizations excluding

small businesses; level of computer literacy; presence/absence of online platforms dedicated to the activities of the government, the head of the region and local authorities; online platforms allowing the population to participate in regional development issues solution)

As part of this study, we tested the model of ‘digital passport’ in eight federal subjects of Russia: Moscow, Republic of Tatarstan, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Republic of Crimea, Primorsky Krai, Altai Krai, Kaliningrad region and Republic of Dagestan. Most data such as population size, presence/absence of titular nations, most common languages in public use, federal and local documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies, Internet penetration rate, average cost of the provider services, available Internet access speed, regional features of digitalization and all criteria of digital literacy were available in open sources.

Still, some criteria were impossible to examine because of absence of the open statistics, although we suppose regional governments might have access to them. The most complete data were found for the Russian capital, probably due to it being the most digitally developed city in Russia. While the Republic of Dagestan turned out to be the region with the least amount of data available in open sources. It is important to mention that some of the regions, such as Primorsky Krai and Republic of Dagestan, do not have any local documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies in open sources, which allows to conclude that their local digitalization processes are regulated only by federal documents and laws. Furthermore, only Moscow region provides open access information about the federal state or local programs of overcoming digital divide. To assess the digital saturation of the region we used the data provided by *Yandex*, *Mediascope*, *TNS*, *NAFI* and *Federal State Statistics Service*, although some of them (*Yandex* and *NAFI*) contains outdated data. Moreover, only one criterion, that is statistics on digital resources use in the region, was not available in open sources.

Data provided by the *Federal State Statistics Service*, *Digital Dictation* reports and open government resources were used as data source on digital literacy. It was discovered that the Republic of Tatarstan ranks first in the level of regional computerization criterium (99.7 per cent), Moscow is on the second place (99.4 per cent) and Altai Krai is on the third place (96.2 per cent). The least computerized region is the Republic of Dagestan (62.7 per

cent). According to the statistics on the appeal to the online public services of the state organizations Moscow keeps the first place (84.4 per cent), followed by the Republic of Tatarstan (80.7 per cent) and Altai Krai (79.5 per cent). The Republic of Dagestan is once again in last place (43.1 per cent). All the mentioned regions maintain online platforms covering the activities of the government, the head of the region and local authorities and online platforms, allowing the population to participate in debates and decision making of regional development issues solution. In the digital literacy level first place belongs to Kaliningrad region (7.53 out of 10 points), Moscow is the second leading state (7.33 out of 10 points), followed closely by the Republic of Tatarstan (7.31 out of 10 points). The last place is taken by the Republic of Dagestan (6.56 out of 10 points).

As an example of digital passport use we provide data of two mentioned regions: Moscow as the region with the most developed digital infrastructure and Republic of Dagestan as the least digitally developed region in the sample. The table below (see *Table 2*) shows the differences in all the indicators mentioned above and allows to see the contrast between the states of digital development of the Russian capital and the regions.

Table 2

‘Digital passports’ of Moscow and the Republic of Dagestan

Indicators			
National Demographic data	Region	Moscow	Republic of Dagestan
	Population size (Rosstat data)	12 678 079	3 110 858
	Male and female population	No data available	No data available
	Presence/absence of titular nations	None	14 nationalities (no titular nations)
	Most common languages in public use	Russian	Russian, Avar, Agul, Azeri, Dargin, Kumyk, Lak, Lezghin, Nogai, Rutul, Tabasaran, Tat, Tsakhur, Chechen

Legal information	Federal documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies	<p>1. Federal Law 'On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection' of July 27, 2006 N 149-FZ (last edition)²³.</p> <p>2. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation 'On approval of the state program' Information Society (2011-2020)²⁴. + Order on amendments²⁵.</p> <p>3. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of May 9, 2017 N 203 'On the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017-2030'²⁶.</p> <p>4. Strategy for the development of the information technology industry in the Russian Federation for 2014 - 2020 and for the future until 2025 (clause 12. Improving the literacy of the population in the field of information technology)²⁷.</p> <p>5. Order of the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation 'On holding an open tender for the right to conclude a state contract for the implementation of research work on the topic: 'Assessment of the current state and prospects of changing the level of media literacy of the population of the Russian Federation on the basis of national monitoring of media behavior. Development of criteria for an in-depth assessment of the population's media literacy, including the quality of information consumption'²⁸.</p>
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²³ Federal Law 'On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection' of July 27, 2006 N 149-FZ (last edition). Available from: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_61798/

²⁴ Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation 'On approval of the state program' Information Society (2011-2020). Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4137/>

²⁵ Order on amendments. Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/3596/> <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/557063853>

²⁶ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of May 9, 2017 N 203 'On the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017-2030'. Available from: <http://base.garant.ru/71670570/#ixzz6cuhlugZ9>

²⁷ Strategy for the development of the information technology industry in the Russian Federation for 2014 - 2020 and for the future until 2025 (clause 12. Improving the literacy of the population in the field of information technology). Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4084/>

²⁸ Order of the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation. Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4314/>

		<p>6. Reform of universal communication services²⁹.</p> <p>7. Federal Law 'On Amendments to the Federal Law' On Communications 'dated 03.02.2014 N 9-Φ3 (last edition)³⁰. (The task of eliminating the digital inequality between residents of urban and the rural population was set in the Federal Law (FZ) 'On Communications.' On February 3, 2014, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin signed Federal Law No. 9 'On Amendments to the Federal Law' On Communications ', which provides for the creation of access points in settlements numbering from 250 to 500 people and providing the population with access to the Internet at a speed of at least 10 Mbit / s.)</p> <p>8. Order of the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation 'On approval of the List of sites of the information and telecommunication network 'Internet', access to which is provided by the universal service operator free of charge³¹.</p> <p>9. Distribution of subsidies provided in 2014 from the federal budget to the budgets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation for the implementation of projects aimed at the formation of the information society in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, carried out under the state program of the Russian Federation 'Information Society (2011 - 2020)³².</p>
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²⁹ Reform of universal communication services Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/activity/directions/193/>

³⁰ Federal Law 'On Amendments to the Federal Law' On Communications 'dated 03.02.2014 N 9-Φ3 (last edition). Available from: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_158410/

³¹ Order of the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation 'On approval of the List of sites of the information and telecommunication network 'Internet'.

Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4761/>

³² Distribution of subsidies provided in 2014 from the federal budget to the budgets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation for the implementation of projects. Available from: <https://digital.gov.ru/ru/documents/4392/>

	Local documents regulating the process of digitalization and implementation of digital technologies	The final document of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference 'Media and Information Literacy in the Information Society' ³³ . Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (since 2012) ³⁴ .	No data available
	Reports on the implementation of digitalization programs	No data available	No data available
	Priority areas of digitalization	Strategy, goals, objectives and methods of information education for children and adolescents (published by Roskomnadzor) ³⁵ . RAEC Manifesto 'Russian Internet in the XXI Century: Child Safety' ³⁶ .	No data available

³³ The final document of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference 'Media and Information Literacy in the Information Society'. Available from: http://www.ifapcom.ru/files/News/Images/2013/mil/mil_decl_rus_2013.pdf

³⁴ Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (since 2012). Available from: http://ifapcom.ru/files/News/Images/2012/mil/Moscow_Declaration_on_MIL_rus.pdf

<https://iite.unesco.org/ru/mig/>

³⁵ Strategy, goals, objectives and methods of information education for children and adolescents (published by Roskomnadzor). Available from: https://rkn.gov.ru/docs/Razdel_20_koncepcija_2901.pdf

³⁶ RAEC Manifesto 'Russian Internet in the XXI Century: Child Safety'. Available from: <http://old.raec.ru/upload/files/>

Theorizing Russian model of the digital divide

	Presence/absence of state or local programs of digital divide elimination	Project 'Media' of Rosmolodezh (direction 'Involvement of youth in the work of the media (youth media)') ³⁷ . 'Media Literacy for Teachers' program of the Faculty of Pedagogical Education, Moscow State University (2020) ³⁸ .	Federal project aimed at increasing the level of digital literacy (DG) of residents of Russia (launch in Dagestan, 2016) ³⁹ .
Digital saturation of the region	Internet penetration rate	79 per cent	67 per cent
	Average cost of provider services	400 rubles per month	613 rubles per month
	Available Internet access speed	35 Mb per second	22 Mb per second
	Average daily Internet audience	All-Russian data from MediaScope: 73% of the population is the audience of the Runet	No data available
	Data on digital resources use in the region	None	No data available
	Regional features of digitalization. i.e. main priority areas	Urban environment, digital mobility, urban economy, safety and ecology, digital government, human and social capital	Communications, healthcare, urban environment, construction, human resources and education
Digital literacy of the region	Level of computerization	99,4 per cent	62,7 per cent
	Data on the appeal to the online public services of state organizations excluding small businesses	84,4 per cent	43,1 per cent

³⁷ Project 'Media' of Rosmolodezh (direction 'Involvement of youth in the work of the media (youth media)'). Available from: <https://fadm.gov.ru/activity/scope/5/details>

³⁸ Media Literacy for Teachers' program of the Faculty of Pedagogical Education, Moscow State University (2020). Available from: <http://fpo.msu.ru/index.php/2-uncategorised/314-mediagramotnost-dlya-prepodavatelej>

³⁹ Federal project aimed at increasing the level of digital literacy (DG) of residents of Russia (launch in Dagestan, 2016). Available from: <https://www.rspectr.com/novosti/47650/povyshenie-urovnya-cifrovoi-gramotnosti>

	Level of computer literacy	7,33 out of 10 points	6,56 out of 10 points
	Presence/absence of online platforms dedicated to the activities of the government, the head of the region and local authorities	https://www.mos.ru/	http://www.e-dag.ru/
	Activity of heads of subjects and their dialogue with the population in social networks	High	Low
	Online platforms allowing the population to participate in regional development issues solution	Aktivniy grazhdanin ⁴⁰	Active citizen of the Republic of Dagestan ⁴¹ .

Concluding, we argue that the use of a ‘digital passport’ as an instrument to monitor regional digital divide could help to identify current trends and reveal shortfalls in digitalization processes in the regions of Russia, in order to further contribute to the development of state policies and combating digital divide. It might also allow for better understanding of the unique digital divide model in the country. The main advantage of a ‘digital passport’ model is that it can be easily adapted for every region with certain amendments depending on specific digital development features in each region. The use of four-component and multi-criteria structure of the ‘digital passport’ allows to study digital divide issue in Russia as a complex phenomenon, and to provide clear guidance for addressing this issue, tailored to the developmental characteristics of each region.

Conclusion and recommendations

Given significant differences in geographic, economic, cultural and societal terms typical for Russia, the problem of the ‘digital divide’ is a natural phenomenon for the country. Earlier studies on digital inequalities in Russia showed a correlation between the first and the second levels of the digital divide

⁴⁰ Aktivniy grazhdanin. Available from: <https://ag.mos.ru/home>

⁴¹ Active citizen of the Republic of Dagestan. Available from: <https://ag.e-dag.ru/>

(Gladkova, & Ragnedda, 2020). In this case, some regions (for instance Far Eastern federal district) lacking behind by access can be the country's leaders by digital literacy, and vice versa – regions with good access and infrastructure availability can lag far behind by digital literacy index, e.g. Volga federal district (ibid). Previous research on Russia also articulated the important role of policy-making mechanisms in building a sustainable and efficiently developing society (Vartanova, 2001), which is particularly important given the specific character of Russia. However, as is revealed in this study, despite state involvement on both federal and regional levels aimed at minimizing digital inequality in the country, federal subjects still differ from each other significantly, when it comes to the spread and availability of ICTs, access to the Internet, population-state authority interaction, the use of state services online, etc.

We argue therefore in this paper that Russia represents an interesting and in many ways unique model of the digital divide due to its sociocultural, economic, political specifics, policy mechanisms, traditionally important role of the state, even climatic and geographical conditions that can affect availability of infrastructure in remote areas (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019). Having analyzed digital literacy and media literacy in a broad cross-regional comparative perspective; state regulation of digitalization processes in Russia on federal and regional levels; and specific mechanisms for the analysis and further overcoming digital divide in the country, we believe a number of recommendations can be suggested to federal and local authorities for further bridging digital gap in the country.

First, we found out that in almost all federal subjects analysed, the priority is to advance and improve the quality of the population-state authority interaction, as well as to ensure that citizens and organizations have access to public and municipal services through ICTs. Much has been done in this respect, and a lot of programs in the Russian regions are aimed at improving accessibility, immediacy and quality of state and municipal e-services to the population, supporting digital economy development on a regional level, stimulating online communication between citizens and local authorities, and much more. However, the analysis showed that little attention is currently given to the problem of increasing the population's media literacy at the regional level. In this regard, we should reiterate the need for straightforward actions aimed at developing media education programs for all social, cultural, professional and age groups of the Russian population.

Second, closer attention should be given to increasing digital skills and competencies of Russian Internet users. Our study revealed the problem of

inconsistency of terminology, with the term ‘digital literacy’ being predominantly used at the state level to mark the importance of the digital competencies development, and the term ‘media and information literacy’ being widely used in the professional Russian community as a broad term, which among other things encompasses ‘digital literacy’ concept. Still, regardless of the inconsistency of terminology, all analyzed federal and regional level documents and programs stress the importance of the digital skills development to ensure Russian Internet users can fully benefit – both professionally and personally – from being online. We believe an important field to develop here is media education: educational programs for students of secondary and high schools, specialized programs for adults, retired people and maybe even preschoolers can play a significant role in overcoming digital divide of the second level in Russia.

Lastly, we believe the use of a ‘digital passport’ model that we proposed in this study can be useful for all regions of the Russian Federation and possibly for other countries. We believe that ‘digital passport’ while providing a detailed overview of all three levels of the digital divide (access; skills; benefits from using Internet and ICTs) can be used both by scholars and policy makers engaged in developing strategies for overcoming digital divide, fostering digital inclusion and increasing digital capital (Gladkova, Vartanova, & Ragnedda, 2020) of Russian Internet users. Furthermore, as noted above, the main advantage of the ‘digital passport’ is its potential to be easily adapted for every national/regional context depending on specific digital development features in each region, which makes ‘digital passport’ a universal model for the analysis of digital inequalities in a broader sense.

Concluding, we assume that digital gap will remain an issue in Russia, at least in the short term, regardless of the discussed above policies intended to overcome the divide. The reason lies in considerable differences between Russian regions in terms of Internet penetration rate, daily audience numbers, the cost and speed of connection, etc. A set of ‘objective factors’ related to the specific character of Russia (distances, climatic and geographical conditions, urbanization level, socioeconomic conditions, cost of laying optic fibre cables in remote parts of the country, etc.) may influence all three levels of the digital divide in the country and result in some regions being more technologically advanced than the others (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019). In this case, the use of a ‘digital passport’ model can solve several problems: understanding digital divide as a two-sided problem, technological and social one; increasing the efficiency of the state policies to overcome digital divide by enforcing population-state authority interaction; revealing main problems and weaknesses typical for

each particular region; and finally suggesting measures for overcoming digital inequality, one of which might be placing high priority on media education and digital literacy programs aimed at bridging the digital gap.

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ARTICLES

Government and youth communications in social media: Theoretical basics and Russian practice¹

Anna Gureeva²

Denis Dunas

Olga Muronets

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

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Abstract

Today's media audience, especially young audience, is often described as apolitical, and their activity in social media on various social and cultural issues is not regarded as political activism. However, the content and forms of political participation have by now undergone a substantial transformation. This paper studies the issue of sociocultural determinacy of modern political activism using Russia's youth as an example, its focus on social change in everyday life, and the practices for interaction between the government and young people in modern Russia. The paper contains the findings of a study of official accounts of Russian government institutions and a survey among young Russian journalism students on their social and political media activism and their interest in communicating with the government through social media.

Keywords

Media activism, mediatization, political communication, young people, social media, social networks.

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² **Corresponding author:**

Anna Gureeva, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Journalism, 9, Mokhovaya st, Moscow, Russia.
Email: gureevan@gmail.com

Introduction

In an era of widespread digital media communication technology, academic interest in the interaction between the political sphere and young people is obvious. Political communication of young people in digital media may have either a constructive or a potentially destructive impact on the society, when it comes to the implementation of normative social and political processes. Young people are clearly an essential part of the electoral system and the talent pool for the society's political institutions. Young people's interest in politics is evaluated and interpreted in different ways.

According to the Levada Center, more than 80% of young Russians are not interested in politics³. On the other hand, sociological studies suggest that young people feel a pressing need to participate in Russia's social and political life, and this need has been particularly strong in recent years⁴. The youth of today – not only in Russia – put a greater focus on social change, which manifests itself in their everyday practices, including media consumption and media activism.

As a matter of fact, conventional ways of drawing young people into mainstream politics, such as voting in elections or affiliation with a political party, are losing their relevance, as they do not offer a possibility for actual political engagement among youth. At the same time, a continuing downward trend in young people's participation in the electoral process (Franklin et al., 2004; Putnam, 2000; Vartanova, 2018; Zakharkin, 2012) does not necessarily mean that they have lost interest in politics, as many researchers suggest, but that the nature of civic and political engagement for young people has changed (Harris et al., 2010).

Political participation of today's youth is described as 'that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in' (Vromen, 2003). In fact, it is about the sociocultural determinacy of politics and understanding it very pragmatically, including as a combination of actions and decisions that can change the world around us for the better and improve the quality of life in line with the current concerns and world views of young people and the community that they represent.

Apparently, social media is the ideal environment where young people can perform their socially oriented actions. Many researchers confirm not only the

³ Available from: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2020/04/29/829352-molodezhi-ravnodushni>

⁴ Available from: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/molodyozhnyj-aktivizm-obshchestvennaya-polza>

political apathy of youth in the context of traditional political theory, but also the inability of political journalism to offer the young audience the information they need. This explains why journalism is not as interesting to young people as social media. It is the social media that allow the audience to fully participate in the process of development of a citizen's personality (Blumler, 2011) and to link socially determined and politically oriented actions with the processes of self-actualization and socialization as key motives for contemporary media consumption (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020).

Youth, social media, and political participation: Research discourse

Modern research approaches identify that young people are becoming intolerant of information that does not represent a diversity of perspectives and opinions (Drok & Hermans, 2016; Kulchitskaya et al., 2019; Laufer, 2011; Lee, 2015; Vartanova, 2017). They are interested in the information that can be used for personality development or can help address social issues, among other things (Drok, 2017; Gyldensted, 2015; Haagerup, 2014; Nichols et al., 2006). Some studies suggest that young people are more involved in their everyday life and the community they represent, rather than in 'big-time politics'. Such identification is not directly connected with a nation or government but has a more personal focus and therefore an equally integral structure (Blumler, 2011; Drok & Hermans, 2016; Drok et al., 2017).

In the context of interaction between youth and politics, a theoretical issue of the motives that determine the behavior of young people comes to the fore. The definition of motives in the context of a new understanding of the nature of political engagement is closely related to the social nature of politics and thus to such social determinants of personality as identity development and self-actualization (Beck, 2001), which is also confirmed by research on the current motives of media consumption by youth in Russia (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). A. Giddens refers to such actions as a manifestation of 'life politics' and defines it as 'a politics of self-actualization in a reflexively ordered environment' (Giddens, 1991). To capture this qualitative shift in media engagement in even more detail, researchers prefer to talk about participatory culture / convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006, 2019) or 'digital media culture' (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020), where new forms and motives for youth to produce and disseminate culture and knowledge take center stage.

The research discourse on the impact of social media on young people and their political engagement is diverse. On the one hand, the perception

of new technology as 'disruptive' is still strong (Christensen, 2009; Gavra, 2020; Gureeva et al., 2020; Vartanova, 2017). Researchers warn us about the detrimental effects of digital media on young people; the latter are described as 'technology addicts' who have lost the ability to interact face-to-face (Kahne et al., 2009; Twenge, 2019). Concerns in the public discourse are raised by the risk of online sexual exploitation and other forms of violence, such as physical and emotional abuse, bullying, trolling, etc. (Gladkova & Cherevko, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2016). Other studies suggest there is a link between smartphone use, depression, and suicide (Twenge, 2019). This discourse concludes with a strong recommendation to parents and teachers to limit young people's access to technology (Jenkins et al., 2016; Twenge, 2019).

The reason why this discourse fails is that it associates perceptions of the detrimental effects of digital media with dependence on them or the specific nature of their use. Access restrictions may indeed limit the damage, but they will also limit the positive effects of digital media.

Specifically, one of the most common motives for using digital media by young people is the exercise of civil rights and liberties through reading online news, joining online political groups, and discussing political issues in social media (Cammaerts et al., 2014; Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). What is more, actions that were once possible only in the space of social physical reality are now performed online at a much lower cost, which results in an increase in participants' activity.

The main focus of studies on the use of digital media by young people is social networks, news web-sites, email, online games, chat rooms, blogs, music, and mobile apps as the most popular media preferred by young people.

The terms *engagement* and *participation* as key terms of youth's political activism do not refer to media discourse only; they are also broadly defined in political science and describe activities such as contacting officials, discussing politics, volunteering, taking part in street marches, boycotting products and services for political reasons, and voting. Whether the use of digital media by young people is related to declining political and civic participation among young people is a key issue that has been a source of debate and concern for researchers for years. Exclusion of young people from the political arena has translated into an extremely poor voter turnout⁵, low levels of party membership, and a sharp decline in other forms of participation associated

⁵ *Social Science Computer Review*, 38(2).

with institutionalized politics (Grasso, 2016; Martin, 2012; Sloam, 2016; Wattenberg, 2008).

But even if young people are repelled by electoral and party politics, this does not mean that they have lost the desire to participate in civic life as such. Digital media do encourage participation in social development for those groups of young people who, for some reason, have no or limited access to formal political institutions (e.g., political parties) and institutionalized methods of participation (e.g., voting) (Jenkins et al., 2016). Research has shown that digital media open new and alternative ways of youth's participation in civic and political life, which are most attractive to young people (Lee et al., 2013; Theocharis, 2011a, b). Early research comparing young and elderly people has proven that the impact of digital media on civic participation differs by age group (Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Since then, digital media have evolved enormously; social networking sites and platforms for online political participation have developed, and the very nature of civic and political engagement has changed (Kahne et al., 2013).

With regard to political socialization, young people are at a critical stage of life when their political identities and orientations are still being shaped. Therefore, with digital media being the centerpiece of their everyday life, we can expect that these tools can have a profound influence on them (Jenkins et al., 2016; Kahne et al., 2013; Kruikemeier & Shehata, 2016; Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Twenge, 2019). There is a growing interest among researchers in how these tools can be used to shape young people's civic habits so that they are helpful (or harmful) to civic and political engagement. So, a careful analysis of how digital media influence young people's citizen and political activism may 'anticipate' the future impact of technology on other age groups (Jenkins et al., 2016).

One of the most common hypotheses in the study of the impact of media on politics is that digital media allow citizens to interact with all kinds of people, find time for browsing through numerous web-sites, and learn about a variety of problems, including directly from people in their digital community, which ultimately influences them and leads to civic or political action.

Social interactions with different people and different values can have a mobilizing effect, which was described even before social media became widespread and which indicated the involvement of individuals in politics on a small scale (see van Deth, 1998). In addition, digital media can act as online spaces where citizens can acquire skills required for participation in civic life

(Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Researchers see the value of social media in building networks and interactions. The digital environment can help citizens develop certain skills and psychological dispositions that facilitate participation in more resource-intensive offline activities (Kahne et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2016; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). Researchers have made an interesting conclusion about online games: certain types of online games accumulate experience that leads to increased civic engagement.

Interaction between government institutions and youth in the social networking space: Findings

As part of the of the RFBR research project *Mediatization of politics in digital communication strategies of the state and the youth in Russia*⁶, we conducted a survey of 373 young people aged 18 to 35 among students who study journalism in Russian universities. During programming of the empirical study, we took into consideration the geography criterion and made a decision to use the ratio of university students from the capital area to students from other Russian regions as the key ratio for sampling at the pilot phase of the study. It was found that according to the Ministry of Science for 2020, the share of students in the country's capital is 43.7% and the share of regional students is 56.3% in the population universe. This ratio was used for the sampling frame.

The survey findings revealed that the absolute majority of the respondents (*Figure 1*) are interested in and willing to receive information about what is going on in the social and political sphere (80.5% of the respondents answered 'Yes' and 'Rather yes'); a little over half of the respondents (*Figure 2*) are already engaged in civic activities (57.7%), and the absolute majority (*Figure 3*) consider it necessary to engage in civic activities (88.3%).

The top three most interesting media consumption topics for young students (*Figure 4*) are: human and civil rights (79.3%); employment and standards of living (69.1%); science and education (59.7%).

⁶ The research project *Mediatization of politics in digital communication strategies of the state and the youth in Russia* is carried out by the research team of the Faculty of Journalism of the Lomonosov Moscow State University with financial support from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) and the Expert Institute for Social Research (EISR) under Research Project No. 20-011-31376.

Figure 1

Do you follow the social and political news?

Figure 2

Are you engaged in civic activities?

Figure 3

Do you consider it necessary to engage in civic activities?

Figure 4

Which of the topics are most interesting to you?

Almost all respondents follow social and political news (88.7%). Their main sources of information are the Internet (99%) and their friends and acquaintances (39.6%); traditional media platforms such as television (22.1%), newspapers and magazines (16.2%), and radio (8.1%) come third only. As to the social media as preferred sources of social and political information, young people opt for Telegram (72.5%), Vkontakte (49.8%), and Instagram (43.4%), which should come as no surprise, given the specifics of certain social media.

Young people are ready to engage in a dialogue and are expecting the government to enhance the outreach and establish bilateral communication on public policy issues. So, for example, the survey respondents were eager to answer the open-ended question on how they see ideal communication between the government and youth; out of 362 responses, the absolute majority of responses had almost the same meaning, i.e. establishing dialogue and two-way communication with the possibility of feedback (e.g. 'through dialogue', 'provision should be made for feedback', 'unbiased information promptly published on platforms used by young people', 'in the form of dialogue with the help of the media', 'direct and open dialogue', 'direct communication, such as Q&A session in social media', etc.).

Considering the share of the younger generation of Russians, which is estimated at one fifth to one sixth of the entire Russian population, who choose social media as their main source of information, we need to rethink the system and form of presenting public policy information.

As part of this study, we analyzed official accounts (open groups) of agencies responsible for youth outreach in the Russian capital and the regions. The object of our study was social media activities of various government committees and departments dealing with youth issues in the following cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Kazan, Volgograd, and Chelyabinsk. These cities were selected to simultaneously survey university students in the capital region and those in relevant regions in order to study their interest in the country's social and political life, their involvement and awareness of important events on the agenda. During the first phase of the study, the working hypothesis was the assumption that all government agencies dealing with youth issues are present in social media and working closely with their audience. However, we had to find out what kind of content is created, what the level of publication activity is, and whether the material offered by the agencies caters to the needs of younger users. The subject field was a sample of 609 posts published in September 2020 in Vkontakte, Russia's most popular social network (Brand Analytics, 2020). All government agencies under study have their own accounts here, except for the

Committee for Public Relations and Youth Policy for the city of Moscow, which has a Facebook account. Although this network is more popular with Muscovites than with those who live in the regions, the reason for such replacement is not quite clear: on average, the Russian youth audience in Vkontakte is 67% whereas in Facebook, it is 32% (Brand Analytics, 2020).

The number of followers of government social media accounts varies and depends on a combination of factors, including the quality of publications, audience involvement, historical interest in the group, and the rate of its growth. Moreover, there is no direct correlation with the population of the cities: for example, the Committee for Children and Youth Affairs in Kazan has more than 42 thousand followers (the city's population is 1.257 million people⁷ and the share is 3.3%), while the St. Petersburg Committee for Youth Policy has about 22 thousand followers (the city's population is almost 5.4 million people and the share is 0.4%).

Table 1

Number of followers of government institutions' accounts

Nº	City	Department	Number of Vkontakte followers	City population, people
1.	Moscow	Committee for Public Relations and Youth Policy	7,451*	12,678,079
2.	St. Petersburg	Committee for Youth Policy	22,008	5,398 064
3.	Chelyabinsk	Department for Youth Policy	840	1,196 680
4.	Vladivostok	Office for Youth Affairs	3,690	606,561
5.	Kazan	Committee for Children and Youth Affairs	42,606	1,257 391
6.	Volgograd	Committee for Youth Policy and Tourism	2,820	1,008,998
7.	Rosmolodezh (Federal Agency for Youth Affairs)	Federal agency	119,495	Not linked to any city

A changing number of followers over time is an interesting parameter to analyze: the annual increase or decrease in the number of followers will make it possible to draw conclusions about the qualitative development of an account in the future.

⁷ <http://www.statdata.ru/home>

Publishing rate. The data analysis shows that the publishing rate varies considerably: some accounts publish one or two posts daily (Vladivostok, Kazan, Chelyabinsk, and Volgograd). Interestingly, the publishing rate for the Volgograd Committee's group during the sample period changed from 4 posts per day on average from 1 till 11 September till zero posts till 24 September. It would be fair to assume that such a long period of inactivity was due to technical or other problems, e.g. their SMM expert falling sick. This fact is an indirect proof that the number of employees responsible for the account is small, so it takes a lot of time to resolve the problems.

The account of the St. Petersburg Committee is more active, with up to 4 posts published daily. However, Rosmolodezh's account has the highest publishing rate (an average of 9.7 posts per day), which means that a new post appears almost every hour.

A wide variation in the findings raises an issue of what the best publishing rate would be. According to practitioners, both content strategies are equally important: the focus may be either on a high publishing rate or on the quality of information content⁸. The choice of strategy depends on the goals of communication. A higher publishing rate brings more traffic to web-sites, which is essential for businesses, as creating a wider audience leads to more sales. But government agencies are not businesses; they are not selling anything to anyone, so in this case, we can safely say that high-quality content adds value, which improves their image. In each case, the final decision on how many posts are published per day should be based on the users' response. Group administrators can independently evaluate the efficiency of content⁹ using internal statistics tools. Another aspect to study is the best time to post on social media. Based on the analysis of media consumption by the audience¹⁰ that reveals peak hours for browsing the Internet, we can select the time period most preferable to quickly read the news or study a lengthy article online. A study by Rusability¹¹ found that Vkontakte posts are most viewed from 3 pm to 6 pm, peaking between 5 pm and 6 pm. Timing also affects the visibility of certain types of content: e.g.

⁸ Available from: <https://vc.ru/marketing/141648-chto-vazhnee-kolichestvo-publikatsiy-kontenta-ili-ego-kachestvo>

⁹ Vkontakte statistic data. Available from: <https://www.cossa.ru/sociorama/238333/>

¹⁰ Media consumption in Russia – 2020. Moscow, October 2020. Available from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/ru/ru/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/media-consumption-in-russia.html>

¹¹ Available from: <https://rusability.ru/internet-marketing/luchshee-vremya-dlya-publikatsij-vk-kejs-rusability/>

the best time to post video content is between 1 pm and 2 pm and between 4 pm and 5 pm. However, it should be noted that general data on any social network always has to be double checked for each individual thematic group, since the behavior of the audience can vary for a whole host of reasons.

Content visualization. A trend toward visualizing content in the social media that offer photo publishing tools can be considered omnipresent. The youth audience today prefers visual information to any other type of information¹². There are several reasons for that, including that visual information is more easily remembered¹³ or that it is easy to create photos with readily available modern photo and video cameras in smartphones. Notably, when pictures or illustrations are used, it is photos that are chosen most often, which may be due to the fact that authors are reluctant to go the extra mile to process photo content (Kolesnichenko & Davletshina, 2019). The accounts of the government agencies under study fully confirm this trend: up to 100% of the posts contain photo materials (usually high-quality ones) and, in some cases, video content (on average, 1 to 10% of the total number of posts). Based on this parameter, social media pages of the agencies under study can be considered uniform.

Table 2

Content visualization in the social network Vkontakte

№	City	Department	Type of content, %	
			Text+PH	Text+V
1	Moscow	Committee for Public Relations and Youth Policy for the city of Moscow	100	0
2	St. Petersburg	Committee for Youth Policy	99	1
3	Chelyabinsk	Department for Youth Policy, Chelyabinsk	94	6
4	Vladivostok	Office for Youth Affairs	97	3
5	Kazan	Committee for Children and Youth Affairs	94	6
6	Volgograd	Committee for Youth Policy and Tourism	76	24
7	Rosmolodezh (Federal Agency for Youth Affairs)	Federal agency	89	11

¹² Available from: <https://us.nttdata.com/en/-/media/assets/white-paper/apps-dbc-mind-the-gap-white-paper.pdf>

¹³ Available from: <http://www.brainrules.net/vision>

The number of posts with video content in the social media is relatively low, which can be attributed to the fact that such posts require a lot of time, money and human effort: to create high-quality video, you need a competent speaker, operator, and editor, whereas taking photos is much faster and allows publishing several posts per day.

Topics for publications. When we analyzed the qualitative characteristics of the publications, the study of topics discussed by the government agencies in their social media was of most interest. The working hypothesis was the assumption that social media are used by government agencies as corporate media: the information they post is about their own activities and is not integrated into the public policy agenda. The hypothesis was fully confirmed: all content was related only to projects of regional and federal youth committees and partner activities. To classify the content, we identified seven topic categories: *Scientific, Educational and Cultural Events* (grants, scholarships, project competitions, forums, lectures); *Entertainment* (concerts, festivals, celebrations); *Student Teams and Volunteer Projects*; *Youth Policy* (projects in this area); *Health* (donation, first aid, vaccination), *KVN (Club of the Funny and Inventive People)*, and *Other*, where we included one-time posts specific to each city and usually logically related to local events. There was also a need for additional topics relevant only to particular accounts. When we analyzed the content on the Rosmolodezh page, we added another category named *Success Story*, a regular feature telling about personal achievements of young men and women. On the Volgograd Committee page, 10% of the content is about urban improvement, which was also identified as a separate category.

The ratio of topics was different for each city: for example, *Scientific and Educational Events* accounted for 67% of all posts for Vladivostok, 57% for Kazan, 55% for St. Petersburg, 44% for Rosmolodezh, and 47% for Moscow versus 13% for Chelyabinsk and 26% for Volgograd. *Entertainment* accounts for 47% of all posts for Chelyabinsk, 33% for Volgograd, 26% for Rosmolodezh, and 17% for St. Petersburg, with zero percent for Moscow and Kazan. *Youth Policy* accounts for 9% of all posts for Kazan, 6% for Rosmolodezh, and 3% for Volgograd; the other cities did not post on this topic during the sample period. Thus, we can capture an individual agenda for making social media content in each city. But, again, corporate data is the basis for all content, regardless of a variety of topics. On the one hand, this can be expected and explained: the committees tell the audience about what they do, engage new participants to grants and festivals, and give credit to winners. Yet, the young audience wants to see what the government has to say on socially sensitive topics. For example, a questionnaire

survey among young people conducted as part of the current study confirms the need of this audience for two-way communication with official institutions. Headline-making public political events of recent years such as Ivan Golunov's case, Kirill Serebrennikov's case, changes to Russia's Constitution, softening domestic violence law, etc. are getting much coverage but the official position of government institutions is not apparent. When asked: 'How satisfied are you with the information about this event in official government sources?', 80 to 92% of the respondents said 'Dissatisfied' or 'Rather dissatisfied than satisfied'. Obviously, at this stage, government social media are not seeking to function as community media and become a forum for public policy discussions. But given that young people obviously want to interact with government institutions, the latter should use their communication platforms to strengthen dialogic relations with the public.

Conclusion

Today, one can say that the nature of youth's political participation and engagement is transformed. With social media reaching far and wide, political action has largely shifted from the space of physical social reality to the space of mediatized social reality (Gureeva & Vartanova, 2018). Both forms and targets of political participation have changed. Media activism is now the most relevant form of political participation and the main target is struggle for social justice. Moreover, both the form and the intention reshape the political agenda and make it more socially and culturally oriented. Strictly speaking, young people do not care about 'big-time politics' or political decisions that will affect them in the long run, but they do care about the everyday injustice they face, and there is an overwhelming desire to change the world for the better. This is precisely why topics that used to be beyond institutional politics and rather dealt with human rights and liberties find their way onto the political agenda of a young audience (Twenge, 2019).

In this regard, one should say that theoretical studies of politics and media have always emphasized the role of the media in establishing democracy and implementing the basic media principles of social and political life, that is, plurality of views and consensus of the parties. The nature of social media supporting the social network infrastructure in the form of social interactions in human communities makes it possible for these principles to be implemented (Jackson, 2020). This is reason why many actions in social media have a social determinacy related to such basic processes of personality development in society as socialization and self-actualization (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020).

Political media activism is no exception; it also acquires social and cultural characteristics (Gureeva, 2020). It is this factor that describes the hallmark of contemporary political participation and political engagement of young people, namely, their media component and sociocultural determinacy.

More specific, but equally distinguishing features of today's political media activism among young people include the leisure context of activity: the activity takes place in free time and is associated both with the search for satisfaction from consuming a certain type of content and from the very process of media consumption and media activism, as well as with the culture of consumption in general (Dietlind et al., 2005). So, political engagement and political participation become attributes of the 'lifestyle' of modern young people integrated into the 'consumer society' (Baudrillard, 2019). However, this does not make their implementation any 'softer'. On the contrary, when it comes to human personality, human rights and liberties rather than some abstract and fanciful political ideals, the establishment of social justice looks more and more like a form of 'struggle' of the citizen and the consumer.

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The concept of interdisciplinary research on intergenerational transmission of communicative and cultural memory¹

Greg Simons²

Ural Federal University, Russia

IRES Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden

University of Turība, Latvia

Mikhail Muhin

Vladimir Oleshko

Anna Sumskaya

Ural Federal University, Russia

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Abstract

In this paper, the concept of studying the specifics of digital communication between the older (analogue) and younger (digital) generations in Russia is proposed. The process of communication opens up the possibility of a perception of communicative and cultural memory by the digital generation, which is in the process of socialization and awareness of cultural identity. We suggest methodological development and the testing of research methods into the transformation of communicative and cultural memory and ways of its transmission from the analogue to the digital generation of Russians. The proposed scientific and practical concept assumes the development of three basic directions. The first is related to the study of the general process of transformation of syncretic communicative and cultural memory in the digital environment. The second involves the study and modelling of media texts.

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² **Corresponding author:**

Greg Simons, Ural Federal University, Russia; IRES Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden; University of Turība, Latvia.
Postal address: Box 514, SE 751 20 Uppsala, Sweden.
Email: gregmons@yahoo.com

Addressing the strategies of organizing multimedia narration and linguistic and statistical peculiarities of big data makes it possible to identify the language and conceptual markers of communicative and cultural memory in the texts of two different generations. Finally, the third one is related to the identification of the specifics of media consumption by generations, which implies the actualization of the transformation of journalistic competencies to work in the modern digital environment. These directions are developed using several approaches and methods: social-communication, cognitive, structural-semiotic, sociocultural, and linguistic. Such an interdisciplinary approach is necessary for the comprehensive study of intergenerational transmission of communicative and cultural memory.

Keywords

Communicative memory, cultural memory, digitalization, analogue generation, digital generation, intergenerational transmission, social media.

Introduction

There are increasing calls for the de-Westernisation of academic research within the context of a de-Westernisation world in order to make it more representative (Curran & Park, 2000; Gluck, 2015). Yet at the same time, the resulting research needs to be translatable and understandable (i.e. accessible and comprehensible) to other contexts. Therefore, is it possible or practical to create a 'hybrid' approach that can use a Western theoretical and conceptual framework, combined with a local academic framework to make the results meaningful and a reliable account of any cultural specifics. This article seeks to explore how this could be done in terms of the cultural, social and political interplay between journalism and audiences in Russia.

The socio-cultural transformations that have resulted from the integration of digital media technologies into everyday life have led to the emergence of new communication practices. However, this is in turn shaped and influenced by different generational cultures that occupy global human communicational spaces. Eyerman & Turner (1998) noted (in the British context) 'a sociological understanding of the 20th century requires a better understanding of the distinctive generational movements that have shaped its history, politics and culture'. The same can be said for understanding the current changes occurring in non-Western countries in the 21st century within the context of an evolving global power transformation. For the first time in the history of civilization (particularly in Russia), digitalization and the formation of a post-industrial

digital society have led to the emergence of a particular intergenerational gap associated with various customary communication practices, which are implemented in different media spaces (Barsukov, 2018; Romanov, 2013).

Although the generations of the analogue and digital are both part of the same larger information domain and interact with each other, there are some differences and tensions observable. On the one hand, the older, *analogue* generation needs to transmit the accumulated communicative and cultural memory to the younger (*digital*) generation. On the other hand, for the *digital* generation, it is essential to have information that can meet the needs of socialization and cultural identity. Furthermore, generations can be categorised by factors others than through merely common media habits, but also by values and lifestyles (Vyugina, 2017). Furthermore, as noted by Erzikova & Lowrey (2020) and Vartanova & Gladkova (2019), the assumption of the different generations relies on the assumption of equal access to new communication technologies and means of communication (Internet and social media). In the realities of provincial and rural Russia, there can be an absence of access to these means and styles of communication.

However, differences in the transformation and tools of memory transmission of generations are the reason for failures in the attempt to transmit communicative and cultural memory, which leads to significant social deformations. Meanwhile, even in an era of instability, the possibility of productive intergenerational communication makes the awareness of belonging to one's country and identification with its interests, history and culture more stable and productive.

The concept of 'generation' is an important aspect of the research and needs to be specified what exactly is meant and implied by this term. Eyerman & Turner (1998) define generation 'as a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time'. Thus, the first aim of this paper is to study the mechanisms of transformation of communicative and cultural memory with a view of applying them to the ongoing research project. The second aim is to study ways of its transmission from the analogue to the digital generation of Russians in the era of digitalization. This present exploratory article is devoted to the first stage of the study of navigating aspects of methodology and approach in an era of rapid social, political, technological and economic change. Is there any discernible transformation in the de-Westernising of media and communication studies beyond the rhetoric and the calls for it? This shall be examined against recent

research in Russia, together with exploring the limits and the opportunities. The interdisciplinary nature of this work is determined by the intersection of interests and the use of methods of journalism, sociopsychology, linguistics and culturology.

Method and approach

Following a communication study by Simons (2020) using the framework of Schulz on social phenomenology, which Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) notes 'is a descriptive and interpretive theory of social action that explores subjective experience within the taken-for-granted, "common sense" world of the daily life of individuals'. Schulz (1967) created a method for studying social interaction that involves two senses of understanding interpretive understanding. The first sense is where people interpret or make sense of the phenomena of the everyday world. The second sense of understanding that involves generating 'ideal' types from which to interpret or describe the phenomenon being investigated. This approach is the most relevant given that the topic of the research focuses upon the results of the interaction between the information domain and the cognitive domain in the production and consumption of mass media content.

In the following section of possible theoretical lenses, the most closely aligned to Schulz are those in the categories of the social and communication approach and the sociocultural approach. It should be noted though, the above two orders need to be firmly grounded in the subjective meaning of human action. Therefore, Schulz proposed three essential postulates to be followed during the research process.

1. The postulate of logical consistency: The researcher must establish the highest degree of clarity of the conceptual framework and method applied, and these must follow the principles of formal logic.

2. The postulate of subjective interpretation: The model must be grounded in the subjective meaning the action had for the 'actor'.

3. The postulate of adequacy: There must be consistency between the researcher's constructs and typifications and those found in common-sense experience. The model must be recognizable and understood by the 'actors' within everyday life (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Schulz, 1973).

This requires a trail of evidence to be followed by the researcher in order to show credibility and reliability of the study in terms of theoretical and conceptual rigor, but to also be mindful of empirical confirmation. To try and achieve this balance a

targeted Internet search was used with the following key words: 'communicative memory'; 'cultural memory'; 'analogue generation'; 'digital generation'; and 'intergenerational transmission'. The search results were also checked within the perspective for snowball technique where displayed 'related research' or 'similar research' promoted by journals were also checked for relevance.

Potential underlying theoretical lenses

Roediger & Wertsch (2008) argue that memory studies is an emerging discipline, its development is dependent upon the creation of a systematic set of qualitative and quantitative methodological tools. These can be borrowed from various social sciences and adapted. This is owing to memory studies combining the intellectual strands from academic domains such as anthropology, education, sociology, psychology, history, literature, philosophy, and others. It is also noted by Roediger & Wertsch that a single definition of memory is not useful, but rather scholars need to specify the variety of memory being subjected to investigation.

The theoretical focus of this paper to study communicative and cultural memory and its intergenerational transmission involves the study of the mechanisms of transformation of communicative-cultural memory of analogue and digital generations. In order to compare, develop and test the methods of communicative and cultural memory transmission from the analogue generation to the digital generation, a new interdisciplinary methodological toolkit is undoubtedly needed. It should be noted that the 'clean' distinction between the analogue and digital generations can be a simplified theoretical exercise that can ignore the physical and cognitive realities present. For example, youth in the large urban areas in Russia have access, motivation and opportunity to engage and be influenced by digital sources. The same may not be true for youth from small towns and rural areas that can lack the technical means of connection and use. There are a number of potential directions that are the most significant and promising for application in our research project, a mix of theoretical approaches can bring a more complete result if it is applied to the right question.

The social and communication approach makes it possible to identify and understand different layers of culture and its specific phenomena as social and communication systems. In the social-communication model of culture developed by Arkady Sokolov, the central place is occupied by the category of meaning (knowledge, skills, emotions, stimuli) and communication cycles of movement of meanings in social time and space (Sokolov, 2002). The approach is applicable to the solution of such research problems as 'interaction of an individual, collective, society in the processes of creation, distribution,

perception, cultural values; mutual influence of sociocultural environment and personality; impact of specific cultural texts on the individual, social group, mass or historical communities' (Mankevich, 2001). It is expedient to use these ideas to reveal the mechanisms of transformation of the communicative and cultural/social memory of generations and the significant meanings-symbols of generations.

The structural semiotics approach was developed by both foreign and domestic scientists (Jean Baudrillard, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Yuri M. Lotman, Evgeniy M. Metelitsky, Charles Peirce, Vladimir Ya Propp, Ferdinand de Saussure, Paul-Michel Foucault, and Roman Jakobson). From a semiotic point of view, social communication appears as an interaction based on signs and symbolic systems. This approach is needed in the construction of social media communication as the basis for intergenerational dialogue.

The cognitive approach in sociology has been developed regarding collective social notions (Niklas Luhmann et al.). According to Luhmann's cognitive system theory of communication, the reality is developed within the media system through the appropriation/production of meaning, and 'any cognition (consequently, any reality) is a construction' (Luhmann, 2005). The cognitive approach in social psychology is based on the principle of consciousness of the individual, developed by George Kelly (personal construct theory), Theodore Newcomb (Newcomb's model), and Jean Piaget (theory of cognitive development).

Cognitive methodology in media research is actively used by Russian and international scientists (Makarenko & Kovalchuk, 2018). The model of media impact on the audience based on the cognitive approach, which is required for the analysis of the transmission of communication and cultural memory from the analogue to the digital generation (Sukhodolov & Marenko, 2018). Cognitive strategies for the perception of digital literature are presented in the work of the Danish scientist Jens Hansen (2018). Understanding the narrative messages of the 'distant past' based on cognitive templates has been experimentally tested and summarized in the works of scientists from Old and New World, such as Ara Norenzayan, Scott Atran, Jason Faulkner, Mark Schaller (Norenzayan et al., 2006). The American psychologist-cognitivists William Hirst and David Manier reveal the psychological mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of collective memory functioning in any specific culture (Hirst & Manier, 2008). In order to address the stated scientific problem, the cognitive approach facilitates the process of constructing meanings and interpreting what is meant in the perception of the digital generation.

Sociocultural approach is to identify the markers of communicative and cultural memory based on work with focus groups of analogue and digital generations. For this purpose, empirical methods of qualitative and quantitative research can be used. In particular, Q Methodology, which benefits and technology of implementation for the study of the perception of social and cultural phenomena are described in the works of Charles Davis, Carolyn Michelle (Davis & Michelle, 2011) and Igor Romanov (Romanov, 2014). This method, as well as surveys, is in demand for mapping the socio-cultural 'places of memory' of generations. Besides, questionnaires, interviews, and mental maps can identify the markers of communicative and cultural memory of both digital and analogue generations.

Linguistic approach uses methods of ideographic lexicography, computer linguistics are actively developed in the practice of linguistic analysis of the text. In the published works of Mikhail Mukhin, the methodology of comparative-statistical analysis of large text arrays is proposed (Mukhin, 2015). There are also the possibilities of automation of semantic analysis that are studied in the monograph of Yuri Kiselev, Mikhail Mukhin, Sergei Porshnev (Kiselev et al., 2018). These methods are applicable for the processing of large volumes of media and social media texts.

The research involves the use of quantitative methods of web analysis of big data in the study of current problems and content requests of the digital generation. Methods of modern corpus linguistics related to computer processing and marking of large text arrays are in demand to identify markers of communicative and cultural memory based on the study of a vast array of social media data and storytelling in media. Comparative lexical and statistical analysis of a vast array of texts created by representatives of different generations allows us to identify the language preferences of each of them and further interprets the peculiarities of media communication, typical for the analogue and digital generations. Methods of selective discursive analysis of mass media texts and social media make it possible to clarify and supplement the results of the lexical and statistical analysis of a large amount of data.

For the purposes of this paper, the social and communicative approach, and the cognitive approach hold the most promise in order to derive an answer to the research question. This is owing to the role of information and communication channels and flows among and between generations of media consumers and producers, and how these information channels and flows are cognitively processed to challenge or reinforce the worldviews and identity of individuals and groups.

Characteristics of an interdisciplinary problem area

We propose a scientific and practical concept that assumes development in three basic directions. The first direction is related to the study of the general process of transformation of syncretic communicative and cultural memory in the digital environment. This represents a tangible communicative act through technical means. The second direction involves the study and modelling of media texts (including media texts and social networks). It will be addressing the strategies of organizing multimedia narration and linguistic and statistical peculiarities of big data make it possible to identify the language and conceptual markers of communicative and cultural memory in the texts of the two different generations. This represents an intangible communicative act through the information domain that impacts upon the cognitive domain of the audience. Finally, the third direction is related to the identification of the specifics of media consumption by generations, which implies the actualization of the transformation of journalistic competencies to work in the modern digital environment. This direction is aimed at mapping and understanding the characteristics and specifics of the segmented audiences. These three parts when combined are intended to reveal the effects on the cognitive domain of the actors (journalists and public) by the qualities and format of the physical domain representations transmitted and appearing in the information domain.

Cultural memory and communication memory: Concept, specifics of accumulation, transformation, and transmission in the context of digitalization

Heinrich and Weyland (2016) propose a theoretical process where collective memory at the macro level influences the individual's memory, where memory at the individual micro level may become part of the collective memories. 'This process can be considered as an exchange taking place at the meso level and can be exemplified by the public discourse within the Web 2.0. It is assumed that the Web 2.0 provides a forum that aggregates individuals' perceptions and interpretations of the past on the one hand (bottom up) and disseminates the meaning of a society's dominant commemoration figures on the other hand (top down)' (Ibid.). However, problems exist in the research and analysis within the field of memory studies.

There exists in memory studies the danger of reducing culture to politics and ideology, instead of broadening the field from the political to the social and the experiential, to an everyday history of memory. And there exists the danger of reducing culture to some vague notion of memory, whereby memory

is separated from other memories in society and from the culture around it (Confino, 1997).

In terms of the recalling and study of cultural and communicative memory, Confino calls for a more wide-reaching analysis beyond the top down only perspective. In understanding the term and practice of collective memory Olick (1999) proposes 'a sensitising term for a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, neurological, cognitive, personal, aggregated, and collective'. These are in keeping with Heinrich and Weyland (2016) that propose investigating all connections and relations, top down and bottom up. Confino (1997) warns that 'the beauty of memory is that it is imprecise enough to be appropriated by unexpected hands, to connect apparently unrelated topics, to explain anew old problems'. These processes and relations are coded, guided and influenced by narrative creation and circulation.

Narrative organisation is an essential element in shaping the collective memory of members of a group or a nation. These narratives are shaped by a socio-cultural context and possess the capacity to serve as cultural tools for those members to recall their past (Wertsch, 2008). This includes specific narratives that refer to specific events, people and places, and schematic narrative templates that include the use of representation and symbolism to shape the quality and specifics of a narrative story (Wertsch, 2008(a)). In his study of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as a 'blank spot' in the collective memory of Russia, Wertsch noted that people are unlikely to come to a common understanding of history as they are not exposed to a uniform body of objective information. Furthermore, 'given how central deep memory is to collective identity, this should come as no surprise' (Wertsch, 2008(b)). Memory is connected to information and experiences that are directly experienced and mediated by individuals and collectives. According to Hoskins (2011), the world has rapidly evolved from an environment of information scarcity to post-scarcity culture, with its possibilities of instant access to information and connections.

The focus of this study is on the concept of communication and cultural memory. To develop this concept, the authors rely on the theories of communicative memory and cultural memory of the German historians and culturologists Jan and Aleida Assman. 'Memory is what allows us to build an image or narrative of the past and in the same way, develop an image and narrative of ourselves' (Assmann, 2011). In Jan Assman's theory, two vectors are distinguished communicative memory (related to the recent past) and cultural memory (related to the 'absolute' past – cultural memory, based on external mediators such as texts, images, monuments and rituals, has no time limit). 'The notion of communicative memory includes those types of collective memory

that are based solely on everyday communication' (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). This memory reflects the personality as the bearer of the social roles of the time. This is the 'field of oral history', which now, in the era of widespread mediatization of communication, seems to be becoming an integral part of the institutional 'written history' and is represented in social media.

Publicly circulated representations of cultural memory serve as markers of collective purpose, meaning and belonging in any given society. 'Cultural memory includes a collection of frequently used texts, images and rituals specific to each society in each era, where cultivation serves to stabilize and convey the image of society itself. Based on collective knowledge, for the most part (but not entirely) of the past, each group bases its understanding of unity and specificity' (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).

In existing scholarship, it has been confirmed that in everyday communication an individual simultaneously operates with communicative memory skills based on 'historical experience within individual biographies' and this reflects the meanings that are stored in the cultural memory of identical groups (Sumskaia & Simons, 2018; Sumskaia & Sumskoy, 2018). Communicative memory requires a means of transmission to the members of the community through social institutions that are the means of cultural (re)production.

In the digital era, the communicative memory transmitted through specially organized institutions such as social networks, mass media, messengers, communication services acquires the status of cultural memory. According to Assman's position, communicative memory is non-institutional since '...it is not supported by any educational institutions and cultivated by specialists, [...] nor reproduced in special cases, it is not formalized and fixed in any forms of material symbolism' (Assman, 2011). However, today, it is evident that everyday communication, mediated by the media, is formalized and has embedded certain norms and rules of communicators' behaviour, set by the developers of media content. Technical development experts have set the framework for 'ritual behaviour' in the digital environment, playing the role of 'Brahmins' in the era of oral culture. The correlation between communicative and cultural memory in the digital era is confirmed by the authoritative Dutch researcher José van Dijck. She concludes that the traces of individual memory in digital media are both personal and collective, and eventually acquire the status of a cultural treasure inscribed in a broader cultural framework than merely personal memories (Dijck, 2004).

Thus today, at every moment of communication in the digital environment, it is the communicative and cultural memory, which has the properties of syncretism and ensures the integrity of perception of information, is actualized.

We believe that the communicative and cultural memory of a generation can be formally presented as a set of essential cultural signs and communicative practices that contribute to identification with their cultural-historical community, with their country, and significant for a particular individual 'here and now'.

The communicative memory has a time horizon that is capable of shifting since it is directly dependent on what is happening in time. Jan and Aleida Assman conclude that the memory of the recent past passes into the status of absolute past through three-four generations, because 'the family is a [...] communication framework for generations living together. Within this framework, their experiences, stories and destinies overlap' (Assman, 2014).

In a situation of dynamic technological transformations, the most expedient thing to do is to operate not with the categories of generations within the family, but with the generations of media communicators, since the framework of communications, including in the media, is set by the service and technological tools of the media industry. As a result, at least two types of generations can be distinguished – analogue and digital. Addressing the media is essential because media 'spectacularly rework the events of the past, update them and convey them to the public consciousness' (Assman, 2014), encode meanings and symbols, ensuring the 'longevity' of memory.

The change of media generations in the period of powerful digital innovations is faster than in the analogue period of media development, especially in the large metropolitan areas. If we consider that a significant marker of the digital era is the mediatization of life in the broadest sense, we can state, on the one hand, a rapid increase in the mass of cultural memory, and on the other hand – a lack of communication practices that ensure the creation of intergenerational relations. These practices and meanings-symbols are a significant field of research since they seem to be the most productive for the implementation of the tasks of transformation and transmission of the communicative and cultural memory, including the transition from the analogue to the digital generation of Russians.

Nowadays, research in this problematic field has intensified all over the world. For example, the transformation of the recent past into a 'digital cultural heritage' and how it is represented to a digital audience are described by Spanish scholars (Pecourt Gracia & Rius-Ulldemolins, 2018). The use of the media in the modelling of shared memories has been studied in the work of the Dutch literary critic Ann Rigney. She has developed a model for the transmission of cultural memory through the media, which includes the following stages: selection, aggregation, repetition, reproduction, transformation, and replication of representations in the media. At the same time, the experience and attitude of the generation towards the events and facts of the near and far past are imitated (Rigney, 2005).

The construction of national cultural memory through narrative message templates is presented in the works of an Estonian professor of cultural history, Marek Tamm (2008). The work of a British researcher describes the ideological framework of the 'past in the present' and its role in the organization of influence on modern politics (Middleton, 2002). The significance of spiritual symbols in the broadcast of political memory is defined in the work of Simons and Westerlund (2016). The writings of a Slovenian communicator, Zala Volčič, investigated the manipulation of cultural memory to exacerbate forms of nationalism and hatred through a populist media discourse (Volčič, 2007). Thus, today there are various tools to study communicative and cultural memory, mechanisms of its transformation and transmission from one generation to another.

In the Russian context, studies (Gladkova, 2015) have noted the creation of the representation of ethnic and cultural minorities in cyberspace as a means of discussing and keeping alive identities and values of those groups. In terms of reflecting upon the past and especially the negotiation of memory in hyperconnected memory cultures where the Soviet past is negotiated in contemporary Russia where national identity is discursively constructed alongside official narratives and individual memories.

An important element in this process is nostalgia, which motivates people to join mnemonic online communities but also functions as an intermediary between cultural memory and national identity by making history a personal, sentimental matter. However, we will also demonstrate that the negotiation of official history and individual memory in mnemonic online communities does not automatically lead to emancipation from state-propagated narratives (Kalinina & Menke, 2016).

Although the research above is done by Russian researchers (or teamed with a Russian researcher), it demonstrates the meta theoretical frames of this topic by Western researchers (such as Heinrich & Weyland, 2016 or Confino, 1997 or Wertsch, 2008) can be used to make sense of the Russian case to international audiences. Theories that have been created by or reworked Western ideas applied to make sense of the national, regional and local specifics of Russia are also used in the internationally published research of Russian researchers.

Media texts and social media modelling and theory of multimedia storytelling

Collective memory and media are intertwined and entangled with one another. As Neiger (2020) points out, 'for a memory to be collective, it needs to be manifested and socially shared, and thus ought to be mediated; on the other

hand, many media products and mediated processes incorporate shared recollections'. Zierold (2008) notes the increased complexity introduced into this sphere of media and memory owing to technological developments, which necessitates a more nuanced and multi-varied approach to explain and account for 'often paradoxical development of present day media systems. Consequently, international scholars are trying to develop an advanced interdisciplinary theory and empiricism that can be counted as part of a media-cultural studies approach to memory studies'. Therefore, Zierold (2008) proposes a more abstract understanding of social memory as an alternative to static models. It includes looking beyond the political and ideological connections to media use to include social and cultural aspects too.

Volkmer (2008) argues that a number of different event spheres are in existence, which represents discursive spheres that act as signifiers of identity and culture of the self and the other. The sphere of reflection is connected to events of the dominant social centre of a given society, its historical roots are found in the development of traditional journalism. It is responsible for shaping a strictly national lens for viewing and understanding the world. Moreover, it is a crucial element in shaping a sense of national identity based on a constructed (imagined) distinction between in-group and out-group (Volkmer, 2008). A second, sphere of action, which is referred to the new demands to produce and cover news in a continuous 24-hour cycle that no longer concerns connectivity, but action. There is also the added aspect of new political influences of media events in the shape of media diplomacy, which has created a new relationship between mediated centres and politics (Volkmer, 2008). The final, sphere of magnification, provides a discourse by magnifying specific moments of a political nature in a politicised context (Volkmer, 2008). This is the process of coding events and experiences as a means of mediated cultural production. As Castells (1996) noted, all realities tend to be communicated through the use of symbolism and in this sense that all 'reality' is virtually perceived.

Nowadays, texts of mass media and social media (in particular, social networks) have become a significant object of interdisciplinary study. Hoskins (2011) notes 'media life is also memory life. Memory is lived through a media ecology wherein abundance, pervasiveness and accessibility of communication networks, nodes, and digital media content, scale pasts anew. An ecological modelling is therefore needed to illuminate a holistic, dynamic and connected set of memory's potential itineraries'. In the Russian case, the methodology of sophisticated linguistic and socio-cultural modelling of the journalistic text, as well as the concept of studying media text in the era of digitalization is

presented in the works of Vera Boguslavskaya (2011) is of interest and relevance for the project. The system of codes of Russian journalistic discourse, the text-generating practices demanded in the modelling of media texts, is being developed by the Ural philologist Elina Chepkina (2000). In terms of a qualitative understanding of journalism's influence via its content, Zelizer (2008) observes that 'as journalism continues to function as one of contemporary society's main institutions of recording and remembering, we need to invest more efforts in understanding how it remembers and why it remembers in the ways it does'. This indicates the need to understand and research more deeply, the direction of the intangible (cognitive) elements found in the communication of text, memory and meaning.

International research in this field includes experience in text modelling in a multimedia environment, which is based on the application of the implicative theory of multimedia storytelling. The author of this theory is the philosopher and culturologist Henry Jenkins (2006). Carolyn Miller confirms that the way stories are told in a multimedia environment has its own characteristics. Her work defines strategies for organizing narration on various digital platforms, and special attention is paid to the use of interactive technologies in the organization of interaction with the media audience (Miller, 2008). Technology is the critical element in the transmission of the narrative.

The technology of creating 'narrative worlds' and convergent narratives is summarized in the works of Spanish researcher Carlos Scolari (2009). In turn, Irish scientist Kelly McErlean is building a conceptual framework for the production of multimedia and transmedia stories (McErlean, 2018). His reference guide to the creation of multimedia and trans-media storytelling is primarily based on an understanding of the concepts and principles of the works of Dziga Vertov, Vasily Kandinsky, Lev Manovich, Vladimir Propp, Alexander Skryabin, Igor Stravinsky, Andrei Tarkovsky, Viktor Shklovsky, Sergei Eisenstein who are representatives of the Russian creative environment.

American media designer and writer Andrea Phillips, in a guide for creators of Transmedia Storytelling, concretizes the position of creating storytelling platforms, which is extremely important for practitioners. She distinguishes between two directions: 1) Western (Hollywood), which involves the transmission of the audience's history on a variety of 'big' platforms – movies, theatre, print and others, and 2) Eastern, entirely focused on interactive online platforms (social media, Internet portals) (Phillips, 2012). Therefore, articles organized as multimedia narratives or as they are called today, storytelling, may become the leading communication technology, which is in high demand

for intergenerational communication for communicative and cultural memory transmission.

Markova and Sukhoviyy (2020) note in the Ukrainian context that the term storytelling in the Ukrainian and Russian languages is borrowed from the English language. They also note the significance and impact of storytelling in the post-Soviet context, where storytelling is a communicational tool of journalism.

Digital storytelling in journalism uses the full communicative potential of traditional storytelling, adding multimedia and interactivity to it, thereby increasing the chances to create an impact. Digital storytelling in journalism is implemented in forms such as cross-media, multimedia, transmedia. Technological innovations such as Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality, and Virtual Reality can also enhance the communicative impact of storytelling. The latter implements the principle of involvement and dialogism to the greatest extent. The principles of storytelling development in journalism are its recognition as a communication tool that can achieve both commercial and social goals, the increase and complication of means to influence the audience with new information technologies, and a paradigm shift from broadcasting to involving (Ibid.).

In this research, the authors identify the role of digital storytelling as a means to enhance the effectiveness of influence on its audience by engaging and involving them in the production of journalistic text in this post-Soviet context. In this regard there are more similarities than differences with the Western approach to understanding and visualising storytelling from a theoretical point of view. The application of storytelling in the Russian context, in particular the development of transmedia storytelling, takes into account the operational objectives of this form of communication.

In addition, the development of Transmedia Storytelling (TS) in Russia is relevant not only for commercial purposes but also for improvements in the social, political and media realms because (1) TS projects help overcome the television vs. Internet divide characteristic of the Russian media system (e.g. The Voice succeeded in this task), (2) TS strategies are used by activists and artists in order to encourage civic engagement development in Russia and (3) TS tools contribute to changing the passive audience paradigm, introducing the Russian audience to contemporary forms of participatory culture (Gambarato & Lapina-Kratasiuk, 2016).

These research findings support some of the findings of the previous research findings based on the example of Ukraine, especially with reference to the use of storytelling as a means to influence an audience to bring about some

type of change in a given society with an active audience participation. This is significant for Russia given the uncertain sense of post-Soviet national identity and values. The appearance of a co-created narrative fits with the Eastern direction of transmedia storytelling envisaged by Phillips (2012) in terms of the role of technology in the process of intergenerational communication, albeit for domestic change in Russia.

Digital audience and journalists' competencies in the digital environment

Information flows are much quicker paced and contain greater amounts of content than ever before in human history. Within this context, Volkmer (2003) observes that the new flow of political information enables the audience to be better informed on issues of relevance. Journalism, both in its analogue and digital form, mediate the collective memory of society through rendering narratives of the past into a functional socio-political construct. In order to deconstruct this complex creation of mediated collective memory, six essential elements have been identified. '1. Its multidirectional disposition (from the present to the past and vice versa); 2. Its concretisation in media texts and other products; 3. The functional role it plays for the community; 4. Its socio-political aspects; 5. The technological qualities of the process of mediatisation; 6. Its narratological characteristics and formation' (Neiger, 2020). Each of these aspects and elements combines to unravel the multifaceted relations and interactions between media and memory. The above also alludes to a dual role played by mass media and journalism in shaping and influencing memory – as a platform for actors and as an actor in their own right.

The new media environment and infrastructure permits eyewitness accounts of events that take place at any location around the globe, which facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge, ethics, values and so forth. This is in-line with Marshall McLuhan's concept of the global village, albeit a very diverse and digitally based one. These developments create new responsibilities for journalism to act as a mediator and mediating between new political discourses and between diverse political media environments. This includes providing discourse platforms for otherwise restricted media environments as 'the terms of "foreign" and "domestic" journalism become obsolete within this environment' (Volkmer, 2003). This creates the potential for change in worldview, identity and culture among segments of the domestic audience.

These 'dialectical' spaces shape 'worldviews' but also political identity, based on conflicting images and refine political reasoning 'rationality' within the national public sphere (Volkmer, 2003).

Generational differences have been detected by field work results, which demonstrate a certain level of divergence that seem to confirm the above quote. 'Whereas in the oldest generation in each of the countries, cultural, national and social memories strongly affected to recollected media events, this is not the case in the youngest generation' (Volkmer, 2003(a)). She noted that the oldest generation's social and cultural context defines the mediated impression. Parents reproduce family roles in relation to the media, access is controlled and 'events' interpreted. Media began to colonise private and symbolic spaces of the middle generation through newly established content, mediating the meaning and importance of events. The individual social context of the youngest generation was defined through the media perspective (Volkmer 2003(a)). Contradictions and dilemmas can be seen emerging across the resulting generation gaps where digital technologies are being increasingly used by the older generations that have the effect of closing the gap, and other gaps are widening as the older generations tend to be ignored somewhat by advertisers and in academic research (Bolin & Skogerbo, 2013). The differences between the analogue and digital generations have been noted by other researchers.

Criticism has been levelled at the current state of knowledge and the resulting need to identify research gaps generational media research. Bolin and Skogerbo (2013) identify several points that require addressing: 1) the lack of critical reflection as age as a category in its own right; 2) there are few attempts to analyse empirically generational user patterns and/or experiences that go beyond fashionable buzzwords and jargon (such as digital natives or net generation); 3) a relative absence of cross-national analyses of generational experience or cross-generational analysis of media users. Bolin (2014) sought to address the third research deficit, a cross-cultural and cross generational comparison of two generations of media users in Sweden and Estonia. Some theoretical lessons were deduced in the course of the study findings that are relevant for our study.

Theoretically, then, it can be concluded that generation as locality needs to consider not only temporal locality in the historical process, but also spatial locality; that is, the locality of geopolitical, media technological and cultural space. In terms of fresh contact, and formative years, it can be further concluded that there are two kinds of formative years: one in childhood and one in youth (Bolin, 2014).

The focus of this study is on intergenerational communication and the transmission of communicative and cultural memory from the analogue to digital generation. We conditionally call the audience, which is more accustomed to using primarily analogue media, the analogue generation, and the audience, for which digital media are preferred, the digital one. The study of the needs of the digital audience is presented in the works of Russian researchers. In particular, it summarizes the communication practices in the digital environment (Kaminskaya, 2018), the habits of a modern user (Viugina, 2017), the focus of media inquiries of digital youth (Dunas, 2018). This lays the broader foundations of our research project, together with its aims and goals.

To solve the stated scientific problem, conceptual foreign studies of both generational values and technologies of overcoming the communication gap of working generations X, Y and Millennials are significant (Coupland, 1991; Hillman, 2014; Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 1998). In this regard, it becomes particularly important to understand the competencies of the journalistic community among both the analogue and digital generations, which are in demand in the production of content 'in digital form'. Many experts recognize the need to adapt the analogue generation of journalists to work in the digital information environment, where the complexity of the transformation of journalists' competencies is concretized, summarized and analysed in Russian research projects (Kohanova, 2017; Oleshko V. & Oleshko E., 2017).

There are conflicting positions taken by scientists, in this case, these are manifested in different points of view regarding the content of communication with the audience: is it necessary to follow its current preferences, anticipating possible interests or to dictate the topic and the content? However, the second question, in our opinion, reflects the experience of the analogue generation.

The mechanisms of transformation of communicative and cultural memory and methods of its intergenerational transmission are causally related to the study of the possibilities of modern information and communication technologies. One of the essential results of the Russian analytical project 'Monitoring of global trends in digitalization in 2018' is the conclusion that the visualization of information is of particular importance, which makes it possible to accelerate the process of the audience's perception of communicative and cultural memory products through the formation of imaginative associations. In this regard, the work of Svetlana Simakova, a philologist and mathematician, 'Visual turn in mass communications' is of great importance (Simakova, 2017). The transformation of historical science in the conditions of formation of a society of visual culture and use of unique methods of work with visual sources are described in the

works of the Ural scientific school under the direction of Ludmila Mazur (2015). The specificity of media consumption of the digital generation actualizes the importance of the transformation of journalists' competences in order to work successfully in the digital environment. Gritsenko, Wijermars and Kopotev (2020) note that the digital is profoundly changing Russia today (in terms of the quantity and quality of available information and communication), but there are also wider implications given the number of Russians and Russian speakers living beyond the national borders. In terms of the production and consumption of information in the digital environment, other national and organisational specifics play a role in journalists' competencies and the digital audience reaction.

Russian journalists had no such autonomy, at least within news organizations. They abided by the top-down one-way communication mandated by officials. Rather than pretending interaction, they openly ignored online audiences and the blogging community. The Russian response of top-down communication was also consistent with the moralistic educational position journalists historically have taken toward their readers. Informal activity among Russian bloggers showed that the potentiality for journalist – citizen online dialogue exists, but the institutional logics of officialdom and moral education stunted this potentiality (Lowrey & Erzikova, 2014).

The study reveals the specifics of political and organisational culture, which differs from its Western counterparts. This culture and approach are incompatible with the nature of the digital environment, but at the same time affects it by limiting the potential of the various actors and stakeholders. In some respects, the digital media environment appears to be viewed as being another communicational environment with a similar approach to analogue media. There are also other identified causes of inequalities for audiences and journalists in the digital environment in Russia.

While one speaks of the journalism environment, it is often in reference to the global megacities like Moscow or other large urban areas in Russia as St Petersburg, which are more digitally connected and politically active. Other regional and local media exist, which is often understudied. Erzikova and Lowrey (2020) stress the importance of these media in information landscapes that are one of the few sources of information to the rural local population. Furthermore, the journalists are torn between ideas and concepts of professional goals, senses of community obligations, and pressures from increasingly influential local elite. Therefore, the regional and local daily realities for journalists and journalism can vary greatly and it is not possible to speak of

a singular reality in a diverse country such as Russia. This is exactly what is noted by Sergey Davydov (2020), 'we should not forget that we are discussing a country with the biggest territory and diverse and complex climatic conditions. That is why communication infrastructure and technologies are of particular importance here. A side effect is the uneven development of the infrastructure and, accordingly, the information inequality in particular, between residents of large and small settlements'. Therefore, technology and access to it is a key aspect and element for a more effective and vibrant digital environment.

Future research

The focus of this paper has been on the informational dimensions of the de-Westernisation of research, which is in reference to the information and knowledge produced. However, this approach ignores vital components and actors in the process and trend. We believe that it is in need of greater academic attention and research owing to the possible influence on the quality and quantity of de-Westernisation of academic research. This is namely the role of non-Western researchers and academic publishing outlets. The young, up and coming research generation is more networked and connected with the global academic and information world, and likely more widely travelled (especially those from major metropolitan areas such as Moscow, St. Petersburg and to major provincial cities such as Yekaterinburg) than many of the previous generations of academic researchers. This means that they are generally knowledgeable about Western academic literature but are also developing their own approaches to academic problems and questions. Furthermore, there are a growing number of academic publishing outlets that specialize on media and communication studies and publish the research results in the English language, such as *World of Media* in Moscow and *Changing Societies and Personalities* in Yekaterinburg. These outlets are also linked with international academic publishing through being indexed to Scopus and other indexes.

Conclusion

As the global transformation takes place that is witnessing an evolution from a unipolar US and Western-centric order to a multipolar non-Western-centric order, it is beginning to affect all aspects of the human environment, including academic research. In the digital age, the role of media communications is increasingly determined not only by participation in the process of socialization of individuals but also by the fact that the mass media contribute to the awareness of a person or an audience as a whole of their universal, professional

and civic identity. A significant problem of communicative and cultural memory transmission from analogue to digital generation are the mechanisms of its transformation, conditioned both by the content of personal memory and social community and by habitual communicative practices. These customary practices are conditioned by the service and technological capabilities and competence of journalists in the era of digitalization. As seen in the examples of research on Russia, there are some national specifics that involve the availability and access to technology beyond the major metropolitan areas, which creates inequalities and defies the assumption of an easy divide between different generations.

Public discussions of the problem that puts the concept of 'memories' relevant for a person or any given society at the centre of comprehension of the changes taking place in the sciences of society and culture. This makes it possible to draw the conclusion that the transformation of the information sphere in conjunction with the communicative and cultural memory as one of the foundations of this process makes it a priority to form and develop the professional culture of journalists and information culture of other subjects of information activity. As noted in the research by Western and Russian academics, there are various specific factors that include national specificities that influence the process and outcome of the communication of culture and memory. An apparent political problem for the Russian authorities is a lack of a coherent cognitive understanding and adherence to a common set of 'ideal' values and an identity as a means to unify a very diverse national population. As such, public discussions and the role of mass media and journalism are potentially important and vital, and it also means actors and stakeholders are tempting targets to influence the quality of those public discussions. This is particularly valid given Vladimir Putin's public statement from the beginning of his presidency that for Russia to rise again the people need to believe in the past (paraphrased).

The study of the ways of transformation of the communicative and cultural memory, typical for the analogue and digital generations, is possible based on a set of interdisciplinary solutions involving the use of social-communication, cognitive and structural-semiotic methodological approaches, socio-cultural and linguistic methods. The comparison of features and mechanisms of transformation will help to identify generational priorities in the awareness of one's cultural identity and significant differences in the understanding of these priorities. In the wider perspective, it will permit the development of a model of social media communication, capable of ensuring the effective transmission of communicative and cultural memory to the digital generation using the actual means used in youth communication practices, for example, storytelling.

An apparent departure in the Russian example from Western examples is the nature of the values and norms that bind various generational communities, which is linked to the historical, social, political, cultural and even economic peculiarities that exist in varied forms across the territory of the Russian Federation. But also includes the influence of other specifics that are demographic and technological in nature, which is evident in the urban-rural divide.

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