

Mediatized by policy and demediatized in practice: Representation of Russian youth policy in the social media accounts of the authorities¹

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Abstract

This paper examines how well the government agencies responsible for the implementation of specific areas of national youth policy in Russia manage to cover this topic on their social media resources, and identifies relevant trends for the space where the state and youth communicate. The results of our qualitative and quantitative content analysis of posts showed that the topic of youth policy does not receive proper coverage on the agencies' own social media accounts. Most often, youth policy is discussed in the context of covering events for young Russians. In addition, much attention is paid to documenting meetings of government officials to discuss issues within their areas of competence. At the same time, reports on specific government measures to support young people, current initiatives, and success stories of young Russians who take an active part in the development and implementation of the country's youth policy rarely get published on the agencies' accounts. The potential of the format for discussing youth policy in an open dialog on equal terms with the audience has yet to be tapped into. We believe it is possible to view the identified features of the communication strategies of the agencies as manifested demediatization of interaction between the state and youth.

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Keywords

Mediatization, demediatization, state, youth, youth policy, social media.

Introduction

Today, digital media play a key role in addressing various social and political issues. Russian and international scholars believe that political communication in an information society is deeply immersed in the media environment, which has its own special logic of functioning (Vartanova, 2020; Labush, & Puyu, 2019; Gureeva, 2020, Shestopal, 2010; Altheide, & Snow, 2000; Hepp, & Krotz, 2014; Lundby, 2014). Over the past few decades, researchers have been exploring the ways in which new media influence the transformation of the socio-political environment, examining how the authorities (Kryshtanovskaya, & Filippova, 2018; Surma, 2015; Chizhov, 2016; Crozier, 2007; Howard, 2005) and citizens (Vyrkovsky, & Kolesnichenko, 2020; Efanova, & Melnichenko, 2018; Bennett, Freedon, Hussain, & Wells, 2013; Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2014) use social media platforms to achieve their goals.

In Russia, the significance of new media space as the infrastructure for social and political communications is recognized at the government level. In July 2022, the President of Russia signed Federal Law No. 270, which requires government agencies to post information about their work on their official social media pages on a regular basis. The law took effect in December 2022; from then on, agencies must publicize their activities and comment on matters of current interest on their accounts. To monitor the implementation of these measures, the digital outreach of government authorities is rated³ to evaluate performance indicators such as the visibility of agencies on social media, audience activity, content quality, content policy planning, special projects, and handling comments.

The Russian government focuses on finding effective mechanisms of communication with young people. For example, the Fundamental Principles of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 approved by the Russian government back in 2014 set forth the following policy priorities: shaping the media space to enable youth development and promoting feedback and relations between government institutions, non-governmental associations, and young people. The official document puts particular emphasis

³ The digital outreach of government authorities has been rated since 2020 by the Research Center of Independent Non-Profit Organization “Dialog”. URL: <https://anodialog.ru/2023/07/25/dialog-predstavil-rejting-raboty-organov-vlasti-v-interne/>

on the need to create efficient mechanisms to raise awareness among young people about the focal points and action items of the youth policy.

The federal authorities responsible for implementing the state youth policy in Russia include the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodyozh), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Sports. In this paper, we examine how well the agencies manage their own coverage of the youth policy on their social media resources and identify relevant trends for the space where the state and youth communicate.

Theoretical framework

Nowadays, the media forms a substantial part of the relations and processes by which people define their lives and assign a meaning to what surrounds them. One of the concepts that most fully reflect the essence of the increasing media influence on various spheres, including the socio-political sphere, is the concept of mediatization. The term was coined in 1993 by the English researcher Thompson (1993), who referred to the process of attributing media logic or media form to basic elements of social and cultural reality as mediatization. In present-day studies, the term “mediatization” often acts as an umbrella concept (Kolomiec, 2014) describing the process of the growing influence of modern communication technologies, including media content, media organizations, media effects, and media logic, and the individual and social significance of media consumption. Mediatization marks the irreplaceability of media in different areas of social life, which leads to qualitative changes in everyday practices (Jansson, 2018).

Digital media, including social networks and messengers, have already become familiar platforms for socio-political communication. Young people are the most active audience of digital media since they are the most receptive to innovations and digital technology (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2022). According to the 2022 data by the Russian research company Mediascope⁴, young people aged 18-24 spend an average of 5 hours and 45 minutes on the Internet every day, which is considerably more than the average for all Russians (3 hours and 40 minutes). The success of digital media is primarily due to the demand of modern society for fast access to and interactivity in dealing with information.

The relationship between youth and the state in the field of social media has been a topic of extensive research by various professionals. A large number of

⁴ Media Consumption in 2022 / Mediascope. URL: https://mediascope.net/upload/iblock/e20/5xy943jkri4nngauf1t1stsr0877w3jn5/CSTB_медиапотребление.pdf

academic papers and monographs have been published in Russia (Gureeva et al, 2022; Minskaya, 2021; Kasyanov, Shcherbakova, & Samygin, 2019; Kalugina, & Klimova, 2016; Popova, 2021) and abroad (Arif, 2019; Livingstone, 2007; Theocharis, 2012; Bennett, Freedom, Hussain, & Wells, 2013); however, it should be noted that this kind of research quickly becomes outdated (Komarova, 2021). It requires updating the theoretical and conceptual tools for describing the specific features of mediatized interaction and verifying new hypotheses empirically. The process of demediatization is one of the underexplored yet increasingly influential trends of our days. In the broadest terms, demediatization can be described as a process of slowing down or reversing the transformation processes associated with the presence, use, and influence of media in all spheres of human life (Kopecka-Piech, 2020).

The review of studies examining the process of demediatization allows us to distinguish two main lines in its conceptualization. The first group of researchers understands demediatization as a gradual shift away from the mediation of traditional media in the process of delivering messages from the sources of information to the audiences (Strömbäck, & Esser, 2014; Kunelius, & Reunanen, 2016; Firmstone, & Coleman, 2015). The second group of researchers focuses on studying individual and group practices of intentionally limiting or avoiding participation in mediatized communication and not using media in certain aspects of everyday life consciously for one reason or another (Steinmaurer, & Atteneder, 2019; Pfadenhauer, & Grenz, 2016; Jansson, 2018). Methodologically, these studies of reactions to mediatization aim to capture and acknowledge the active role of subjects under pressure caused by the profound integration of media into contemporary life. In this respect, particular attention is paid to describing the various motivations for demediatization, including attempts to protect oneself from media's invasion of privacy, the desire to become more productive (by limiting time spent on using digital services and consuming content for non-professional purposes) (Kirschner, 2017), the desire to demonstrate one's exceptionalism ("everyone is on social media but I am not") (Prisching, 2017), etc.

We should also highlight the interpretation of the demediatization process recently proposed by Russian researchers Gavra and Bykova (2022). The main focus of their research is event demediatization, i.e. demediatization of local politicized incidents. The authors define demediatization as a process in which the level of mediatization of a newsworthy event is purposefully reduced by moving the discussion of the event to the periphery of public media discourse. Such event demediatization can be spontaneous or purposeful. Researchers

point out that the tools of intentional demediatization can include silencing, discrediting sources, and shifting public attention to other newsbreaks.

As part of the communications between the state and youth, we propose to consider the process of demediatization in connection with the strategies of three key actors, among which are not only the state and the youth audience, but also the digital platforms on which their interaction takes place.

If we appeal to the idea that media is an inherently impartial communication medium that performs strictly mediation functions (McQuail, 2010), then demediatization can be described as the process of acquiring subjectivity by new media in the processes of socio-political communication. Digital platforms, which provide the resources for interaction between the state and young people, are increasingly establishing themselves as independent actors of communication. In many ways, digital media defines the principles by which the information field around a person is formed today. Thanks to algorithmic content delivery, they decide what to show the users and what to hide from them. Digital media algorithms select content based on the user's personally identified interests and digital interaction experience recorded by the platform. For example, if entertainment and lifestyle content accounts for a significant share of media consumption by young people (Dunas et al, 2023; Alhabash, & Ma, 2017), this kind of content will feature the most in the newsfeed, with other news pessimized. Posts about government initiatives in youth policy run the risk of being ignored by the algorithms because they do not match the interests and interactions of the audience, the data on which was previously collected. The youth feed is gradually becoming more and more thematically homogeneous. Therefore, no matter how hard the government agencies try to build constructive communication in social networks, the target audience will simply not see their posts. At the same time, young people get the impression that the government does not communicate with them at all, because such posts almost never appear in their feeds.

The manifestation of demediatization trends on the part of young people can be considered at the level of individual and group practices of intentionally limiting or avoiding participation in mediatized communication and the purposeful rejection of media in certain contexts. For "digital youth", media use experiences are characterized by independence, thoughtfulness, and awareness (Dunas, 2022). Young audiences can demonstrate a very high, almost professional level of critical thinking during media consumption, control the duration of media activity, and put bounds to its "integration" into their daily routines. Thus, young people are active actors in the media communication space, as they demonstrate the ability to control their level of involvement and select their content consumption.

The telling signs of demediatization by state authorities are, firstly, their selective media support of some initiatives, and secondly, their refusal to provide feedback in their own channels (with regard to all or some issues) at a time when young people are ready for dialog and expect the government to engage in two-way communication on social and political issues. Unlike a number of foreign researchers who interpret demediatization as the aspiration of government agencies to communicate directly via their own social media accounts, bypassing mass media (Strömbäck, & Esser, 2014; Kunelius, & Reunanen, 2016; Firmstone, & Coleman, 2015), we cannot unambiguously define it as a manifestation of demediatization, if demediatization is understood as a slowdown of the transformational processes associated with the expansion of media logics. In an era of deep mediatization, social networks push back the conventional limits of communication in the political sphere, offering political actors numerous extra tools for interacting with target groups. However, to be able to utilize them, political actors need to take into account a number of specific features and the operation logic of digital platforms. Therefore, with the minimized role of mass media and more intensive interaction in government agencies' social media, the state will still have to adapt to the requirements of communication platforms.

Methodology

Our previous research studied the manifestations of demediatization in the socio-political context at the levels of youth and digital platforms. In this paper, we decided to find out whether this phenomenon is specific to the communications of Russian authorities on social media on youth policy issues. With this purpose in mind, we will focus on the following questions:

1. How well is the youth policy represented on the official accounts of relevant executive authorities on social media?
2. In what contexts is youth policy mentioned most often?
3. What are the specific features of information support of events related to the implementation of youth policy on the official accounts of responsible agencies?

The main research method was the qualitative and quantitative content analysis of posts on social networks. The subject of our research was the posts of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodyozh), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Culture in the VK social network and Telegram Messenger. We chose these communication platforms for our analysis because they are very popular among the young audience. According to Mediascope, VK

(or VKontakte) and Telegram remain the leading positions among social media in terms of the average daily reach of the Russian audience⁵. In addition, all five agencies have official accounts on both platforms, which made it possible to conduct a comparative analysis.

The study was divided into three stages. Firstly, we analyzed the dynamics of references to the youth policy by each agency in VK and Telegram and the overall dynamics of representation of this topic on their accounts. The total sample was 298 posts. To identify the contexts in which youth policy is used, we made a content analysis of the agencies' posts on VK and Telegram. The list of contexts was compiled in the course of the study. Out of the total sample of youth policy posts, we excluded posts where this word combination was mentioned in a formal rather than a meaningful way. By formal references in the posts, we mean mentions of the youth policy in the job titles of the speakers. So, the total sample where the topic is mentioned in a meaningful way amounted to 236 posts.

The third stage of the study included a more detailed analysis of posts about two events (N=121): the Territory of Meanings youth forum (*Territoriya smyslov*, N=70) and the educational project "Voice of Generation" (*Golos pokoleniya*, N=51), as the results of the second stage of our research showed that events were the most popular context for youth policy coverage. We selected the information support of these two events for the case study because the posts, which discussed youth policy through the prism of the events, most often referred to the Territory of Meanings and the Voice of Generation. To identify the features of coverage of these events, we: a) described the dynamics of references to them on social media resources and determined which stages of the events were covered in more detail; b) identified peak periods of mass media interest in these events and compared the dynamics of references to the analyzed events on external and internal media resources; c) identified the genres of the publications by the agencies about these events; d) analyzed the reaction of the social media audience to these posts.

When identifying the genres of the publications, we used the classification by Kolesnichenko (2021), which describes popular formats for presenting information in social networks. The response of the audience to the publications about the events was assessed using metrics such as the number of likes, reposts, and comments. The dynamics of references to the word combination "youth policy" in VK and Telegram was monitored using internal search on

⁵ Media Consumption in 2022 / Mediascope. Available at: https://mediascope.net/upload/iblock/e20/5xy943jkri4ngauf1t1stsr0877w3jn5/CSTB_медиапотребление.pdf

the platforms. The data provided by the Medialogiya monitoring system were used to identify the dynamics of references to the topic in the mass media. The chronological framework of the study covered the period from 2021 to 2022.

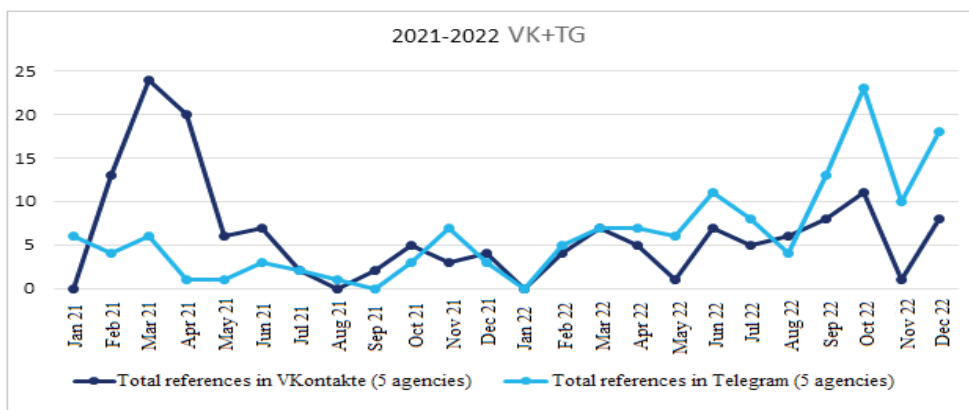
Results

Specific features of representation of youth policy on the agencies' accounts: the qualitative and quantitative analysis

The analysis of the references to the word combination “youth policy” on the social media accounts of the five agencies revealed that this topic does not receive proper coverage. We found only 298 posts mentioning youth policy over two years. In VKontakte, all the agencies mentioned the term 86 times in 2021 and 63 times in 2022. In Telegram, youth policy was mentioned only in 37 posts in 2021, although in 2022 their number increased considerably to 112. Thus, the overall dynamics of the references to youth policy in VKontakte and Telegram shows the inconsistency in its coverage on different communication platforms of the agencies. The number of references to youth policy by the agencies in VKontakte peaked in March 2021; in Telegram, in October 2022 (*Graph 1*).

Graph 1

References to youth policy in VK and Telegram, 5 executive agencies

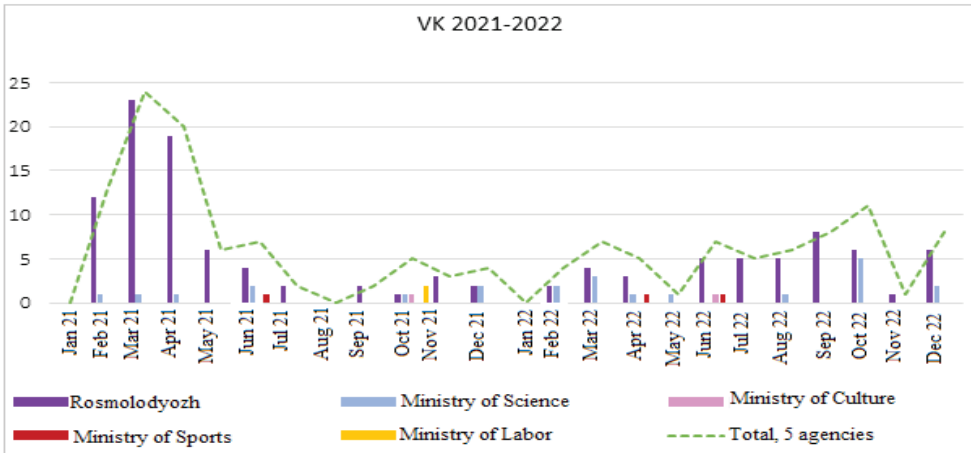


Unsurprisingly, Rosmolodyozh was the agency that addressed this topic in its publications the most. Over two years, the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs published 119 posts mentioning youth policy in VKontakte and 121 posts in Telegram, which accounts for more than 80% of the total number of posts by all five state agencies. We found the least number of references to youth policy on the accounts of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry

of Culture. These ministries published only 2 such posts on VK. *Graphs 2 and 3* show the distribution of the posts referring to youth policy on the VK accounts and Telegram channels of the five agencies.

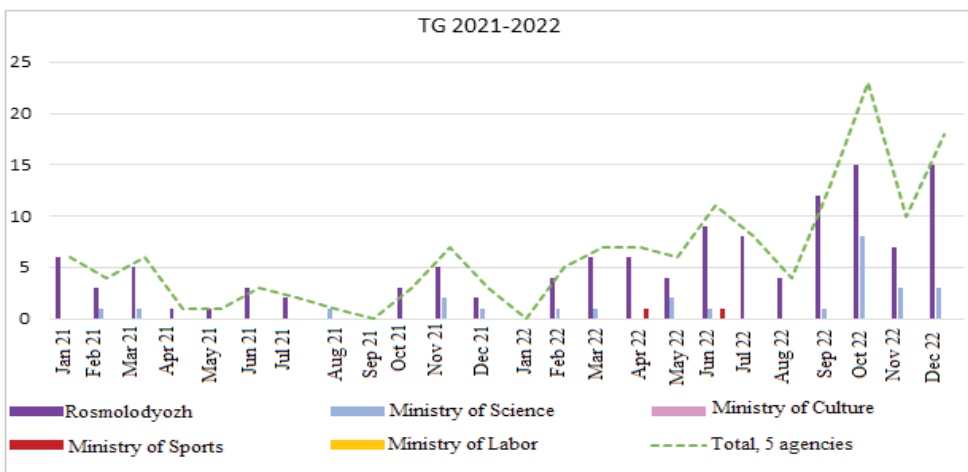
Graph 2

Distribution of references to youth policy on VK accounts of 5 executive agencies in 2021-2022



Graph 3

Distribution of references to youth policy in Telegram channels of 5 executive agencies in 2021-2022

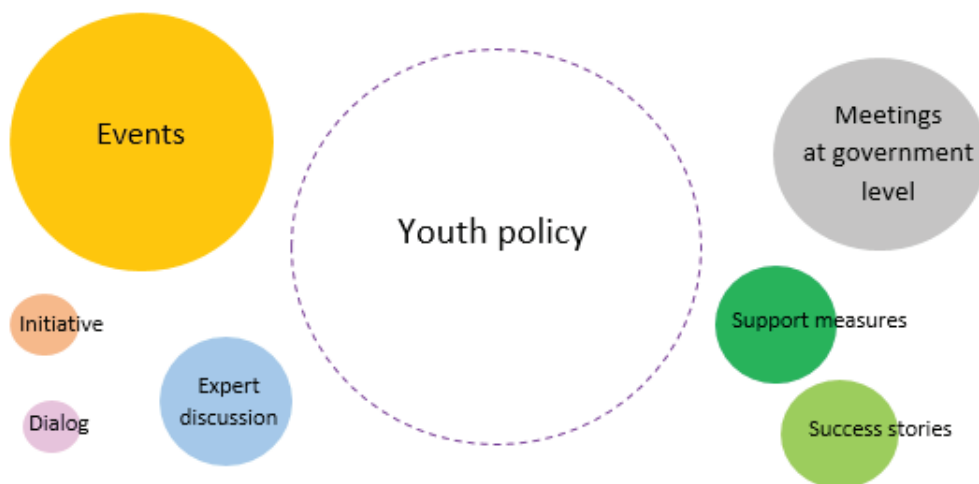


To determine the context in which the topic of youth policy is covered, we decided to use the method of content analysis of posts on the agencies' accounts. Out of 298 posts, youth policy was mentioned in a meaningful way in 236 posts, which were included in the final sample for content analysis.

The results showed that the agencies most often discussed youth policy on their VK accounts in the context of ongoing events (42%) and official meetings between government officials to address issues within their areas of competence (27%) (*Figure 1*). Success stories of young Russians covered through the prism of their participation in the country's youth policy (8%) and government support for youth (7.5%) were reported much less frequently. In addition, youth policy was rarely addressed in the context of the discussion with the expert community (7.5%). Other reference contexts included youth policy initiatives (5%). Of particular note is the context that we can describe as a dialog with young people (3%). For example, on March 23, 2022, Rosmolodyozh announced the launch of a website to collect proposals for the Youth Policy Law, encouraging young people to join the project and send their own ideas⁶.

Figure 1

**Contexts of references to youth policy on VK accounts
of 5 executive agencies in 2021-2022**



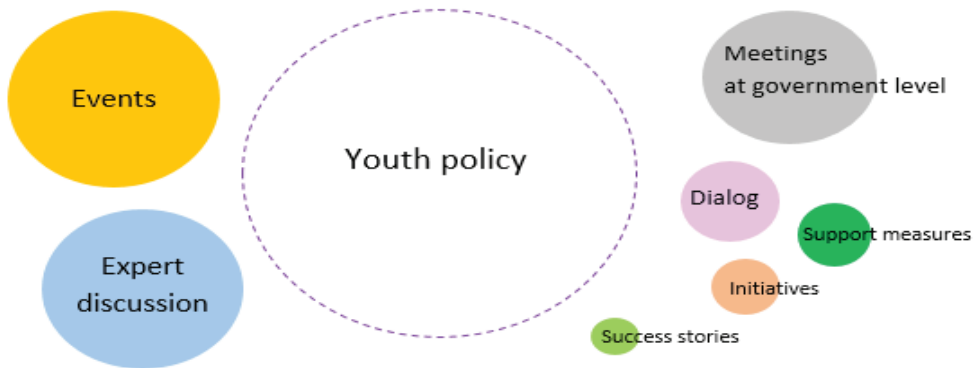
Such “angles” of presenting the topic of youth policy as events (26%), meetings of government officials (24%), and expert discussions (21%) received

⁶ Post on the Rosmolodezh VK-account published on March 23, 2022. URL: https://vk.com/wall-49388164_56810

almost equal coverage in the Telegram channels of the five agencies (Figure 2). However, we should note that texts with expert reviews of youth policy implementation were published on Telegram almost three times more often than on the official VK accounts. Dialog was another youth policy context, which has gained more prominence in the agencies' Telegram channels (12%). For example, on January 11, 2021⁷, the Rosmolodyozh Telegram channel posted an invitation to choose the most relevant topics for discussion at the Youth Policy Commission of the Russian State Duma⁸. In another post⁹ the agency offered its followers to join the conversation about youth policy and grant competitions in a live broadcast on the Clubhouse. Success stories, by contrast, were less often the reason to talk about youth policy (4%). Posts about special initiatives (7%) and government support measures (6%) were rare on Telegram.

Figure 2

Contexts of references to youth policy in Telegram channels of 5 executive agencies in 2021-2022



Events as a context for covering youth policy in the Rosmolodyozh account

Since youth policy was much more widely presented as a topic on the accounts of Rosmolodyozh than on the resources of the other agencies, we decided to take a closer look at these publications. We analyzed the posts referring to youth

⁷ Post on the Rosmolodezh Telegram channel published on January 11, 2021. URL: <https://t.me/rosmolodez/2876>

⁸ The State Duma is one of the chambers of the Russian parliament, the Federal Assembly

⁹ Post on the Rosmolodezh Telegram channel published on March 6, 2021. URL: <https://t.me/rosmolodez/2915>

policy through the prism of events, and found two events that the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs mentioned most often. They were the annual Russian youth forum “Territory of Meanings” (*Territoriya smyslov*) and the educational project “Voice of Generation” (*Golos pokoleniya*), which is a relatively new project for the agency launched in 2021 to develop the management potential of Russian youth. These two events were the subject of our case study of information support of youth events on official resources.

Case study: Territory of Meanings

The Territory of Meanings is described as the largest educational forum in Russia, which has been bringing together young professionals in different industries from across the country to create socially important projects every year since 2015. The forum offers several themed sessions targeting young people aged 18-35. The sessions address such issues as culture, education, entrepreneurship, public administration, journalism, etc. In 2021-2022, the Territory of Meanings was mentioned 4,696 times in the Russian mass media, and 70 times in the VK and Telegram accounts of Rosmolodyozh.

Rosmolodyozh covered the event on its own social media accounts most actively in July 2022, when the final stage was held in Solnechnogorsk, and in the period from February to March 2021, which coincided with the regional stage of the forum that year. The data on the references to the event in VK and Telegram (*Graph 4*) indicate that in 2021 the regional forums of the Territory of Meanings enjoyed more coverage than the final event of the project; in 2022, on the contrary, the culmination of the forum campaign coincided with the peak of references to the event on social networks.

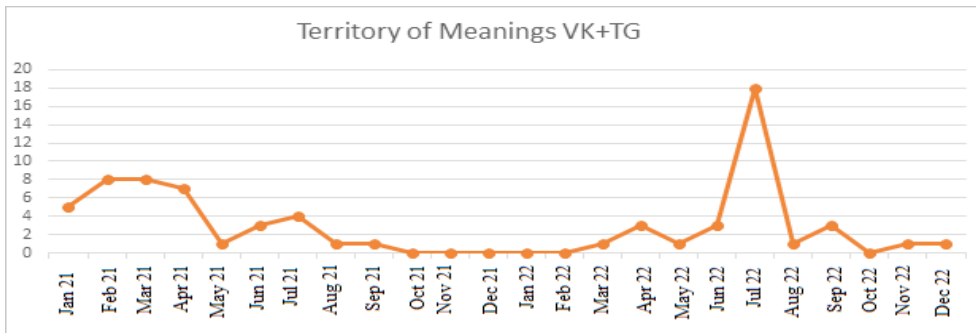
The final stages of the forums in 2021 and 2022 received the most publicity in the mass media: the references to the Territory of Meanings peaked in July 2021 and July 2022 (*Graph 5*). It can also be noted that the event was a bit more actively promoted in the media in 2021 compared with 2022: the number of references totaled 2,696 in 2021 and 2,000 in 2020.

Interestingly, the event did not disappear from the Russian mass media agenda after the end of the forum in August 2021. From October to December 2021, journalists frequently mentioned it in the context of two other Rosmolodyozh contests, Hospitality Workshop (*Masterskaya gostepriimstva*) and Your Move (*Tvoy khod*), the winners of which were given the opportunity to visit the Territory of Meanings forum. In addition, during this period the Territory of Meanings was mentioned in the context of the Senezh Management Workshop, which has become a traditional forum venue. However, Rosmolodyozh did not stir up interest in the forum between October and December 2021 on its own accounts.

Almost all content about the forum on both Rosmolodyozh communication platforms was limited to informational genres: news (47%) and announcements (30%). Posts openly encouraging people to join the event accounted for a mere 5% of the sample. Other formats of social media coverage of the Territory of Meanings included the impressions of forum participants, audience surveys, and reports on the forum sessions. Remarkably, there was a publication among the posts about the event in VK, where six participants of the Territory of Meanings forum shared their ideas on the development of youth projects in Russia, but this format did not go any further on Rosmolodyozh's accounts.

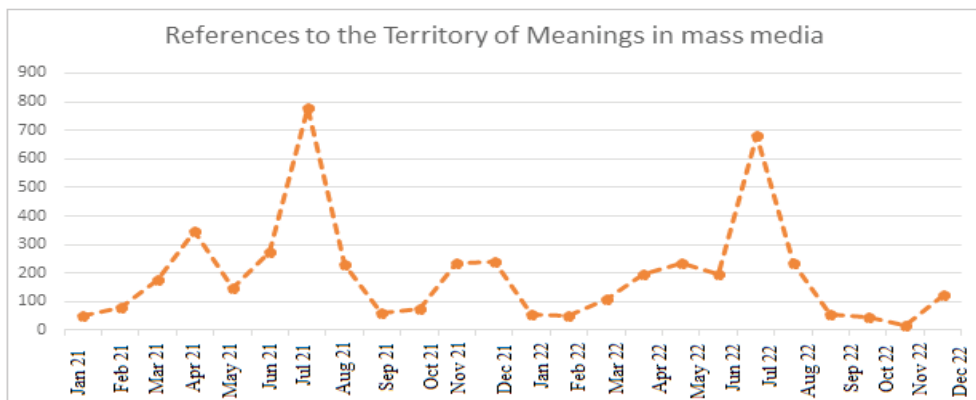
Graph 4

References to the Territory of Meanings event on Rosmolodyozh's social media accounts (VK and Telegram) in 2021-2022



Graph 5

References to the Territory of Meanings event in mass media in 2021-2022



Case study: Voice of Generation

The Voice of Generation project was launched in September 2021 as a new flagship educational program offered by Rosmolodyozh for people between 23 and 35 years old, which want to develop their management skills. At the end of the program, the participants who have proven themselves are included in the executive candidate pool of the government agency with the opportunity to take part in the implementation of federal projects. The program is open for youth policy professionals, university students, and recent graduates working in government and commercial organizations in any sector.

In 2021-2022, the Voice of Generation was mentioned 863 times in the Russian mass media, and 51 times in the VK and Telegram accounts of Rosmolodyozh. If we compare the dynamics of references to the event in the agency's accounts (*Graph 6*) and the mass media (*Graph 7*), we note a discrepancy in the periods of active coverage.

Rosmolodyozh most actively addressed this event in its social media accounts in the period from July to September 2022. This period coincided with the completion of the first season of the Voice of Generation, the collection of applications, and the closing of the elimination round of the second season of the project. If we look at the graph of references to the event in the Telegram channel and on the VK account, we will see that the information support of the second season of the Voice of Generation, which started in September 2022, became much more intensive in comparison with the first season of the project in September 2021: the number of posts about the event increased three times.

The majority of posts about the program on both VK and Telegram were the participants' impressions (40% of all posts). The project was frequently mentioned in information posts: news (21%) and announcements (19%), with news being more actively posted on VK (29% of all posts on this platform), while announcements were most common on Telegram (33% of all posts about the event). Other formats of reporting on the Voice of Generation included the publication of the program's anthem, an audience survey to see if the followers had time to apply, a report on the project's first module about leadership, and a congratulatory message to a program alumna on her appointment as head of the youth committee.

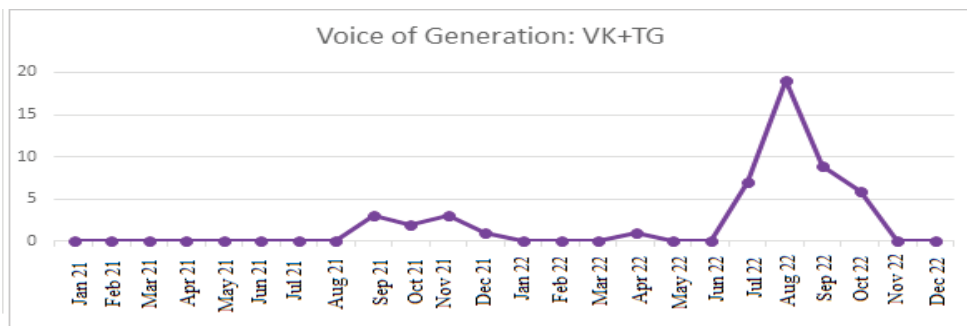
Mass media interest in the project peaked in December 2022 and September-October 2021. Here we should highlight that the surge of media publications in December 2022 was related not so much to the first educational module "Leadership Position" of the second season of the Voice of Generation project, as to the completion of the special (additional) program "Voice of Generation: Vice-Rectors" launched

in October 2022 and the three-day intensive workshop “Voice of Generation: Teachers”. Both programs were developed by Rosmolodyozh in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

Other peaks of publication activity in the mass media (September-October 2021) were related to the launch of the first season of the educational event in 2021 and the first module of the program. The graph of media references to the Voice of Generation shows that the announcement of the first season in 2021 was more publicized than the start of the second season a year later.

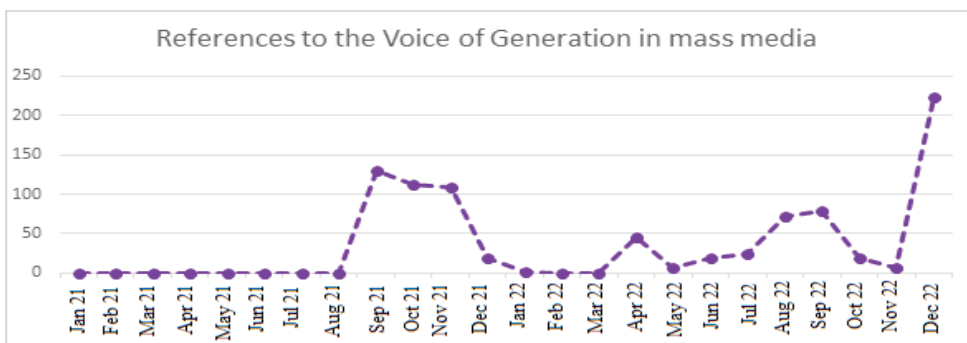
Graph 6

References to the Voice of Generation event on Rosmolodyozh’s communication platforms in VK and Telegram in 2021-2022



Graph 7

References to the Voice of Generation event in mass media in 2021-2022



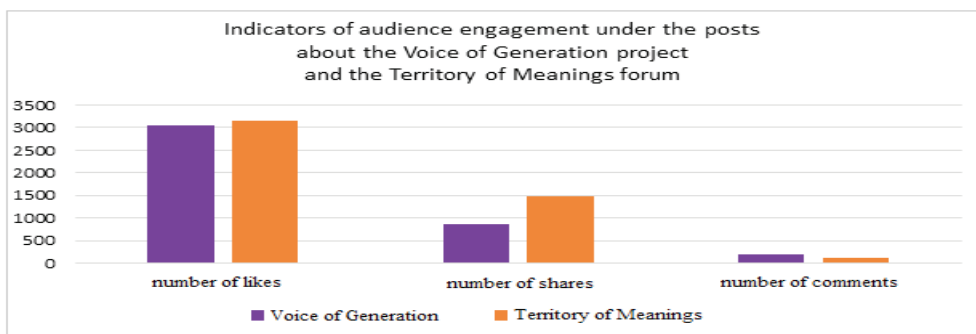
If we consider the indicators of audience engagement under the posts about the two events on VK¹⁰ (Diagram 1), we can see that the communication

¹⁰ The Telegram channel of Rosmolodyozh does not allow users to leave reactions and comment under posts.

strategy for the presentation of the new educational project Voice of Generation proved to be quite effective. In terms of audience response on the social media accounts of Rosmolodyozh, this event is comparable to the well-known Territory of Meanings forum, which has been held for eight years. The total number of comments under the posts about the Voice of Generation project (198) exceeded the number of comments under the posts about the Territory of Meanings forum (109) by almost two times. The number of likes under the posts about Rosmolodyozh's new educational project was close to the number of such reactions of the audience under the publications about the traditional forum (3,042 for the Voice of Generation and 3,139 for the Territory of Meanings, respectively). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the audience demonstrated a greater willingness to share information about the Territory of Meanings forum, with the number of shares about this event 1.5 times higher than that of the Voice of Generation project.

Diagram 1

Indicators of audience engagement under the posts about the Voice of Generation project and the Territory of Meanings forum on Rosmolodyozh's VK account



Conclusion and discussion

In this paper, we attempted to answer the question of how well government agencies manage to cover youth policy on their social media resources. The results of our analysis showed that the topic of youth policy does not receive proper coverage on the agencies' own social media accounts. Moreover, there is a tendency towards inconsistent support of the topic of youth policy on VK and Telegram: the number of references to this topic on VK is gradually decreasing, while on Telegram it is increasing. This can be explained by the fact that Telegram as a messaging service is gradually transforming into an effective

communication platform to which agencies pay increased attention. Telegram's rising popularity is driven by the ban on social networks such as Instagram¹¹ and Facebook¹² in Russia.

Unsurprisingly, Rosmolodyozh pays more attention to the topic of youth policy on its resources than other agencies, for which this area of work is not the main focus but which, nevertheless, have a direct relation to specialized initiatives aimed at young people. The least number of references to youth policy was found on the accounts of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Culture.

Most often, agencies use their own accounts to talk about youth policy in the context of covering events for young Russians. The case studies of information support for the Territory of Meanings forum and the Voice of Generation educational project revealed different approaches to promoting important federal projects. While the coverage of the well-known Territory of Meanings forum, which has been held in Russia for eight years, was limited to providing news information to the young audience, the communication support for the new Voice of Generation event, which was launched in 2021, focused on demonstrating the benefits of the project through the participants' success stories and impressions. And this approach turned out to be rather fruitful: the indicators of audience engagement under the posts about the Voice of Generation and the Territory of Meanings were comparable, even though the potential target audience of the new project is obviously narrower. Personal stories, or, in other words, the "human interest" frame, resulted in more comments to the posts about the Voice of Generation on Rosmolodyozh's official VK account and almost the same number of likes as publications about the Territory of Meanings forum. At the same time, Rosmolodyozh's new project did not manage to attract much mass media attention: its information support was sporadic and much less active than that of the traditional Territory of Meanings forum.

On their accounts, the agencies also often report on meetings of government officials to discuss youth policy issues within their area of competence. On the one hand, such publications convey a message to the audience that the agencies make strenuous efforts in this area; on the other hand, the engagement potential of such reports remains controversial. At the same time, posts on specific government measures to support young people, current initiatives, and success stories of young Russians who take an active part in the development and implementation of the country's youth policy rarely get published on the

¹¹ Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.

¹² Ibid.

agencies' accounts. However, we consider that these “angles” of presenting information could potentially contribute to creating a positive image of the authorities.

Discussing youth policy in an open dialog on equal terms with young people appears to be a promising communication strategy, but so far its potential remains untapped also. Meanwhile, there is a demand for communication with the agencies in the digital environment on the part of young people; young people often seek to present their picture of the world in their comments, share their reasoning, and introduce their initiatives (Gureeva, & Kireeva, 2023a). If the authorities want to draw young people's attention on social media and win their trust, they should be ready not only to listen more to the opinions of the audience but also to initiate these discussions themselves.

The absence of common infrastructure for obtaining up-to-date, complete information about youth policy and a consistent strategy of the authorities to provide information on this subject on social networks could be one of the reasons for the poor awareness of young Russians of the government's efforts in this area. The results of our earlier pilot survey of young students also indicate that this group does not perceive social media as the most promising resource for finding information about youth policy, noting that they would rather turn to legacy media in this case (Gureeva, Kireeva, 2023, b). Taking the research results into consideration, youth policy in Russia today is more likely to be called an area of social and political communications that is deeply mediatized *by fiat* and demediatized *in practice*.

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