Social media communities as cultural-code spaces for constructing the lifestyle of Russian youth[1]

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Abstract
In the current context of geopolitical turbulence, characterized by value clashes among other things, the younger generation in Russia is becoming a crucial audience for fostering national interests. The nature of the content young individuals independently consume has the potential to shape their worldview and lifestyle, while also serving as a vehicle for transmitting cultural codes. This is where social media content takes center stage, as media consumption serves as both a lifestyle practice and a means of gaining insights into preferred lifestyles. The present study aims to explore the analysis of youth communities' content on social media platforms in order to understand how it influences their lifestyle choices. To this end, a methodical approach combines content analysis of young people's communities with comparative analysis of values expressed on social media in relation to cultural codes embedded in national folklore. It has been shown that social media content effectively incorporates most of these designated cultural codes and values. However, it fails to recognize the significance of Orthodox faith, which is also an important aspect of many young people's lives.

Keywords
Media usage, lifestyle, Gen Z, social media, cultural codes.

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Introduction

In 2024, approximately 106 million people in Russia used social media, accounting for 73,5% of the population. Among young people under 24 years old, Telegram and VKontakte were the most popular platforms, with 85% and 37% (among 18-24 y.o.), respectively. Within these platforms, various communities were formed, serving as paramount sites for the creation, reproduction, and dissemination of collective identities, values, and behaviors. These communities act as specific cultural code spaces where unique linguistic forms, visual aesthetics, behavioral patterns, and social norms emerge. The combination of all these elements forms a distinct lifestyle for their members. Understanding this phenomenon is essential for comprehending the mechanisms of cultural identity formation among young Russians in the context of ongoing digitalization and media-driven society.

The emergence of social media as primary spaces of youth socialization has fundamentally altered the mechanisms through which collective identity is formed in contemporary society. Previous generations developed their worldviews largely through face-to-face interactions within relatively stable institutional frameworks such as family, school, state-controlled media. Today's young Russians, by contrast, encounter value systems, behavioral norms, and lifestyle models primarily through curated digital content produced and circulated within online communities. This shift is not merely technological but ontological, changing the very nature of how meanings are constructed, negotiated, and internalized. The content young people consume daily on platforms such as VKontakte and Telegram does not simply reflect pre-existing values but actively participates in their formation, offering cognitive and emotional templates for interpreting reality and navigating social life. Despite the scale and significance of this phenomenon, we have remarkably limited empirical knowledge about what these templates actually contain – what stories are being told, what ideals promoted, what vision of "the good life" constructed within the digital spaces where Russian youth now spend a substantial portion of their waking hours.

This gap in understanding becomes particularly consequential in the contemporary Russian context, characterized by geopolitical turbulence, value contestation, and explicit state emphasis on cultural sovereignty. Presidential Decree No. 809 of 2022, which codified a list of "traditional spiritual and moral values", represents an explicit attempt to articulate a normative value framework in response to perceived challenges to national identity. However, the relationship between these officially designated values and the actual content environment

of young Russians' media consumption remains empirically unexamined. Do the values promoted in the decree find reflection in the material young people voluntarily engage with? Or does the digital media landscape operate according to a different logic—one shaped by platform affordances, attention economy dynamics, and the vernacular creativity of content creators and their audiences? Moreover, how do contemporary value expressions in youth-oriented communities relate to deeper historical strata of Russian culture—specifically, to the folk wisdom systematized in Vladimir Dahl's proverbial collection and subsequently analyzed by Svitich (2012) as a coherent hierarchical system of traditional values? The question at stake is not whether tradition simply persists or vanishes in digital modernity, but rather how it is transformed, reinterpreted, and selectively mobilized within new communicative environments.

Approaching thematic social media communities as "cultural code spaces" provides a productive analytical framework for investigating these questions. Cultural codes, understood not as fixed symbolic inventories but as dynamic meaning-making systems that integrate individuals into collectivities, operate across multiple dimensions simultaneously: the linguistic (what can legitimately be said), the aesthetic (what can appropriately be shown), the normative (what ought to be valued), and the practical (what should be done). In large subscription-based communities that aggregate content for millions of young users, these codes are perpetually produced, tested, and stabilized through continuous cycles of posting, responding, commenting, and sharing. Such communities effectively function as laboratories of collective sense-making, bringing diverse and often conflicting value propositions – traditional and modern, national and transnational, official and vernacular – into sustained contact and thereby generating a complex, multilayered, and potentially contradictory symbolic environment. Determining what actually emerges from this process demands rigorous empirical investigation rather than normative speculation: not assumptions about what youth values should be according to institutional actors or adult observers, but systematic documentation of which narratives demonstrably circulate within these spaces, what values they encode and transmit, and how these patterns relate both to historical tradition and to contemporary official value discourse.

The relevance of this research is driven by the increasing importance of social media as a significant socio-cultural space (Smirnova, Denisova, & Mamedov, 2025), a crucial segment of the media landscape (Tyshetskaya, Vartanov, & Kalachikova, 2026), and their predominance in media consumption patterns, particularly among young people (Fan, Luo, & Chan, 2025; Hai, & Xiong, 2026).

This research focuses on the content of thematic youth communities on social media platforms VKontakte and Telegram. Specifically, it examines their role as cultural code spaces that shape the lifestyle of modern Russian youth.

Thus, the objective of this study was to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Do the traditional, indigenous Russian values (the Dahl–Svitich values) find reflection in the social media agenda of contemporary youth?

RQ2: Does the content produced by social media communities align with the modern list of traditional values outlined in Presidential Decree No. 809?

RQ3: Is there a meaningful correlation between these two sets of values?

RQ4: Which values are *de facto* characteristic of the contemporary youth agenda on social media, irrespective of their presence or absence in the aforementioned official lists?

Lifestyle construction in the digital environment: Theoretical and methodological foundations

Cultural codes as a symbolic framework for lifestyle formation

Social media have been studied in relation to various aspects, including the formation of new forms of sociality (Jenkins, 2006), digital citizenship (Mossberger, Tolbert, McNeal, 2008), consumer practices (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021), and the emergence of new types of agendas (Vargo, Guo, Shaw, & McCombs, 2014).

The study of social media from the perspective of the meaning and cultural codes production draws on the tradition of semiotics and cultural media studies. This approach sees platforms not as neutral tools but as cultural environments where collective meanings are continuously created and challenged (Vartanova, 2025). The concepts of so-called collective intelligence (Levy, 1994) and distributed knowledge (Jenkins, 2006) explain how communities in social networks work together to create and maintain complex symbolic systems called cultural codes that define norms, identities, and practices of group membership. These codes are manifested in the form of memes (Shifman, 2014), viral narratives, and digital rituals that can be seen as modern "texts of culture" (Lotman, 1992).

Bourdieu's works (2005) on symbolic capital and habitus have found new applications in studies of digital inequality and preferences (Hills, 2015) showing how social media have become a site for the struggle over symbolic power and the legitimacy of certain cultural practices. These social media appear to be a dynamic "cultural production field", where the meanings of

modernity are created and reinforced (Bourdieu, 1993). At the same time, the analysis of communities as cultural coding spaces, where lifestyles act not just as sets of consumer choices but as systems of symbols and meanings that integrate individuals into groups, requires further exploration.

Sociological perspectives on the lifestyle concept

In modern scientific discourse, lifestyle is interpreted as a resultant form embodying values, worldviews, the level of material security and the social status of an individual (Chaney, 1996). Despite the fact that the phenomenon of lifestyle has been an object of philosophical reflection throughout the history of human thought, it was institutionalized as a scientific category only in the 1970s by Soviet sociologists. This concept emerged in opposition to the bourgeois concept of "quality of life", interpreted as a purely economic indicator (Pilyushenko, 2015). Within the framework of Soviet tradition, lifestyle was seen as the product of a set of social, legal, and cultural factors that influenced an individual (ibid: 50).

The sociological understanding of lifestyle is mainly related to the concepts of leisure, free time, and the influence of entertainment and media on these aspects (Bourdieu, 1980; Rojek, 1985). The sociological understanding of lifestyle is primarily concerned with the concepts of leisure and free time, as well as the impact of images created by the entertainment and media industries (Bourdieu, 1987). Lifestyle attributes, on the one hand, are the results of an individual's efforts, representing their symbolic capital. On the other hand, they can also act as elements of the aestheticization of everyday life, showcasing a person's desire to belong to a particular social group and align their lifestyle with the desired one (Chaney, 1996).

The mediation of lifestyle: A channel-centric perspective

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, television had a significant impact on the formation of ideas about lifestyles, broadcasting normative models of socially approved life, appearance, and behavioral patterns in family life, social circles, sports, leisure, recreation, and work (Fiske, & Hartley, 2003). The effectiveness of using cinema and television as channels for disseminating preferred values, viewpoints, and models of organizing everyday life has led political actors to actively utilize them in promoting certain ideas (Shapiro, 2011). Commercial structures followed a similar strategy: brands conveyed via advertising not so much a specific product as a value system and lifestyle, the attribute of which was the promoted product (Marcus, 2019: 156; Vodanovic, 2020).

If, in the middle of the 20th century, housewives who spent a significant amount of time watching TV content were considered to be the most relevant audience for lifestyle models (Fiske, & Hartley, 2003), then in the 21st century, the focus has shifted towards the younger generation. Today's youth demonstrate the highest level of media activity in the digital space, especially on social media platforms (Dunas, 2021).

The Internet has become a crucial platform for disseminating ideas and worldviews, both from established media organizations and non-institutional actors outside the traditional media ecosystem (Vyrkovsky, & Makeenko, 2021). These non-institutional players, mainly in the entertainment industry, mediatize the lives of popular Internet personalities who share their personal values and demonstrate lifestyles that serve as reference models for young people (Khamis et al., 2016; Giles, 2018). The latter function mainly in the field of entertainment and mediatization of everyday life of Internet celebrities, who share personal values with the audience, demonstrate attributes of their own lifestyle and thereby form reference models for young people (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016; Giles, 2018).

The communities on social media platforms do not merely serve as passive repositories of information. Instead, they actively engage in the production of meaning. Within these communities, the lifestyle is shaped through a continuous cycle of creating, consuming, and internalizing specific cultural codes. This process results in the development of consistent patterns of perception and behavior among participants, leading to a sense of habitualization (Bourdieu, 2001).

In the era of social media proliferation, the rise of opinion leaders in the digital realm has emerged as a new phenomenon. These are Internet celebrities whose popularity is rooted in the widespread sharing of their personal and public experiences, and they are admired by younger audiences as role models (Morrison, 2020). Thus, ideas about lifestyle among contemporary youth are formed under a dual influence: on the one hand, these are the attributes of success demonstrated by public figures (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016; Vodanovic, 2020; Morrison, 2020), and on the other hand, there are narratives circulating within online communities on social media (Dunas, Salikhova, & Babyna, 2023).

The theoretical foundation for comprehending these phenomena lies in the concept of media socialization as a process whereby media are integrated on all levels, acting as an agent of primary socialization (shaping fundamental values), serving as the central environment of secondary socialization (establishing

group identities), and functioning as a pivotal resource for lifelong tertiary socialization. This is due to the fact that media practices pervade every stage of the contemporary individual's life journey, manifesting themselves through media consumption, which has evolved into a prevalent social practice (Dunas, 2022).

Social media platforms constitute a potent agent of socialization, particularly during the primary stage. This is owing to their capacity not only to convey information and facilitate communication but also to shape social interactions, operating as a sophisticated social system that simultaneously serves as a space and a place.

Cultural codes as a foundation of audience lifestyle formation

Dmitriy Likhachev emphasized the connection between cultural space, territory, and values shared by the community: "By space, I mean in this case not just a certain geographical territory, but primarily the space of the environment, which has not only extent but also depth" (Likhachev, 2022: 21). Yurii Lotman pointed to the dialectical nature of culture, existing in the tension between the past (real or mythologized) and the future (predicted), but always actualizing in the present: "it always contains what we need now, today" (Lotman, 2023: 13).

Summarizing existing interpretations, Elena Vartanova understands a cultural code in media as an informal or partially formalized system of values, significant historical narratives, traditions, and collective representations shared by social groups and serving as the basis of their identity. It is a kind of "collective intelligence" or "collective unconscious" of a community, manifested in similar emotional reactions and interpretations of phenomena, processes, and institutions (Vartanova, 2025). In media studies, cultural codes are studied at two levels: the representational (how media reflect and transmit values shared by the community) and the deep (cultural codes as fundamental national determinants conditioned by language, history, and territory) (ibid). Media, being a crucial infrastructure for creating and disseminating collective meanings (Innis, 2024; Castells, 2000; McQuail, 2005), are one of the main spaces where the cultural code is not only transmitted but also reproduced.

Thus, the lifestyle of modern youth is formed under the complex influence of media consumption, where social networks act as a crucial agent of socialization and inculturation. They function as full-fledged social systems, not only broadcasting ready-made behaviors, but also actively producing cultural codes

through communities and opinion leaders. These codes, which are systems of values, symbols, and narratives, integrate an individual into a group and become the basis for identity formation. Unlike traditional media, which mainly broadcast normative patterns, social media create an interactive environment for the joint construction of a lifestyle through continuous practices of production and consumption of meanings. This requires further study precisely as cultural code spaces, where lifestyle appears not as a set of consumer choices, but as a deep result of media socialization.

Empirical research: Narratives – cultural codes – values

The formation of the sample of communities was based on data from Brand Analytics and TGStat, taking into account the audience aged 12-22. For content analysis, a random week in 2022, not marked by holidays or other anomalous events, was selected. A total of 1134 publications from six communities were analyzed: *Topor 18+* – 163 posts, *Ne Morgenshtern* – 164 posts, *Krovavaya barynya* – 142 posts, *Leonardo Dayvinchik* – 96 posts, *Rifmy i panchi* – 283 posts, *Ovsyanka, sir!* – 286 posts. Publications were also analyzed for the topics covered, among which were distinguished international, political, economic, social, lifestyle, army/military, incidents, sports, cultural, medical, religious, ecological, interpersonal / family / gender, and the category "other topics". One publication could represent several topics at once, covering multi-problem events or phenomena. The lifestyle theme was most widely represented – 16% (302 posts) of publications were dedicated specifically to lifestyle topics.

For each publication, narrativization was performed – transforming each publication into a narrative with the identification of thematic topics. As a result, 26 narratives were identified (see *Table 1*). The narratives were correlated with the value codifier by Vladimir Dahl – Louisa Svitich (Svitich, 2012), based on the systematization of over 30 thousand Russian proverbs, representing a hierarchical system of folk values and behavioral models (see *Table 2*), that is, essentially cultural codes. Finally, the identified narratives were correlated with the list of traditional spiritual and moral values approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 809 dated November 9, 2022 (see *Table 3*).

Table 1

Correlation of narratives identified in social media content with traditional values

№	Narrative	Value according to Dahl-Svitich	Traditional spiritual and moral value	Correlation
1	Russia is a strong country that defends its sovereignty. The basis of its power is a strong leader, a stable ruble, law, order, and security	Patriotism, respect for righteous authority, law-abidingness	Patriotism, citizenship, service to the fatherland	Direct
2	Family and having children are a great happiness for a person	Value of family, love, fidelity, respect for elders	Strong family	Direct
3	Russia is surrounded by enemies. Its enemies are primarily the United States and the West. China is not an enemy, but it should be treated with caution. Belarus is a friend	Patriotism, peacefulness, but readiness to defend a just cause	Patriotism, unity of the peoples of Russia	**Indirect.** Actualized through the construction of an enemy image
4	Russia has a rich culture, both historically and today	Respect for traditions, respect for intelligence, reasonableness, striving for learning, sciences	Historical memory and continuity of generations	Direct
5	Contemporary popular culture is global. Russian youth are well acquainted with top American bloggers and celebrities, films and music, as well as global brands	Contradicts condemnation of external dandyism	Contradicts priority of the spiritual over the material	**Non-conformity.** The narrative reflects contemporary reality but is in tension with values of distinctiveness and priority of the spiritual
6	Of course, Russia faces its own problems: for example, corruption in the regions and imperfect legislation. Additionally, there are some unscrupulous business people	Condemnation of extortion, sins, vices	Justice, Responsibility for the fate of the fatherland	**Indirect.** Actualized through values of justice and condemnation of vice

№	Narrative	Value according to Dahl-Svitich	Traditional spiritual and moral value	Correlation
7	Russia has a rich history that must be remembered. Above all, we must preserve the memory of the Great Patriotic War	Respect for traditions	Historical memory and continuity of generations	Direct
8	The "little man" often gets into trouble. Either big business exploits him, or a natural disaster occurs. The little man needs the protection of the state and society	Mutual aid, hospitality, condemnation of evil, sins	Mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual aid	Direct
9	Rap and hip-hop are the most progressive musical direction in Russia today, represented by talented musicians and bloggers	Creativity, ability to have fun, humor	Priority of the spiritual over the material	**Partial.** Corresponds to values of creativity and dynamism but may conflict with values of humility and non-fussiness
10	Childhood is a period of a person's life that evokes warm associations	Love of life	Life, high moral ideals	**Indirect**. Values are actualized through love of life and the value of life
11	Nature and the animal world amaze with their beauty and are endearing	Closeness to the land, nature, "universality"	Implied in creative labor and humanism	Direct
12	It is always important in relationships with people to remain a decent person: be respectful, behave with dignity, be a good friend	Good fame, friendliness, honor	Dignity, human rights and freedoms, mutual respect	Direct
13	A person's death is a great sorrow, but the deceased live on in our memory	Christian attitude towards death, condemnation of murder	Life, dignity	Direct

№	Narrative	Value according to Dahl-Svitich	Traditional spiritual and moral value	Correlation
14	It is important to lead a healthy lifestyle, which includes active recreation, sports, proper nutrition, and avoiding alcohol and drugs	Good health, moderation, condemnation of drunkenness	Life, dignity	Direct
15	Alcohol consumption and smoking are acceptable. Especially on special days / holidays	Conflict: condemnation of drunkenness vs. hospitality and ability to have fun	Conflict with life and dignity	**Non-conformity.** The narrative reflects cultural dualism between condemnation of vice and the tradition of festive feasting
16	Outstanding athletes are people worthy of admiration	Courage, bravery, perseverance	Creative labor	**Indirect.** Actualized through the lens of labor and perseverance as a form of creation
17	The current authorities in Ukraine are an enemy of Russia, but this does not apply to Ukrainians as a people, who remain fraternal for Russians	Peacefulness, unity in diversity, patriotism	Unity of the peoples of Russia, patriotism	**Indirect.** Actualized through the value of brotherhood of peoples and by constructing an enemy image
18	Bloggers remind us that everyone can achieve success, fame, and money	Love of labor, craft, striving for learning, hope for happiness	Creative labor, human rights and freedoms	**Partial.** Corresponds to the value of labor and perseverance but may conflict with values of humility and condemnation of idleness
19	Domestic violence is unacceptable	Condemnation of evil, sins, vices, respect for life	Dignity, human rights and freedoms, life	Direct

№	Narrative	Value according to Dahl-Svitich	Traditional spiritual and moral value	Correlation
20	Expressing your opinion and being able to speak freely about what you think are both important aspects of freedom of expression.	No equivalent	Human rights and freedoms	**Non-conformity.** The narrative reflects a liberal value, weakly represented in the traditional hierarchy
21	Traditional patriarchal values are outdated	Direct conflict: value of family, respect for elders, humility	Strong family, service to the fatherland	**Non-conformity.** This narrative is a counter-narrative aimed at revising traditional value
22	Cryptocurrencies will not bring anything good	Thrift, resourcefulness, condemnation of wastefulness	Priority of the spiritual over the material	**Partial.** The narrative reflects a cautious attitude towards speculative financial instruments
23	Education, self-development, and progress are important both for the individual and for the whole society	Striving for learning, sciences, enlightenment	Creative labor	Direct
24	Perfect democracy does not exist in the West	Patriotism, respect for righteous authority	Patriotism, citizenship, service to the fatherland	**Indirect.** Actualized by constructing an enemy image
25	Foreign agents remain a significant part of Russian cultural and public life	Conflict: law-abidingness vs. creativity	Conflict: unity of peoples vs. human rights and freedoms	**Non-conformity.** The narrative is in tension between the value of law-abidingness and the values of creative freedom
26	Elders must be respected	Respect for elders	Strong family, historical memory and continuity of generations	Direct

Source: Authors.

Table 2

Traditional values of the Russian people according to Dahl-Svitich

№	Values
1	Values of community
2	Value of family, love, fidelity, respect for elders
3	Communality, collective spirit, unity in diversity, respect for traditions
4	Patriotism, respect for homeland, kin, people, language
5	Person as a member of the community
6	Values of economy, labor and its fruits
7	Domesticity, closeness to the land, nature
8	Respect for property, labor sufficiency, condemnation of theft
9	Love of labor, craft, condemnation of idleness
10	Beliefs, faith in higher powers
11	Fear of God, punishment for sins
12	Belief in the unusual, miracles, omens, fortune-telling
13	Orthodox faith
14	"Universality", awareness of one's place in the Universe, subordination to the elements
15	Virtues — vices
16	Good fame, condemnation of evil, sins, vices (drunkenness, debauchery, gambling)
17	Mutual aid, hospitality, generosity
18	Hope for happiness, patience towards suffering
19	Respect for intelligence, reasonableness, condemnation of stupidity
20	Striving for essence, use of essential concepts in language
21	Thrift, resourcefulness, moderation, condemnation of wastefulness, greed
22	Striving for learning, sciences, enlightenment
23	Courage, bravery, perseverance, condemnation of cowardice
24	Friendliness
25	Love of life, Christian attitude towards death, condemnation of murder
26	Respect for righteous authority
27	Creativity, concentration, non-fussiness
28	Peacefulness, condemnation of aggressiveness, but readiness to defend a just cause
29	Sense of measure
30	Good health
31	Humility as opposed to pride, meekness
32	Ability to have fun, humor, joke
33	Dynamism, movement, journey
34	Caution
35	Neatness, condemnation of external dandyism
36	Law-abidingness, judgment, condemnation of crimes and extortion
37	Honor as a value

Source: Authors.

Table 3

Traditional spiritual and moral values, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 809 dated November 9, 2022

№	Values
1	Life
2	Dignity
3	Human rights and freedoms
4	Patriotism
5	Citizenship
6	Service to the fatherland and responsibility for its fate
7	High moral ideals
8	Strong family
9	Creative labor
10	Priority of the spiritual over the material
11	Humanism
12	Mercy
13	Justice
14	Collectivism
15	Mutual aid and mutual respect
16	Historical memory and continuity of generations
17	Unity of the peoples of Russia

Source: Authors.

The conducted comparison allows us to identify several crucial patterns in the relationship between modern media narratives and traditional value systems. To start with, twelve narratives represent a direct projection of traditional values into the modern media space. They foster social solidarity, promote national identity, and transmit unchanging cultural codes such as respect for family, history, and protection of the weak. Six narratives are actualized indirectly, through related values. Some narratives use values (patriotism, unity) to consolidate society not around a positive ideal but around the image of an external threat. This does not negate the value itself but changes its emotional coloring from constructive to defensive. Three narratives show partial conformity, confirming the evolution and adaptation of value sets. Several narratives represent traditional values (creativity, labor, perseverance) and apply them to new, often individualistic phenomena (rap, blogging). This creates tension between the traditional understanding of labor and success and their contemporary, often mercantile interpretation.

Finally, five narratives demonstrate non-conformity with traditional values, reflecting internal value conflicts. Such narratives demonstrate an existing internal

schism in the culture, and media reflect this dualism without offering its resolution. They clearly indicate the presence in the media space of attitudes alien or directly hostile to the traditional value system. These are either liberal values (individual freedom), consumer globalism, or direct calls to revise the traditional way of life. Their presence demonstrates that the Russian media field is a battleground between different value systems, rather than a monolithic promoter of any one of them.

Several crucial traditional values are completely absent from media narratives aimed at a young audience. For example, humility (in a religious or moral sense) is not present. Modern media culture, especially in the blogging and rap scene, is built around self-presentation and self-promotion. Narratives often encourage the display of success, confidence, and even pride, which are the exact opposite of humility. Additionally, there is no mention of the fear of God or the consequences of sin. The secular nature of most young people's social media communities and public pages and general media environment do not include references to religious concepts such as sin and punishment. Orthodoxy (as a specific religious value) is also not present.

Discussion and conclusion

Thus, we can identify a uniformity of values in Russian youth discourse on social media, one that aligns with two distinct value sets simultaneously. This finding, in itself, provides a direct answer to research questions RQ1–RQ4. The traditional values outlined in Presidential Decree No. 809 closely correlate with those identified in Russian folklore by Vladimir Dahl and later Luiza Svitich. Essentially, these modern expressions represent a synthesis and adaptation of the original folklore values to a contemporary context (RQ3).

The values embedded within the metanarratives promoted by these social media communities almost entirely reflect both the historical and the officially designated value sets, likely without conflicting with the values held by Russian youth themselves. The subscriber counts of the studied communities demonstrate rapid growth. For instance, the Telegram channel *Topor 18+* tripled its audience (from 3 million to 9 million subscribers) between June 2022 and December 2025 and spawned satellite channels dedicated to breaking news, economics, and technology. The follower counts for the channels *Ne Morgenshtern* and *Krovavaya barynya* remained stable. The VK community *Rifmy i panchi* grew from 4 to 5 million people, *Leonardo Dayvinchik* from 14 to 16,5 million, while the subscriber base for *Ovsyanka, sir!* stayed the same. All listed communities and Telegram channels maintained their leading positions among youth in terms of engagement, reach, and subscriber numbers.

By December 2025, the combined audience of all these communities reached 38,257,000. Notably, this figure even exceeds the total estimated number of Russian youth, which constitutes roughly a quarter of the country's population. Although this study did not aim to directly analyze the audience of these online communities, the data presented strongly suggests their positive reception of the values being promoted.

Despite the declining role of traditional religious practices, the lifestyle portrayed by Russian youth on social media platforms cannot be characterized as completely devoid of spiritual elements. In the face of geopolitical turbulence and Western sanctions, the everyday lives of young Russians have undergone substantial transformations. The departure of numerous familiar foreign brands, including those offering clothing, accessories, and food, as well as the withdrawal of streaming services and social media platforms, have served as catalysts for the emergence of novel practices.

The response was the construction of a new lifestyle, which is manifested in the following trends: support for personal initiative highlighted by the development of design talents, the desire to aestheticize everyday life, and also the manifestation of ingenuity and entrepreneurship. Appeal to national and nostalgic aesthetics is represented by the struggle for support in national culture and visual traditions. The rejection of false values is also relevant for young people, which consists in strengthening the importance of spirituality, education, culture, and the manifestation of humanistic qualities instead of consumer-driven behaviors.

It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the postulates about the obsolescence of traditional institutions, the family remains an essential component of the contemporary lifestyle. In media discourse, there is a focus on the distinctive role of shared hobbies, joint activities, and travel experiences, often exemplified by the portrayal of young "celebrity families". Moreover, children and childhood become an integral part of this narrative. Contemporary media culture promotes the idea of childhood as a time of freedom, play, and interaction with nature, drawing inspiration from the idealized experiences of pre-digital Russian millennials (Gen Y). Representations of youth lifestyles on social media are multifaceted, incorporating both material and spiritual dimensions. This discourse upholds values such as personal creativity, moderation, amicability, and openness to positive change.

Despite some contradictions and tensions, the overall picture does not suggest a crisis or disintegration of values, but rather a dynamic balance and stability within individual digital communities and society as a whole. This balance is

evident in several aspects. To begin with, we can discuss the prevalence of the core principles of traditional values. A vast majority of identified narratives, such as respect for the family, reverence for history, adherence to the state, upholding decency in personal interactions, and fostering mutual assistance, exhibit a direct and unwavering conformity with both the value code proposed by Dahl and Svitich and the officially sanctioned spiritual and moral tenets. This suggests that the traditional bedrock of values remains a potent foundation and conceptual framework for media discourse targeted at the youth.

Secondly, it is necessary to take into account the adaptive potential of tradition. The traditional value system is not static. The analysis showed that such topical issues as the protection of the "little man", a healthy lifestyle, and the environmental agenda are successfully articulated through existing values (unity, good health, proximity to nature). This demonstrates the ability of tradition to adapt and integrate new social challenges without losing its essence.

Thirdly, it is possible to observe a relatively manageable nature of value conflicts. The presence of conflicting narratives, such as those regarding global culture, patriarchy, or alcohol consumption, does not destroy the overall system. Rather, it reflects internal discussions that are historically inherent in society. For example, we can recall the opposition between Slavophilism and Westernism in Russian culture. These conflicts are not absolute in nature and exist on the periphery of the core values, reflecting the pluralism of opinions within the media.

The contemporary discourse of Russian social media platforms aimed at the youth is neither a straightforward continuation nor a total rejection of traditional values. It constitutes a multifaceted, dynamic, and multifarious amalgamation, with the fundamental principles of traditional values, such as patriotism, familial bonds, justice, and collectivism, serving as the bedrock of most narratives. However, on the peripheries of this foundation, there exists a constant tension between the traditional ways of living, liberal perspectives, and the influence of global consumer culture.

Thus, values (both as defined by Dahl and Svitich, and in accordance with the Presidential Decree) serve as a reliable guide for decoding and understanding the deeper meanings of most media messages. However, their application requires considering the complex and ambiguous nature of modern society.

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