



International Journal of Media and Information Literacy

Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN 2500-106X
2021. 6(2). Issued 2 times a year

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Journal is indexed by: Scopus, CrossRef (UK), OAJI (USA)

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Postal Address: 1717 N Street NW, Suite 1,
Washington, District of Columbia 20036

Release date 15.12.2021
Format 21 × 29,7.

Website: <https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>
E-mail: ijmil.editor@cherkasgu.press

Typeface Georgia.

Founder and Editor: Cherkas Global
University

Order № IJM-11

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and Information Literacy, 2021

International Journal of Media and Information Literacy

2021

Is. **2**

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 249-258

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.249
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Social Media Interactivity in Pakistan: A study from Metropolitan City

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Abstract

In this study the social media interactivity among digital natives and digital immigrants in Lahore has been evaluated. The primary goal of this research is to determine whether they are participating in social media interactivity or not. In continuation to this their social media interaction patterns have been highlighted. The interview of total 16 participants were carried out. These participants belong to a variety of communities including students, academics, psychologists, sociologists, and housewives. They are chosen based on their interest in and frequency of social media interactions. Data was collected through a semi structured interview and examined using thematic analysis. The results revealed that the digital natives and digital immigrants both spend a significant time of their daily lives interacting with social media. Both natives and immigrants have comparable intentions of staying connected, following recent trends on social media and interacting with friends and family. These research threads address high-profile problems and debates surrounding both groups' involvement in social media interactivity, and they provide fertile ground for future research.

Keywords: social media interactivity, digital natives, digital immigrants, interaction patterns, trends, socialize.

1. Introduction

The emerging trend of social media usage is not only to spread the news and information but also to let the people connected with their near and dear ones. Previous studies examine how digital natives use social media at various phases of life, but the researchers in this study looked at both to see if age, gender, and digital expertise have an impact on how people use social media. It has been noted that people interact online with each other in order to permanently remain connected with their friends and families. This interest of connection is emerging as an addiction to social media in this era (Ahmed, Khalid, 2014). Khoo (Khoo, Yang, 2020) discovered that using social media for interactions with social networks is just as helpful for boosting middle-aged and older persons' perceptions of social support as being connected with family in real times.

Interaction patterns have now turned from a single-way connection to a shared world. Fosters multilateral interactivity that is transforming contemporary communication. Social media forms such as Blogger, Wikipediand My space to the social media sites that dominates today media sphere which are *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* (VanDijck, 2013). Uses-and-gratifications scholars for studying new media, likewise Internet users have created a list of gratifications remarkably like those collected from older media. Therefore, the notion that media technology will influence user needs, creating new and distinctive gratifications (Sundar, Limperos, 2013). Gratifications are defined as satisfactions, which occur when a person's

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requirements are met by certain media sources that meet their expectations (Katz et al., 1974). According to one study (Downs, Javidi, 1990), the interpersonal communication motives in the lives of older adults are due to loneliness, escape, pleasure and inclusion. The messages have impact on receivers are passive and reactive, focuses on changes in thoughts, attitudes and behaviors which assumes a direct influence on users (Rubin, 2009). To investigate the emerging trend of using social networking sites among earlier scholars, researchers conducted in-depth interviews in order to identify the reasons behind using social presence and not using privacy measures on *Facebook* (Jung et al., 2017).

In this study, researchers are exploring the social media interactivity among digital natives and digital immigrants in Lahore, Pakistan. A digital immigrant is someone who was born before the widespread use of personal computers and the Internet made digital communication ubiquitous whereas A digital native is someone who grew up with digital technology and is comfortable with it (Prensky, 2001). In-depth interviews have been conducted from 8 digital natives and 8 digital immigrants for understanding the interaction patterns of both groups. Kirk (Kirk et al., 2012) stated that with the advent of new technology as social media, academic researchers, as well as marketing professionals are continually looking for a better understanding of how information is generated and consumed, the relationship between interactivity, consumer satisfaction and intentions to adopt. Nonetheless, user age affects gratification with interactivity. The older “digital immigrant” users are highly contented with static e-books and younger “digital native” are more satisfied with interactive sites.

The uses of tablet computers and its differential gratifications for information seeking, relationship maintenance, enjoyment and for spending time online. The study explores that social media usage is least among earlier adults and higher among Boomers and GenY (Magsamen-Conrad, 2015). The focus of this study, is to evaluate both groups together. The focus should not be only on digital natives, who are young technology users and were born in the digital age, but also on digital immigrants who were not born in the digital age and still intensely use social media. Online survey with former adults aged 60 years or older according to *Facebook* profiles indicates that personal status updating is associated with community-building and interaction gratification (Jung, Sundar, 2018). Recent research suggests that users' social media preferences vary depending on their individual interests and motivations and these aspects can contribute towards problematic social media usage in a minority of users (Kircaburun et al., 2020). The purpose of this study was to investigate the patterns of social media interactivity among digital natives and digital immigrants in Lahore, Pakistan. Because of its accessibility and variety of options, using social media sites has become one of the most popular social behaviours. According to recent data, social media sites are used by more than two-thirds of internet users and about one-third of the world's population (Kemp, 2017).

Social media usage and gratifications differ depending on user factors such as age, gender and personality. The use of social media might also vary depending on the type of social media sites being used. Facebook, for example, can be used to fulfil the need of belonging as well as for self-presentation (Nadkarni, Hofmann, 2012). This study's integrated view of the existing literature can assist future researchers to avoid duplication while also providing fruitful avenues of inquiry in order to help and influence research in this growing topic related to immense usage of social media among different age groups. Usage and gratification are applied as theoretical implications for this study. This viewpoint implies that people have inherent desires that may be met by social media. To this day, scholarly study on social media gratifications is guided by U&G's original 1970s approach. We no longer refer to Internet audiences as "audiences" since they are so active. Instead, we refer to them as "users," as per the letter and spirit of the U&G paradigm. Some capabilities are more frequent in specific media, such as newspaper interactivity being lower than in computer-based media due to the form of letters to the editor and other feedback methods (Rafaelli, 1988). With the support of literature, the aim of this study is to explore the social media interactivity patterns among digital natives and digital immigrants to look at both groups to see if age, gender, and digital expertise have an impact on how people use social media in Lahore, Pakistan.

The specific objective is to explore the social media interactivity patterns of digital natives and digital immigrants' in a metropolitan city of Pakistan.

2. Materials and methods

The concept of an active audience, first proposed by early uses-and-gratifications (U&G) researchers to capture the purposiveness and attentiveness in media consumption and contrast it with the general assumption of a "passive audience" among media effects scholars (Rubin, 2009) has steadily moved from assumption to obvious reality. With the advent of user-generated content (UGC) interfaces and applications, these affordances are increasingly allowing Internet users to not only view media in new ways, but also actively contribute their own content. The medium's technology is a major contributor to the shifting nature of user gratifications. According to T.E. Ruggiero (Ruggiero, 2000) explains technological features (e.g., interactivity, demassification, and synchronicity) will be crucial for future U&G research since they will give researchers with a variety of different behaviors to investigate. Quantitative researchers use a few variables and many cases, whereas qualitative researchers use a few cases and many variables, according to (Thelwall, 2021). For greater objectives, qualitative and quantitative methods have been suggested in media studies. Direct observation in natural settings is used to obtain data in qualitative research. Individual data is anonymously and impersonally reviewed. Qualitative research adds depth to meaning by respecting the individuality of each subject and necessitating a researcher's interpretation (Tonaka, 2015).

Thematic research usually starts with verbal interview or focus group data or textual newspaper data. Open-ended responses to questionnaire items, diaries, video material, photographs, and essays, on the other hand, can all be analyzed thematically. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to acquire interview data (Tonaka, 2015). Lahore has selected to conduct this study. All the participants of this study belong to Lahore. Demographic details of participants are given in appendixes. All digital natives and digital immigrants were selected on their social media usage frequency and interest in social media interactivity. To analyses the data gathered during the 16 interviews, such themes were identified in data: connectivity, curiosity, fun, sharing content, express feelings, and follow trends. Thematic analysis will be discussed the current study aim to identify the social media interactivity in a metropolitan city of Pakistan. Thematic Analysis (TA) is a simple, adaptable, and increasingly popular method for analyzing qualitative data. Learning to do it gives a qualitative researcher a solid basis in the fundamental abilities needed to engage in various qualitative data analysis approaches (Braun, Clarke, 2012). In addition, for data collection and analysis, the researchers used NVIVO 12-Plus, software designed for qualitative research investigations.

3. Discussion

Since the late 2000s, when social media became popular, there has been an upsurge in research examining SNS usage from diverse academic perspectives. Since 2004, Facebook's popularity among SNSs has grown, particularly as a worldwide and social phenomenon (Fidan et al., 2021). Many popular websites and apps have social networking capabilities that allow users to engage, build social connections, make updates, share material, and leave comments on other people's posts. *Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Google* are the most prominent and well-known social media sites in the Western world (Alexa, 2017). Why are social networking sites such a hot topic in so many fields? Is it true that combining data from different fields improves insight and understanding? Media studies is one of the academic areas that uses a variety of methodologies. The goal of this research is to present a multifaceted perspective and to investigate generational disparities as well as other aspects based on social media interactivity and personal qualities. As the above debate shows, social networks might be classified differently in key online communities (e.g., *Google*), as well as differently than users expect. Given the variety of capabilities available on established platforms today, users may classify social media under a variety of areas (Rhee et al., 2021). Most social media studies focus on how young individuals, particularly college students, use social networking sites. While various studies have investigated how Facebook can help older adults feel less lonely, the motivations for use other social media sites, such as Instagram, have not been thoroughly investigated (Sheldon et al., 2021). The entire use of social media via applications and sites, in which users communicate freely with writing, chatting, and sharing photographs and stories, was operationalized in this study as social media interactivity.

The most popular and most-visited SMS is Facebook. Online social networks such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* use social networking aspects, but they are not the only ones. News reading,

online education, music listening, book reading, diet and weight loss, and physical activity are just a few examples (Althoff et al., 2017). Users can build a profile on any social site over the internet and have access to a list of users with whom they want to interact using Social Media Networks. Any user can view and explore their own list of connections, as well as those made by others within the system (Nasir et al., 2012). It has been shown that social networking sites improve offline relationships. According to many academics, *Facebook* is utilized to consolidate existing offline user ties. Social media refers to websites that enable the formation of relationships between users of various backgrounds, resulting in a complex social structure. Inquiry and decision-making are aided by user-generated content (Kapoor et al., 2018). Another study looks at how users in the United States characterize the fundamental purpose of major platforms (*Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram*), as well as how such definitions connect to important outcomes previously related with social media use.

Overall, the findings shown that classifying platforms as social interaction is linked to increased social affordances and resources (Rhee et al., 2021). In addition, many studies have investigated the viability of online communities/social media as a marketing medium, while others have investigated various aspects of social media, such as the risks associated with its use, the value it creates, and the negative stigma associated with it in the workplace. Another study uses mind maps to explore the perceptions of Instagram as a social networking site, with the goal of better understanding this social phenomenon that affects them due to its use motives and features.

Thematic analysis was used to resolve qualitative data. The four categories were revealed are Communication and interaction, knowledge acquisition, entertainment and sharing, and negative consequences of Instagram (Fidan et al., 2021). Prior research has looked on the usage of social media for information sharing during crucial events, as well as for seeking and/or rendering assistance. Other contexts include politics and government, as well as a contrast of traditional and social media. Overall, this research uncovers several new themes in the existing corpus, adding to our knowledge of recent developments in social media interactivity. Many studies focus on the social media usage of digital natives now not only the digital native who we considered to perfect users of technology those who born in technology others who are digital immigrant older adults not born in technology but effectively use social media and this study are going to identify how much digital natives and digital immigrants are involved in social media interactivity in Lahore, Pakistan. Social media platforms have enabled the Internet to expand from a one-way communication tool to a virtual environment that supports social media interactivity, which has had a transformational impact on modern communication since their introduction nearly two decades ago. Expectations for the level and quality of communication between individuals and groups have evolved from the earliest forms of social media such as Blogger, Wikipedia, and Myspace to the social media platforms that currently dominate the social media sphere are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Van Dijck, 2013).

Data Analysis and Findings Computer-Assisted Analysis Social media interactivity patterns: The researchers have examined the data using NVIVO 12-Plus at this point and have come up with some significant conclusions. Figure 1 depicts the statement's overall word cloud, from which we can determine how interviewees interpret social media interactivity. In addition, by using NVIVO 12 Plus, the social media usage pattern is identified.



Fig. 1. The Statement's most commonly used terms

In the above-mentioned Figure 1, which clearly shows that digital natives and digital immigrants like to interact with social media consider it trend wanted to stay connected with friends and family. In most prominent terms showing all positive and negative experiences of digital natives and digital immigrants that can be creating impact on many further aspects of life

like, behavior, values relationship and cultural grounds. Figure 2 also demonstrates how these commonly used words form a Tree-Map, which shows the relationship between the words and them collocates. It also emphasizes the hierarchical nature of certain terminologies and their societal implications.

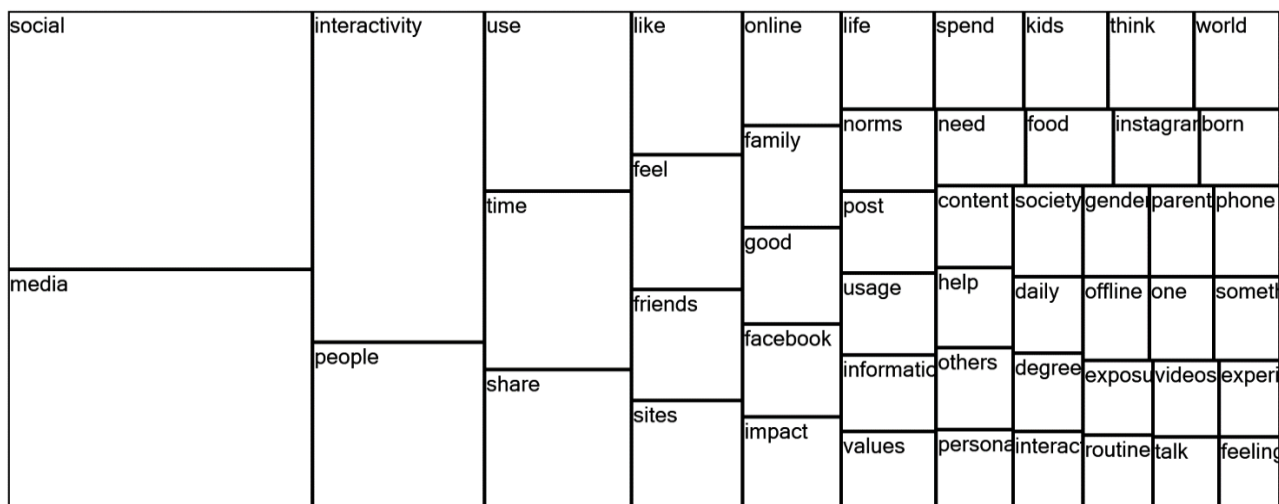


Fig. 2. Tree-map showing the Statement's frequently used keywords.

Thematic Analysis of Social Media Interactivity Patterns

The interviewees come from many walks of life they were students, Academicians, psychologist, sociologist and house wife etc. Generally, participant interact through *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* some of them mentioned *WhatsApp* for texting and sharing freely with their personal contacts. *Facebook* owing *Instagram* and *WhatsApp*. They all having interactive features to text to share story and status. Digital natives use *Instagram* more frequently these days.

“Instagram is probably one of my favorite social networking apps because it is so dynamic and user-friendly. I can quickly share the content I enjoy, such as my videos and photos, or write on a subject.” Now *Instagram* has also introduced a feature of memories which brings the bar even higher as users can cherish the moments of their lifetime. Another digital native enjoys *Instagram*'s features *“I like to interact through Instagram that help me a lot to socialize and enhance my food blogging interest. I express my feelings through writing a blog.* Blogging is a new healthy trend among individuals; they write about their own interests to participate in societal debates. Digital immigrants, on the other hand, are more interactive through *Facebook* and *YouTube* *“I enjoy interacting with people on Facebook; I have nearly 5000 friends and 2000 followers, and I can quickly share posts about my Eilaf club; I didn't have the option to communicate with such a large number of people before social media.”*

These apps make it easier for users to share information, but other traditional options, according to the digital immigrant, cost a lot of money. So, let others know about their lectures, they'll just make a note on *Facebook*, and then upload it to *YouTube*. That's how they target large number of audiences with zero cost of it. In this aspect, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube* also facilitate people in creating a small business opportunity and providing any online services. Many people nowadays make money from *YouTube* channels. Users can now easily create a small business by posting photographs or videos of their products, communicating with consumers, and completing transactions.

As a result, *Instagram* serves as a central hub for all marketers to connect with their target audiences and offer a hassle-free online buying experience *“It is now easy for the social media users to start a small business as you can post pictures of your product or videos and communicate with the customers and get the deals done.”* According to current analysis only few of interviewees use *Twitter* who have some intellectual insights regarding current affairs and interest in politics *“My main interest is Geo Politics and its implications strategically. For this purpose, Twitter is my main source of getting news and updates from around the world. Other*

than that, I use Facebook for a mix of entertainment and current affairs.” Both digital natives and immigrants regard Twitter as a source of good news and current affairs, whereas Facebook is more focused on enjoyment.

Digital natives and digital immigrants are more excited for connectivity in the early stages of social media usage. Many social media sites and apps allow numerous options to communicate with people in an unrestricted manner. Social media make users able to connect with old classmates, colleagues and friends. They use social media to keep in touch with friends and family that live far away. As one interviewee give an interesting answer, *“I remember when I newly joined the world of Facebook, I have sent the message to my favorite singer SonuNigam, at that time. I felt that I can connect to everyone though*” most of the interviewees feel comfortable to interact with old friends and colleagues on Facebook because they believe Facebook is simple to use and that they can quickly find their friends there. Almost all interviewees begin interacting through social media out of curiosity to learn more about this new virtual world, while others use it for fun to check out other people's profiles and how they post information on social media sites *“I began using social media in 2005, at the time, my sole motivation was to learn about something new and see how people were having fun on these sites.”* When it comes to interviewee 4, she explains, *“I had no idea how to use the many features of Instagram, but it was a fantasy world for me. I created a profile in 2013 just for fun because all of my friends were doing it, so I did as well.”* This is something so challenging in social media that it creates a fantasy world for users and shows only a glittering side of picture.

Users can become so engrossed in social media that they lose track of time, browsing and spending hours on it. Digital natives spend an average of 5 to 7 hours on social media per day, whereas digital immigrants spend an average of 3 to 4 hours per day on social media. *“I use YouTube to watch entertaining and educational videos (I mostly use it while having my meals). Even if it isn't my favorite cuisine, I can easily get through it by viewing videos while eating. So, even something as simple as my meals, which is a part of my daily routine, is influenced by my use of social media.”* Digital natives are usually aware of their usage patterns that have an impact on their lifestyle, but they are unable to change them because social media interaction is somehow become their lifestyle.

They are content with this and strive to avoid all the activities that disrupt their daily routine. Whereas one of the participants from digital immigrant also talk about the time he spends on social media on daily basis *“I believe that I spend a lot of time on social media, and it's become a habit for me to try to make new friends through social media sites rather than meeting people in person my friends annoyed with me in this regard that I am not giving them time.”* On social media sites, interviewees have their own moods and expressions to communicate their emotions. *“Emojis are a great way to express feelings on social media and I use them quite often”.* Digital natives are more into the fun side of things, and they even express their anger by posting various status updates to openly express their feelings. *Usually, I express my feelings with pictures and videos”.* Digital immigrants, on the other hand, are careful to freely express their emotions on social media platforms. They usually like the idea of being able to offer something that reflects their individuality *“I love to share content related nature, I found the world is full of wonders, I should explore the beautiful post of sceneries of natural resources and then share with fellow friends”.* Most of their content, among other things, is based on information, education, and inspirational quotes. Another digital immigrant usually posts on religious knowledge. *“I prefer pages and content that are based on Islam; I've come across some doubtful content as well, but I still find myself attracted to incidents that are based on someone's faith; I exclusively post religious quotes and stories”.*

The freedom of expression offered by social media interactions drew users; the medium is so wide and broad that it allows users to speak freely and explore the world according to their own preferences *“I always feel excited and think that this site would must have something new for me and something entertaining”.* The basic purpose of using social media of both digital natives and immigrant must keep up with what is going on in the world, and it was also trendy. It makes them feel good and provides them some gratification, and it is a fun way to pass the time. Both digital natives and digital immigrants occasionally browse for no reason other than to pass the time, and this is how they spend most of the time on social media sites *“When I'm sitting alone and exhausted from my job and domestic tasks, and my children are occupied with their homework, so I feel free socialize. I sometimes feel bad for wasting so much time on social media, but I also feel relaxed”.*

Some interviewee claims that they use social media because they see it as a trend, and that if they don't check their status and share their thoughts on current events, they feel lost and undesired, as if no one knows who they are. Digital natives are more concerned with their social identity on social media “*Fear of missing out (FOMO) is another thing that keeps me returning to social media repeatedly. Even though there are very few things that can't need an immediate response, FOMO will have me believing otherwise. Perhaps I'm worried that I'll be left out of the conversation at University if I miss the latest news or gossip on social media.*” It is detected that digital natives are so concerned about displaying their presence on social media is an intriguing observation. They feel out of touch if they do not update their information on their profiles via status and stories on a regular basis. Social media interactivity creates that urge among users to stay online and active in the virtual world. Some digital immigrants also believed that social media interaction is an opportunity to understand about others, and that by showing their presence on social media, they are aware of current societal debates and trends. Users are more conscious of society now, and they want to voice their opinions on current issues and social media trends via hashtags. With the use of hashtags, Instagram can promote and attract many audiences corresponding “*hashtags which were initially introduced by twitter to set a trend for any cause but now Instagram has taken over as it let you share videos of quite a good length, you can edit and add music of your choice*”. Digital natives utilize hashtags on Instagram and Twitter to communicate their feelings, whereas digital immigrants still choose to chat about the subject on Twitter. As one of the interviewees expresses his feelings regarding social media that “*These sites control our minds. It's an ocean, internet attract you the way someone tries to catch fish, so it gives us such a variety that we don't understand how to avoid the intoxication.*” Although this is a trend for users that they are using social media because everyone is using and somehow available on social media that's why age and gender is not matter anymore in usage patterns of social media.

4. Results

This study focuses on older generations' use of *Facebook* and *Instagram* to bridge the gap. Social media have allowed this since its beginning nearly two decades ago the Internet emerge. Previous study has highlighted the contrast between digital natives and digital immigrants when it comes to how they understand and interact with social technology for work (Jarrahi, Eshraghi, 2019). In this study researchers examine the involvement of digital natives and digital immigrants that how much they are active in social media interactions, their reasons and usage according to their age and expertise towards new technology. *Facebook* and *Instagram* are used by older individuals to make up for a lack of social activity and face-to-face encounters in their daily life (Sheldon et al., 2021). Popular discourse illustrates that social media generates radical effects on users (Elgot, 2015). Social media is a powerful communication tool to share information within a second in the world. The literature emphasizes that social media is a content created by a customized user that gives users complete control over their use of content creation and manipulation (Dickey, Lewis, 2012). Traditional mass media and social media are fundamentally different. Traditional media services are focused on the one-to-many relationship, whereas social media uses a many-to-many relationship with a passive audience (Allcott et al., 2020). Fioravanti (Fioravanti et al., 2021) identify an increasing corpus of research has investigated the effects of social networking site problematic use on the fear of missing out (FOMO) and (PSNSU). The relationships were not moderated by the samples' age, gender, or geographic location. Now people have awareness they want to know about the society, want to share their views. *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Snapchat* did not make social interaction their primary focus. Above and beyond social interaction networks, researchers found that *Twitter* was perceived more as a news or entertainment platform, whilst *Instagram* and *Snapchat* were viewed more as photo/video and entertainment platforms (Rhee et al., 2021). Chen (Chen, 2011) discovered that *Twitter* use satisfies the demand for a sense of unity and connection amongst individuals by acting as a channel for interaction and giving individuals with the option to connect with others. Women and men were equally likely to have accounts on a friend-networking site when the characteristics of users were examined. Theirs, on the other hand, in some cases, the benefits and gratifications for doing so differed (Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008). A new phenomenon is observed during interviews that digital natives and digital immigrants both are making funny videos on TikTok to getting likes and entertain their selves watching videos on TikTok, further these videos also share on other networks for fame and satisfaction. TikTok separates out from other social media applications because of its

strong user engagement has now surpassed Facebook as the app with the greatest monthly use in minutes in only a short period of time (Scherr, Wang, 2021). During the interviews, it became evident that many users, particularly digital natives, used social media frequently without any proactive aim, while feeling guilty about it. In contrast, according to the last quote from one of the digital immigrants, guilt had no impact on the amount of time spent. There should be no guilt if the user's motive for using social media is clear and relevant.

5. Conclusion

In the conclusion of this analysis digital natives and digital immigrants both are using social media freely according to their choices and needs, this was the biggest concern users know they spoil their daily routine activities, their eating and sleep patterns are also affected with immense usage of social media at late nights. Researchers started by asking whether users still consider major social networks to be places for social interaction, given their ever-changing range of features and functions. This research discloses two major constructive conclusions: 1) Our research confirms that there is no single solution to this question, and no single platform that embodies "social interaction". 2) Finding also reveals that both generations, whether they belong to digital native or digital immigrant are on same urge to socialize to explore and entertain their own self. Rather, the results of this study show how individual users' preferences fluctuate depending on which social media networks they use. Some of the digital immigrants also like to show off about their belongings like digital natives and some use to oppose it and believe in our culture we help people not to let them feel frustrated about what they don't have. The debate over social media's usage and impact on welfare has taken a typical path, with initial optimism about the great uses giving way to universal concerns about potential consequences. Finally, according to the researcher observation and thematic analysis the benefits and drawbacks of using social media are indisputable. It's entirely up to us how we use it. It is necessary that everyone uses social media for the betterment of himself and society.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 259-273

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.259
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Are We Transformed to Confused Decision-Makers? The Impact of Digital and Conventional Media on the Health-Relevant Choice and Information Overload

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Abstract

During H1N1 and Coronavirus pandemics, there has been a global info-demic. We have seen an immense rise in the production and dissemination of health-relevant information and choices. Biomedicalization and pharmaceuticalization paved the way for the proliferation of many products, services, and advice. This process has also enhanced the dissemination of misinformation and conflicting information. This study investigates how information overload influences health-relevant decision-making and behaviors, and how the overload of healthy life messages creates confusion and indecisiveness about ideal healthy life behaviors through mass communication, the internet, and social interaction. It provides examples from digital and conventional media and data from primary and secondary findings. This paper was prepared and organized as part of a doctoral dissertation for the period anteceding Coronavirus pandemic and did not focus on this pandemic, however, it may provide some foundational explanations about the Coronavirus info-demic.

Keywords: information overload, choice overload, indecisiveness, health information, info-demic, decision-making, misinformation.

1. Introduction

The volume of production exceeding the demand has occasionally raised such topics as information overload and choice overload. An overload and abundance in the supply, demand and consumption of many kinds of information and products has always followed the developments in the relevant industries throughout history. For instance, after the invention of the printing press, progress was made in scientific fields and technology, resulting in changes in the perception about access to information and consuming it as well as triggering many changes in individual and social life. Later on, the developments in the culture industry (cinema and television) coupled with the commodification of cultural values produced a consumer audience and the consumption of products of the culture industry. We can see from 1950s onwards that body and health-relevant issues and advice had an increased visibility in conventional media and social interactions. The visibility of healthy life advice was amplified as a result of the developments in medical technologies, health communication strategies, social and cultural changes, and these have regulated the proactive health behaviors since then. Health advice in modern terms is not a recent phenomenon and dates back to the 1800s. It was introduced by the authoritative professionals (primarily doctors) at the beginning of the 19th century along with the emergence of industrial modern society. Now at the beginning of the 2020s, popular culture and consumer culture prevail in disseminating these. Besides advice in media, digital media, and word of mouth health communication, nowadays, the healthy life images, messages, and information are attached to so

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many products, to nutrient product packages, into restaurants, cafes, and many other public places to transform the citizens into health-literate consumers and provoke them emotionally.

Starting in the 2000s, the overproduction and distribution of health-relevant messages emerged as a result of the involvement of lay people in organizing health communication and behavior management in addition to the top-down media and internet streams of information. When we consider the aspects relevant and specific to this study, that is health information (advice), we see that the production of health-relevant information had already increased in the context of modernist state goals even in the 1930s and 1940s during the periods of both Salazar and Atatürk. Healthy life choices and advertisements were disseminated in mass media faster than in previous decades. However, these were still limited to such commodities as toothbrushes, painkillers, nutritional supplements, or advice on sports and exercise. In due course, this gradually changed along with advancements in marketing, food, and information production technologies during the Post-War years. After the Post-War years, an overload in the supply of health-relevant products and information emerged in the process of globalization. In conjunction with this, an increasing number of people in Portugal and Turkey have constantly been exposed to such advice due to developing health communication technologies. In accordance with neoliberalist consumption norms, the health-relevant products, advice, and services spread throughout society as marketable commodities to be consumed without restriction by the policy-makers, interest groups, and organizations.

Health promotional activities have successfully convinced, been manipulative, and imposed the behavior changes through fear-producing discourses. These moral and emotion-targeting discourses are easily associated with the commodification process in such a simplified fashion: “If you do not want to experience this problem, you should do this and that”, with suggestions of products, services, and ideal behaviors for a healthy and beautiful body. Even public health customs and practices are reinterpreted and new neoliberalist consumer slogans are derived from these.

The consumer society members having a compulsive demand for narcissistic investment (Baudrillard, 2008) are also likely to have a compulsive demand for information. However, this demand for information and products alternately brings about the production of a variety of choices by the entrepreneurs, but not necessarily an overload of choices, including conflicting advice overload. This variety of choices can be seen in the constitution of many groups of experts supporting some theories (supporters of proteins carbohydrates in Facebook, enemies of fat or sugar, low-carb consumers in Instagram, macro-counters, and social media cultural intermediaries, etc.). In conventional or digital media, one dietitian or nutritionist asserts that any type of sugar use is fatal, so the fruits should be consumed very carefully (Karatay, 2018), another may assert the opposite (Sousa, 2014). Here, the neoliberal market and media have acquired a position in which they can ignorantly lead people to indecisiveness by not controlling information replication and pollution.

As labor-force of neoliberal health market and media, the cultural intermediaries have long been one of the most important actors organizing this global health decision-making process. In the literature, there is a variety of different names and terms to define them. Gomes calls them health brokers but we may call them cultural intermediaries (actors) as Bourdieu and others named them (Gomes, 2010; Bourdieu, 1984). Featherstone attaches particular importance to the role of cultural entrepreneurs and intermediaries in health commodification and advice. He defines them as those people creating postmodern pedagogies, educating the public, and being engaged in fashion occupations and symbolic production in consumer culture and popular culture (Featherstone, 2007: 10). “They produce popular pedagogies and lifestyle guides...They can be found in market-oriented consumer cultural occupations – the media, advertising, design, fashion, etc. – and in state-funded and private helping professions counseling, educational and therapy occupations” (Featherstone, 2007: 35). Featherstone’s definition has long been appropriate and sufficient for relevant issues. However, this definition should be developed to include the present issues of today regarding the exploitation in health. In this regard, we can add another function of this group; today, they may also fulfill a duty of “disease mongering” within the scope of medicalization, biomedicalization, para-medicalization, pharmaceuticalization, and pathologization activities. Disease mongering is a function of medicalization, a proactive practice, which labels many conditions as illness, increase the publicity of these newly defined “disorders” so that some cures for these can be produced and offered by the market, for further reading, please see (Fontecilla, 2014: 104-107). The number of disease-mongering activities and cultural

intermediaries that target health-related decision-making has drastically increased in line with the increasing usage of internet technologies, mainly social media applications such as Instagram and Facebook. The dissemination of information that guides the decision-making has drastically increased as well. Today, even the smart-bands (smart bracelets), smartwatches, or activity tracking applications in smart devices function as cultural intermediaries and they offer some behavioral norms as imperatives of commodified ideal health. Levitin indicates the information literacy deceptions full of biased or pseudo-scientific health information including the disease-mongering activities in the following example: “If you are looking up a particular prescription drug and trying to figure out whether you want to take it or not, the first thing that is part of information literacy that every eight-year-old should know is, whose website are you on? Is it the drug manufacturer’s? Might there be a biased information on there? Is it the site for the manufacturer of a competing drug? Maybe it is some sort of shadow site for the manufacturer of a competing drug under the name *americansforbetterhealthcare.com* or something like that” (Levitin, 2014).

Especially in Instagram and Facebook, cultural intermediaries are defined as “influencers” and “lifestyle coaches”, they are taking the commodification issue several steps further. Many famous “lifestyle experts/coaches” or popular social figures (actors) disseminate images, videos, and texts about their healthy lifestyle and body exercise activities and relevant advertisements on social media. These are organized to govern and manipulate people’s decision-making in a convincing manner, thereby they decide to consume that particular brand or act in the proposed or imposed manner. For instance, in Portugal, we can check this website that has a genre-based name, not a brand name: <https://www.saudebemestar.pt/pt/>. It has much advice on general healthy life issues which can be easily accessed through search engines. However, in some messages and pages, it can also be easily observed that these information sources belong to specific investor groups in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors. Anyone can find visible or hidden advertisements and commodified advice that go beyond “the needs and wants” discourse.

Johnson focused on the similarities between production and consumption of food and information, on the similarities between production models of these markets and sectors. In media, one can easily find examples for the health information production models, which provide sensational information to attract readers accustomed to consuming such information. Johnson claims that consumers prefer this sensational information rather than informative ones: “The food companies learned that if they want to sell a lot of cheap calories, they should pack them with salt, fat, and sugar—the stuff that people crave—and that affirmation sells a lot better than information... These media companies are driven by a desire for more profits and for wider audiences and produce information as cheaply as possible. As a result, they provide affirmation and sensationalism over balanced information” (Johnson, 2012: 6-10).

Johnson claims that the production and consumption models are similar in the food and media industries. That is to say, the targeted emotional consequences or outputs are similar and the information is now “consumed”, not acquired systematically and pedagogically due to the information overload. He establishes a relationship between over-supply and overconsumption in the food industry. He states that it is applicable for media industries, too: “In the food industry, the cost of a calorie has been reduced down so low that now obesity has become more of a threat than famine. The food supply became more abundant, and access to it improved. Obesity is no longer just for a fortunate few” (Johnson, 2012: 6-10). His notion assumes that overconsumption occurs as a result of these kinds of production models, which have mostly become cost-effective: “the media companies learned how to produce and distribute information in an almost free manner” (Johnson, 2012: 6). In a Bourdieuan way of thinking, this notion proposes that the food-nutrition industry has changed the products and the tastes of people, so have done the media-internet industries. Esitti refers to the capitalist justifications for this similarity in food-information production and consumption: “Media companies target more profits and a wider audience. To reach this goal, they produce as more cost-effective information as possible. After awakening to the fact that sensational and sexually explicit information is consumed more than informative content, they focused on producing more magazinish information and news instead of informative content and entered into a competition. Such elements as the sensational and sexually explicit information, advertisements, public relations activities, informational intervention, propaganda and spin doctors came to the fore in new media” (Esitti, 2015: 82).

The following headlines taken from newspapers can exemplify the sensational information produced through a communication technique that blends food and information production and

consumption models. These sensational news headlines are produced to manipulate the emotions of those demanding health information:

- “Mushrooms Beat Cancer” – (*Mushrooms...*, 2009).
- “Blood Pressure Risk from Salt” – (*Blood...*, 2013).
- “Eating Fat Is Good for You” – (*Eating...*, 2013).
- “Processed Foods are Driving Up Rates of Cancer” – (*Processed...*, 2018).
- “Eat Up, Fat is Good for You” – (*Eat...*, 2016).
- “Diet That Will Add Years to Your Life” – (*Diet...*, 2012).
- “Diet That Will Add Years to Life” – (*Diet...*, 2014).
- “Healthy Diet to Beat Dementia” – (*Healthy...*, 2014).

In Web 1.0, people received healthy life advice from cultural intermediaries and applied this information to their lives and behaviors. Now, we have transcended the limits of Web 1.0, we have social media and Web 2.0. In Web 2.0, the opportunity for people to share information has contributed to information and choice overload. The number of healthy life advice sources through which we are expected to make the decisions has exploded. Schwartz attributes this information bombardment to the emergence of healthy life information dissemination on the internet: “It is not just a matter of listening to your doctor lay out the options and making a choice. We now have encyclopedic lay-people’s guides to health, “better health” magazines and most dramatic of all, the Internet. So now the prospect of a medical decision has become everyone’s worst nightmare of a term paper assignment, with stakes infinitely higher than a grade in a course” (*Schwartz, 2006: 32*).

The overload of choices and information has also transformed lay-people into cultural intermediaries, consumers of this overload, and decision-makers. Within the context of this transformation into information consumerism, a majority of people’s habits were altered to cover the utilization of these information technologies. In the 2010s, almost half of the day of many people has been allocated for consuming a variety of information choices, Johnson underscores which kinds of information transform us into infosumers (information consumer) as follows: “People spend more than 11 hours per day consuming information—reading newspapers and books, checking out friends’ Instagram and Facebook pages, reading the newspaper, watching television, listening to the radio or portable music player. For those who work in front of a computer all day, the number of hours is even more, spending all day reading and writing in front of a screen” (*Johnson, 2012: 4*)

As held by Johnson, extensive consumption of information, “can have physiological effects on our bodies, as well as fairly severe and uncontrollable consequences on our decision-making capability” (*Johnson, 2012: 5*). Accordingly, the decision-makers and regulating structures, aware of the power of information on decision-making capability, develop management techniques through which they overproduce information and manage their marketing strategies. The market research companies use many eye-tracking glasses or devices to monitor and observe the decision-making patterns and habits of people from each class. Many digital mouse-tracking software are employed in online shopping sites. Many analyses are conducted to observe people’s decision-making and emotional reactions to images, messages, or sensational information. By using such techniques, they affirm the relationship between this information consumption habit and manipulation. The ruling classes reproduce their power through these and produce well-elaborated governmentality.

Overload of Healthy Life Advice and Indecisiveness

In indecisiveness literature, many scholars focus on the influence of the IO on the emergence of confusion and indecisiveness (*Ozkan, Tolon, 2015: 33; Walsh et al., 2007: 704*). However, none of these scholars have focused on the impact of the overload of health advice on relevant health behaviors. Many people seeking advice about losing weight are exposed to very different kinds of diet regimes, many of which set off with conflicting assumptions and data sets and offer very different philosophies and lifestyle recommendations. In the middle of all these conflicting regimes, clear and understandable ways of managing health are created and destroyed by the diet market and media. Ozkan and Tolon assert that decision-making will be impacted by the confusion emerging after being exposed to the overload in the market: “confusion causes the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the market by the consumer who wants to find the optimal solution for himself/herself with the results not displaying the expected performance during the consumers’ decision-making process” (*Ozkan, Tolon, 2015: 33*). In the same line with Ozkan and Tolon, Mitchell and Papavassiliou state that decision-making may be more complicated

and stressful as we can see in Simmel's urban complexity, too: "The number of products, the increasing amount of information carried by each brand about their products, the product proliferation and production of a decision-making imperative could cause the consumers' exposure to information overload and the consumer confusion, resulting in stress and poor decisions" (Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1999: 319).

A combination of delay in decision making and postponing the act of buying (see: purchase avoidance) is deemed to be another consequence of indecisiveness or confusion (Ozkan, Tolon, 2015). Ozkan and Tolon found statistically meaningful relationships between IO and indecisiveness. They also found that this confusion has a negative effect on consumers' buying decisions, leading to a decrease in purchasing behavior (Ozkan, Tolon, 2015: 27). According to Malhotra, the "information load" may lead to decision difficulty with undesired consequences (Malhotra, 1982: 419), an undesired consequence for both the market and the consumers. Fletcher and Wald also make references to this possibility in terms of health-related indecisiveness: "Confusion is central to consumer protection because confused consumers may suffer physical harm when they unknowingly buy a product other than the one they intend to buy" (Fletcher, Wald, 1987, as cited in Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1999: 324). These opinions and data should be updated with reference to the possibility of increased risks associated with increased information pollution and imitated products in many areas of life, such as food, non-prescription drugs, supplementary nutrients, beverages, and cosmeceutical products, but not limited to these.

The macro implications of this limitless and uncontrolled dissemination of health advice may be striking. While the health market overloads the customer with information and choices, it may also hinder the expansion of the market, by producing permanent indecisive, indifferent and unconfident consumer groups tending toward the purchase and decision avoidance in such phenomena as anti-consumerism and resistance against vaccination. Johnson underscores other possible impacts of information and choice overload, the influence of sensational diet philosophies on the health-related decision-making: "No matter which way you turn, abundant information makes it easy to distort our relationship with food into something unhealthy. If you're looking to surf through a land of false promises, spend a few minutes in the diet aisle of your local bookstore. You can lose weight by thinking like either a caveman or a French woman, or by eating only food that's cooked slowly. You can lose it, says the updated 2012 edition of *Eat This Not That!* (Rodale Books), by simply swapping in a Big Mac® for a Whopper-with cheese®" (Johnson, 2012: 16)

Johnson attributes the existence of such complicated and conflicting philosophies to the free market: "The emergence of these kinds of false premises is unavoidable in a free society: the right answers— healthy information—compete side-by-side with the answers we may want to hear but which may not be true. Only the highly nutritionally literate can easily tell the difference" (Johnson, 2012: 17). Similarly, Kuo underscores a possible correlation between less indecisiveness and high literacy despite the choice overload: "Even though consumers might feel overwhelmed or dissatisfied under an extensive choice variety situation, those who are high in product expertise will suffer less than those who have less expertise about the product they are customizing" (Kuo, 2010: 38). Being uninitiated about health issues or highly health-literate can impact the levels of indecisiveness in a given health decision-making case, however, here again, it should be kept in mind that both of these two types of consumers are exposed to an overload and no serious structural mechanisms protect them from decision difficulties.

Johnson brings another perspective and argument to the information overload issue. According to him, IO is not a problem, for him, the main problem is 'information overconsumption' (Johnson, 2012: 4-26). In his definition, he uses information overconsumption instead of "maximum capacity" discourse or "information overload" as most scholars did in the literature. This perspective could offer new insight in the related literature, in the construction of policies to eliminate the low-quality information production. However, this could also be counted as one of the blaming-the-victim discourses of biomedical perspective, because the overconsumption cannot be controlled only by the individuals. Without people's consent, all kinds of mass communication products, an incredible plethora of healthy life advice, and related issues appear before their eyes in public spaces and daily conversations.

Another biomedical categorization and stigmatization in information overload literature is the concept of "information obesity", similar to Johnson's "information overconsumption" concept. The overconsumption notion makes references to the individual free will instead of structural mechanisms that also regulate decision-making. However, Esitti developed another perspective

that does not dare to blame the victim as the “victim” is not aware of the stigmatization. For him, “the information obesity has turned out to be an inevitable result of the disfunction emerging in media. Accordingly, it has become almost impossible for the people to refrain from the information obesity, even to notice it” (Esitti, 2015: 83). Those leading suppliers of healthy life advice and conflicting ones should also be kept responsible for managing health care, because these suppliers contribute to information pollution and information overload, too. For instance, as one of the world’s biggest news and information suppliers, Twitter had to deactivate more than 70 million user accounts so as to eliminate the information pollution, even though this meant a decrease in the number of users by almost 20 % (Reuters, 2018). However, this elimination by the immense information disseminator platform shows us that this regulation is two faceted, one for the individual (agency) and another for the information providers and policymakers or structural factors (structure).

Mitchell and Papavassiliou stress the importance of respecting the ethical norms in information production for advertisements: “Even though the law and regulations require that advertisements should be honest, and truthful, with a sense of responsibility to the consumer and society, in line with principles of fair competition, little protection from information overload or consumer confusion is provided” (Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1999: 324). In Portugal and Turkey, there is no specific protective law and application that underscore the influence of the accumulation of advertisements. Regulatory organizations have not conducted any serious analysis about the impact of the accumulated messages and sanctions on health decision-making. In recent years, some improvements have been made in the dissemination of health information in the conventional media of these two countries; however, the inclusion of social media in health communication has paved the way for another discussion, the necessity of considering the cumulative effect of all these media, messages and images. Mitchell and Papavassiliou have focused on this cumulative impact of discourses and advertisements in media: “this may be because overload generally results from the accumulated effects of many advertisements rather than being caused by any single advertisement or promotion. It could be argued that the codes should address this cumulative effect as well as the confusion resulting from any single advertisement” (Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1999: 324). This cumulative effect can mainly be analyzed with powerful software by information technology enterprises; however, overload can even be observed in many mass-communication devices. This notion can be developed to include the cumulative effect of the advertisements and information overload and information pollution, choice overload relevant to health, too.

Today, the plethora of healthy life products and services is almost limitless. The information about how to use this variety of products and services comes in the form of an overload when the accumulation of the information received is taken into consideration. Among these various choices in the market, some sources offer some possible conflicts or confusion in information and meaning. This “confusion usually arises from three main sources, (1) over-choice of products and stores, (2) similarity of products, (3) ambiguous, misleading or inadequate information conveyed through marketing communications” (Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1999: 320).

From the sociological perspective, Giddens focused on “late modernity’s role in fostering a diversity of lifestyle choices, the necessity of having to choose and the tendency of choices to cluster in particular patterns...” (Cockerham, 2013:134). In this regard, the similar products, the ever-increasing diversity of lifestyles, communication styles, the pressure emerging out of the information, and choice overload may be leading people to an indecisiveness or decision difficulty in terms of how to regulate the health behaviors, how much sugar, meat or bread to consume, how long to “do work-outs” or “six-packs” etc. .

The inefficient replicates of original information and products are not monitored attentively by the states or suppliers. The consumers can come across such diet regimes or lifestyle practices as “Keto”, “Paleo”, “vegetarian”, “vegan”, “Mediterranean”, “raw”, “low-carb”, “intermittent” “fasting”, “no-sugar”, “Atkins”, “weight watching”, “zone”, “17 day diet”, “alternate day diet”, “calorie counting”, “South Beach”, “Dukan” etc. . The health-literate consumers can experience decision difficulties or distrust some of these as they can observe the conflicts or contradictions in the relevant messages.

Mainly in internet marketing of consumer-oriented advice, there is a lack of a filter of choices. The emerging inability to filter the choices offered in the market may be another consequence of IO and the reason for the confusion felt by the consumer. Mitchell and

Papavassiliou point to this strain and difficulty with the "shopping fatigue" concept and assert that this fatigue could lead to a considerable strengthening of the anti-consumerism movement in Europe, as already observed in the USA and Canada (Mitchell, Papavassiliou, 1997: 172). As healthy life consumerism is one area in which tens of foods in many diets are considered as healthy or unhealthy in a manner and intensity that may create indecisiveness, it may be another area prone to anti-consumerism. Today, anti-consumerism extends to such divergent health-relevant areas as anti-vaccination and minimalism in nutrition and stands as a socio-political problem constructed by the neoliberal market structure.

Indecisiveness can be experienced in macro levels of healthy life regulation as well as in micro and meso levels. According to Santos, even the healthcare providers may experience indecisiveness about the nature of the emerging information and its impacts on their decision-making (Santos, 2017: 2). Boateng also makes references to macro levels and to an increasing difficulty in managing the complex health systems of the present time: "Modern health care systems are confronted with the task of effectively managing the resources necessary for improving the health and wellbeing of those they are committed to serving. Fulfilling this task successfully implies sound and effective decision-making at critical points throughout the entire system" (Boateng, 2007: 14)

The regulations and applications employed by the non-governmental bodies and structures, the state organizations, enterprises, and international organizations may collide or be in direct conflict because all these organizations have distinctive targets, interests, strategies, and information sources besides common or similar ones. It is also caused by the variety of decision-making mechanisms, the number of sources, and the agendas structured in line with the targets of these bodies. Some references to the complexity of decision-making in different levels can also be seen in the following interpretation by Boateng: "The contemporary healthcare systems can be divided into macro-, meso-, and micro levels of decision-making. Each level has a distinct mandate, but all are linked to contributing to overall healthcare system performance" (National..., 2005; Wilson et al., 1995, as cited in Boateng, 2007: 14). Here, it is essential to note that almost all macro-level health structures, World Health Organization being in the first place, experienced an ultimate level of indecisiveness in managing the Coronavirus pandemic. Other organizations and individuals perceived these macro-level decision difficulties because of the cumulative impact of the contradictory information disseminated by WHO.

In the diet industry, hundreds of studies, popular articles, books, and reports focusing on weight, fat, sugar, and fast-food issues are published each year. Some of these are even funded by the enormous enterprises making production in these issues which are stigmatized in society. These are even employed in the health policies of the health organizations. It is held that a glass of wine per day may be healthy for the heart. However, this is disproved by some studies announced in Turkish, Portuguese, and global media (Sputnik..., 2019) and there are some doubts (New..., 2016) about such propositions as the researches claiming its healthiness may also be funded by the alcohol companies as in the unclear history of the promotion of smoking from the 1960s until the 1980s. In these sources, it can also be observed that maximum alcohol consumption is recommended in Portugal at a higher level than in the UK, if it is 50 ml per day in the UK, it is recommended to use 75 ml in Portugal.

Hundreds of examples can be found about tens of different health-relevant issues as information is produced and disseminated in digital and social media for almost everything, even at the molecular level. I have picked only one simple example to show that there are conflicts that the health-literate consumers can encounter in a cumulative manner over time. The example is about the messages about walking and the messages have been extracted from the websites of national newspapers in Turkey and Portugal.

In Turkey, one can come across a diverse range of advice in conventional media or social media concerning the daily walking imperative, some of which present conflicting numeric figures or claims. For example, there are references made to the benefits of walking 20 minutes a day in a CNN Turk article (Citci, 2016), to walking or being active for 25 minutes a day in a Yeni Akit article, (Sagligimiz..., 2018), to walking for minimum 30 minutes a day in Milliyet article (Ozlem, 2015), to 6 benefits of walking 30 minutes a day in a Sozcu article (Kaya, 2017), to the imperative of starting walking for 15-20 minutes and increasing it to 45-60 minutes in another Milliyet article (Haftada..., 2015), to the imperative of starting walking for 15-20 minutes and increasing it to 30-60 minutes to lose weight in a Haber 7 article (Kilo..., 2016), to the imperative of walking with

10.000 steps a day in NTV article (Gunde..., 2017), to taking 2000 steps to maintain the weight, but the literally suggested advice is taking 5000-10.000 steps in a Vatan article (Arslan, Arslan, 2018), to taking 5000-12.500 steps a day in a Sabah article (Gunde..., 2018) and a Hürriyet article (Muftuoglu, 2016). Here, we can see that there is a variety of advice and choices starting from 15 to 60 minutes, from 2000 to 12500 steps, and references made to the accuracy of each advice. As for Portuguese sources, references are made to walking for 10000 steps a day in a Sapo.pt article (Baptista, Miranda, 2018), to walking 8 km and 10 minutes and 3 times a day in a Diário de Notícias article (Três..., 2018) and to 30 minutes a day and variations in a Beleza e Saude article (Que..., 2018). In terms of walking, Turkish sources were found to have more variety in terms of conflicting claims.

Many different healthy life messages, namely, choice overload, may be observed to conflict with each other in terms of applicability, meaning, scientific correctness, and knowledge quality. The “conflict” concept is used in this study for the information received from different sources that collide in meaning and accuracy. For instance, one source states that fat-based nutrition is healthy and carbohydrate-based nutrition is unhealthy, whereas the other source states the contrary. Such information is conceptualized as conflicting in this study. We can argue that the increase in healthy life messages may also increase the number of “conflicting” or “contradictory” ones. These conflicts in meaning and the difficulties in healthy life decision-making should not be reduced only to the health-related perception, knowledge level, and responsibility of lay people (individuals). However, they should also be attributed to the structure of the healthy life market, the inefficient management or regulation of the health promotional activities in digital and conventional media. Hemp holds that the digital media facilitated the IO, and that the magnitude of the loss of resources by this information pollution was very high even ten years ago: “Digitizing content also removed barriers to another activity first made possible by the printing press: publishing new information. No longer restricted by centuries-old production and distribution costs, anyone can be a publisher today...Information overload costs the U.S. economy \$900 billion a year” (Hemp, 2009).

In a similar vein with Hemp, Schwartz asserts that the “internet can give us information that is absolutely up-to-the-minute, but as a resource, it is democratic to a fault — everyone with a computer and an internet hookup can express their opinion, whether they know anything or not” (Schwartz, 2006: 55). Here, it would be useful to explain the distinction between ‘information overload’ and ‘information pollution’. In information pollution, the poor quality of the information concerned. In principle, information overload is possible with both high and low-quality information and this is a fundamental problem. Too much information is disseminated, especially on the internet and this makes the human brain to process this information more difficult and to arrive at useful results with the quantity of available information. Even if there were little information of only very poor quality, it would possibly confuse and even mislead the decision-maker. When the information overload and information pollution coexist, they confound the problem by a multiple. Together, these generate complexity and obfuscation. Even though people are media literate, they do not always perceive whether the cultural intermediaries or content generators lead them with correct and quality health information.

As this study also inquires the influences of the information disseminated lay-people, the overall impact of information overload is not limited to those by cultural intermediaries. It should be noted here that our minds can be the final destination as trash bins of other people, of their inaccurate or misleading information. This process impacts the reliability of internet-based information received through any communication technology device. In a research study conducted by the RAND Corporation more than one decade ago, the quality of websites with medical information was evaluated. Nearly all of these sources were found insufficient in quality. It was figured out that the information presented was occasionally misleading or inaccurate. Besides this study, some surveys indicate that these websites influence the health-related decisions of 70 % of the people who are exposed to health-relevant messages. They are inclined to start applying this information to their lifestyles to protect their health in line with their expectations from information and products marketed (Schwartz, 2006: 55). Besides the findings of Schwartz, Pew Internet and American Life Project also found that health information changed thinking patterns (PIALP, 2009).

According to a study conducted in Turkey over 600 texts about health-related news and articles, 29.1 % of the texts have a sponsorship relationship and 65.9 % of these include advertisements. (Can et al., 2014: 486-489). The majority of the healthy life messages and advice

one comes across has financial concerns. It initiates the pressure to make consumption decisions before a plethora of choices offered by capitalist markets. The choices concerning therapies are usually made with misinformation (unintentionally formed missing or incorrect information), in an entirely emotional and anxious atmosphere/mood. As one can conclude from such instances, health information should be correct, clear, applicable, and informative to be impactful in the decision-making process (Cinarli, 2012). Unfortunately, it has become too easy to find example cases that demonstrate that the health information reality is far from the ethical and desired level for the benefit of the public.

2. Materials and methods

This paper mainly discussed the relevant academic literature, made use of primary and secondary findings to inquire into the relationship between media-induced information and choice overload and indecisiveness. The research question of this study was: “How does information overload (advice-messages) creates confusion and indecisiveness about ideal healthy life behaviors through mass communication, internet, and social interaction?”. It promises to answer this question by referring to various scholars’ former theoretical and empirical contributions from diverse disciplines and crosschecking primary and secondary findings. The general conceptualizations of these scholars about health-relevant perception, choice, and decision-making and their interpretation about media impact on the perception, decisions, and behaviors were discussed, adapted, criticized, and developed in terms of healthy life issues. To explain the theoretical relationships and to be more precise, this paper provided some example cases from mass media and newspaper websites. The findings of an online survey study were also provided to subject the arguments to a test and relevant findings were presented. This study was organized in a theoretical argumentation fashion proposed by Rettig’s and Paolucci et al.’s models: perception (reception), decision, and action (behavior) (Paolucci et al., 1977; Rettig, 1993).

The internal consistency and reliability (Cronbach alpha) for the scale was calculated as ,828. The scale consisted of 26 items. The researcher developed the scale as no other scale focusing on the issues to be investigated was found in the literature. This study targeted to investigate the issues through a holistic and integrative perspective, so did not use the scales based on reductionist perspectives seeking the answers in individual capacities and qualities. On the contrary, some items making references to the social, market-related, and organizational impacts and considering the relational structures were developed to have a more holistic view of the relevant issues.

After data collection through the online survey, the coding and analysis were conducted through the IBM SPSS 23[©] software. In the analysis process, such simple descriptive analysis techniques as frequency analysis and cross-table analysis were used. The online survey was conducted through Esurveycreator.com (Now Surveyhero.com) software. The link of the survey was distributed on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Reddit* in October and November 2019. The size of the sample group was calculated as 400 respondents, 196 respondents from Lisbon, with a 0.07 margin of error in 95 percent reliability gap, and 204 respondents from Istanbul, with a 0.07 margin of error in 95 percent reliability gap. A sample calculation table belonging to a private research company’s (Aksoy Research Company, Turkey) was used to define the sample size.

The sample group was defined as the health-literate consumers that use the internet, social media, forums, and other interactive platforms. The lifestyle practices, awareness, and experiences of this group are statistically and empirically more significant than the characteristics of the general population because the data from this group could provide better responses to the research question of the study. Health literacy was used as a quota to incorporate the relevant respondents into the investigation process. In doing this, a quota question was used at the beginning of the survey: “Do you think that you have enough knowledge of healthy life advice to be able to meet your daily bodily and health-related needs?”. When the respondent did not see himself/herself as a health literate person, s/he chose the option “no”. Then, the interview was stopped thanks to the algorithms of the online survey software. In the survey, the quota question included only the participants that define themselves as health-literate. There are some measures used to define health-literacy in the literature, however, these usually focus on measuring the level of health knowledge, and there is a risk of a condition in which the respondents may feel that they are being tested in terms of the level of knowledge. If the respondents hold that they can maintain

healthiness or wellness in everyday life thanks to the available knowledge they have, such a conceptualization of health literacy can be deemed sufficient.

Other than health literacy, gender, and country quotas were also used. In this context, it is safe to say that this study made use of quota sampling, however, the principal technique was purposive sampling.

3. Results

Above, some methodological details about the online survey study were presented. After these explanations, some findings from the survey will be presented below with references to the theoretical arguments discussed in the text. And finally, the relevant interpretation of the findings will be provided in the conclusion.

The rate of respondents by gender is as the following 51,3 percent (205 respondents) female, 48,0 percent (192 respondents) male, the rate of other gender category is 0,8 percent (3 respondents).

Below, four items from the online survey were presented as supportive data for the arguments of this paper. The graphics manifest data from Turkey and Portugal, and also an average of these two countries is presented as 'global'.

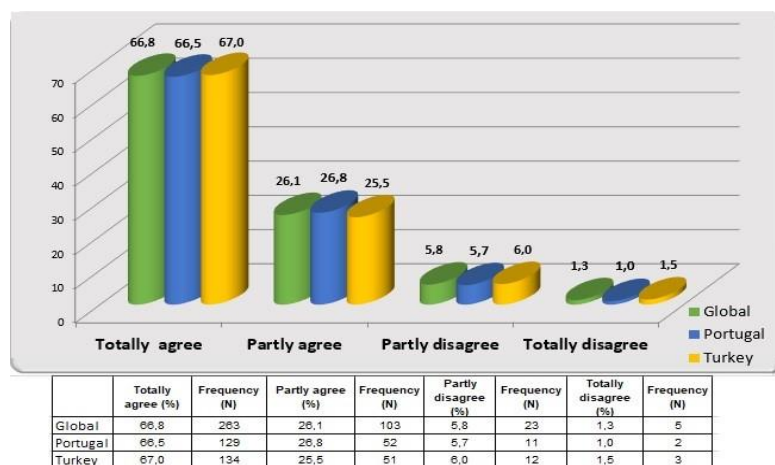


Fig. 1. In media and the internet sources, I come across health advice and information which are in conflict with each other

This item inquired into whether the internet and media are the main sources of conflicting health information and advice. Findings revealed that these conflicting messages are encountered by a great majority of respondents (92.9 %) upon the reception of the overload of advice through media and the internet. They encounter conflicting health information and advice on the internet and media sources. This finding belongs to the period before Coronavirus info-demic but reflects the memory of the recent past. So, it may be safe to read the process of Coronavirus info-demic as a continuum of the past. There may be slight changes in these rates after or before info-demic, but the finding shows that the health-literate consumers were already aware of the conflicting information on the internet and in media. No significant statistical difference was found between the data collected from respondents in Turkey and Portugal.

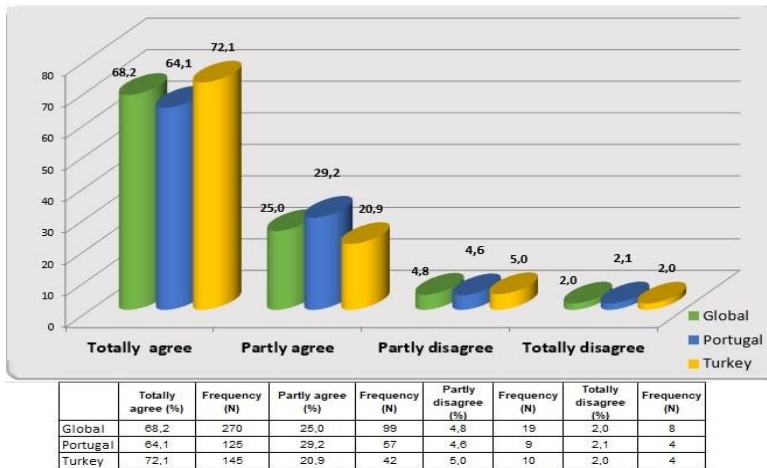


Fig. 2. Internet and media distribute confusing health advice whether I like it or not

It was an important issue to inquire about whether the internet and media disseminate the confusing health information and advice that may lead the respondents to indecisiveness. The findings revealed that the confusing messages were disseminated through the internet and media. 93,2 percent of the respondents totally or partly agree with the statement that the internet and media distribute confusing health information. They confirmed that they have no control over this dissemination of conflicting advice on media and the internet. There was no significant statistical difference between the data collected from respondents in Turkey and Portugal.

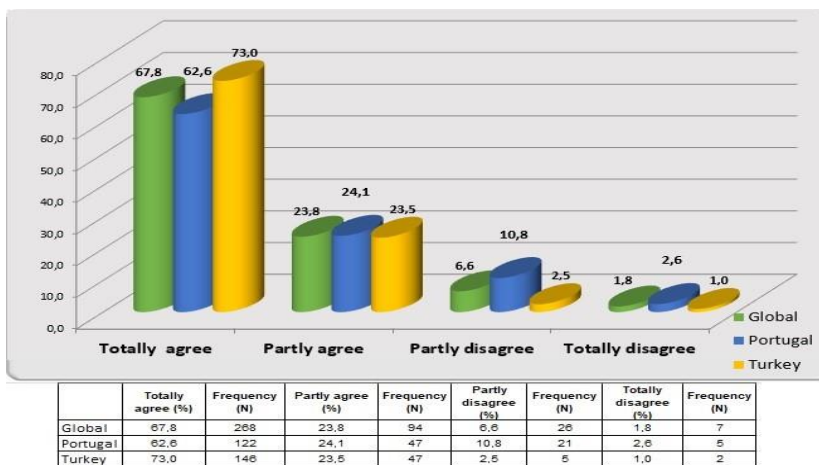


Fig. 3. There is too much information pollution about healthy life on the internet and in media

Another important issue to be inquired was the health-literate consumers’ perception about the existence of conflicting, confusing, and low-quality information dissemination on media and the internet. Findings revealed that the media and internet can facilitate the dissemination of the conflicting health information. 91.6 % of the respondents totally or partly agree with the statement that they encounter too much health-relevant information pollution in media and on the internet, The data indicates that information pollution is produced and observed a bit more in Turkey. There, the information pollution is controlled less due to a lack of protective measures by relevant organizations. This was an expected result. This phenomenon was one of the most important issues that establish the theoretical and empirical framework of the inquiry of this study. The findings concerning the perception about the existence of information pollution converge with the findings concerning the perception about information overload, conflicting information, and indecisiveness (see Figure 4).

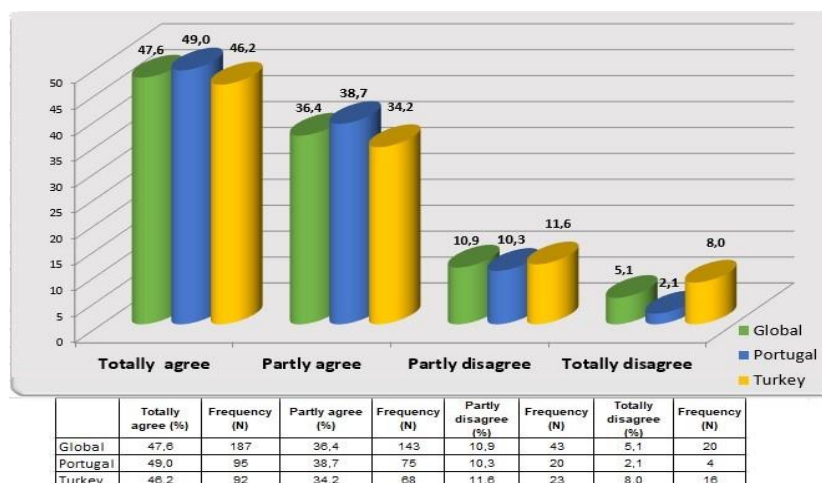


Fig. 4. On the internet and in media, there is a redundancy of healthy life advice

The data revealed that the health-literate consumers perceive the volume of health information disseminated on the internet and in media as an abundance or overload. It supports the argument that the health-relevant information volume disseminated in the media and internet can be considered as an overload, overproduction, or over-dissemination. 84.0 % of the respondents totally or partly agree with the statement that they consider the volume of health information disseminated in media and on the internet as an abundance and overload. No significant statistical difference was found between the data collected from respondents in Turkey and Portugal.

4. Conclusion

The consumer society has generated an imperative to make a narcissistic investment in physical and mental health. This has been reflected in the compulsive demand for health-relevant products, advice, and services. This demand brought about an immense variety of health-relevant choices and information when the profit maximization was coupled with these. The suppliers of information, product, and services responded to this demand with an overload of choices and information in many areas. This overload included health-relevant misinformation and conflicting information, which have been disseminated in media intensely by health professionals and cultural intermediaries. These actors could firstly discuss their counter-arguments in scientific conferences to produce scientific progress. This could lead to verification or refutation, but so many health professionals who have commodified and commercial agendas created postmodern pedagogies. They disseminated sensational information and convinced the majority of the public to believe in their philosophies, try and consume specific nutrients, pills, and act accordingly. Their agendas produce their supporters in social life and on the Internet. The commercialization and commodification in these areas have stimulated the practices and activities relevant to medicalization, biomedicalization, para-medicalization, pharmaceuticalization, pathologization, and disease mongering. These trends and movements spread thanks to the increasing usage of the Internet, wearable devices, social media, and shadow websites. The public has internalized the consumption of sensational and low-quality health information (Rand corporation, 2001) and products through these apparatus and these have become everyday life issues. The conventional and digital media took advantage of the fact that sensational health information attracted a wider audience, contributed to the information overload, and disseminated confusing or contradictory advice.

Cooperation of the biomedical sectors with conventional and digital media contributed to indecisiveness in health behavior and consumption. It resulted in many unsatisfied experiences and trial-error processes. This unregulated process may hinder the expansion of the health market due to the emergence of indecisive, indifferent, and unconfident consumer groups who tend to have purchase and decision avoidance within the context of the anti-consumerism movement. We can see the impact of this info-demic on the resistance against vaccination in the Coronavirus pandemic as observed in the H1N1 pandemic.

The example case by *Twitter* (elimination of 70 million irrelevant accounts) showed that the structural factors could eliminate misinformation. Policy-makers can also contribute to the regulation of health-relevant information dissemination. The cumulative effect of the information

and choice overload should be considered, because, as revealed in the study by RAND Corporation (2001), many digital sources contributing to the health-relevant information overload are low-quality. A majority of the people (70 %) takes this information seriously and apply it. A study by Pew Research Center also revealed that this information taken seriously changes the mindset of those consuming it (PIALP, 2009). The health-relevant information disseminated in media is not scientific. Moreover, one-third of this information is sponsored and 65.9 % include advertisements (Can et al., 2014: 486-489). Considering all these data, it may be safe to state that health-relevant information disseminated by conventional and digital media has a considerable impact on health-relevant perception, decision, behavior (PDB), and indecisiveness. Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, it has been very easy to detect the misinformation and information overload created or facilitated by conventional, digital, social media, and the Internet.

According to the data from the online survey, the conflicting health advice are disseminated in media and on the internet, and the majority of health literate consumers (92.9 %) perceive this confusing overload of information. They (93.2 %) hold that they cannot control the dissemination of the confusing and conflicting health advice, it is beyond their control and without their consent. Most of the respondents (91.6 %) are of the opinion that media and the internet disseminate low-quality health information and misinformation. Even though there are some hints about the consumer demand for health information, the health literate consumer respondents (84 %) consider the volume of health advice on the internet and in media as an overload and redundancy, which surpass their demand and exhausting their decision-making capacity. This process may cause the health-literate consumers to experience indecisiveness on many occasions, and that may be a negative situation in the eye of the consumers. Further macro studies can study the impact of info-demics on the health-relevant indecisiveness on a global scale with references to many example cases from a great variety of sources and structural factors that this study pointed.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 274-282

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.274
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Analysis of the Use of Visualization in Teaching Subjects of Different Ages

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Abstract

Global technological changes and the widespread use of information and communication technologies lead to the need to study the formation of information literacy skills of various demographic groups. The formation of the information economy creates increased requirements for the level of proficiency in digital and information technologies in order to successfully exist in a modern high-tech environment, which leads to the need for changes in the education system. These changes are aimed at developing the ability to understand the dynamics of the information world, to navigate the increasing flow of information. To this end, the latest technologies are actively used in educational programs, which, on the one hand, improve the quality of the educational process, helping to master educational content more effectively, and on the other hand, contribute to the mastery and use of digital and information technologies by students. This study examines the technologies of visual learning, which significantly improve the quality of the educational process. As part of the study of modern trends in the educational environment, the emphasis was placed on the use of visualization as a form of presentation of educational material. Different forms of visualization were investigated: active, passive, value-semantic, universal for different age groups of respondents (schoolchildren, students, adults), a total of 412 people participated in the study. For six months, they worked with different forms of visualization as part of the training. It was revealed that it is necessary to take into account age factors, motivational features that will allow you to build individual training routes based on operating with different forms of visual information, which will allow you to critically and systematically study materials, qualitatively develop skills and abilities, be effective, achieve goals and results.

Keywords: information literacy, digital skills, information technologies, training, education, visual technologies, virtual reality, visualization.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technologies and the active use of these technologies in all spheres of human activity has led to the emergence of the concept of "information society". The further development of digital technologies and their active use in educational activities contributed to the introduction of such categories as information literacy and digital literacy into scientific circulation. Information literacy and digital skills form the information culture of an individual. Given the intellectualization and digitalization of almost all areas of business, the need to work in an information environment, simple knowledge and the

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ability to apply information and communication technologies in ordinary and professional activities is no longer enough (Bartolomé et al., 2021). The penetration of digital and information technologies into all spheres of life has led to the fact that the necessary competencies in the new reality are the so-called computational thinking, the ability to critically evaluate and create media content, the ability to allocate what is necessary in significant information flows, the ability to work in cloud environments, interact in virtual teams. The processes of acquiring and transferring knowledge have also changed, which are now carried out with the help of the latest information and digital technologies. The field of higher education has also become part of the digital transformation (Deja et al., 2021; Gálik, Oprala, 2021).

New media practices and new technologies are causing global changes in education, which leads to the expansion of traditional educational concepts. The need to introduce digital and information technologies into the educational space is due to the fact that, on the one hand, students need to acquire new skills and competencies that will allow them to be successful in a high – tech environment, on the other hand, educational technologies should quickly change to meet the emerging needs of the labor market, and universities should provide students with the opportunity to use the opening opportunities of digitalization, create accessible educational spaces. Digital and information technologies provide a variety of universal tools for designing educational processes. The combined use of real and virtual learning components allows you to use the advantages of some methods and avoid the disadvantages of others. Information technologies provide students with greater freedom and independence in mastering the educational material, develop their information literacy skills, since they need to master new technologies before using them in the learning process.

The main features of the education system in modern conditions are the development of personalized learning, the availability of easily accessible technologies, the expansion of the use of virtual technologies, continuous innovation (Fedorov et al., 2020; Gálik, 2020; Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2020; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021; Lyapunsova et al., 2021). The formation and development of information literacy at various stages of training helps students to understand the current trends in the development of science and technology, the nature of the information space, to use the latest achievements of technology and technology at the beginning in the learning process, and then in professional activities (Mail Pala et al., 2021). The use of audio technologies, visual technologies, and other opportunities provided by information and communication technologies allow the use of educational materials at a qualitatively new level, contribute to obtaining higher learning results due to the possibility of mastering more educational material (Gálik, Oprala, 2021; Nouri, 2019).

Information and digital technologies form an individual educational environment, an integral part of which is Internet platforms, thanks to which students can manage educational content. Given that the Internet provides unlimited access to information resources in the process of learning digital skills, it is important to learn how to assess the legitimacy of Internet sources, which involves the use of special methodological approaches in training based on information technologies. Digitalization of education makes it possible to expand traditional educational activities to include elements of real life in them with the help of, for example, game simulations or virtual objects. The technologies used stimulate students to improve the skills of searching and processing information, remote communications, increasing the level of information literacy.

2. Materials and methods

The analysis of the literature on the study of the use of various information and digital technologies in educational activities was carried out. The logic of the research was to analyze which information technologies are currently the most popular in the field of education and how visualization technologies are used in the learning process.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the possibilities and effectiveness of visual learning technologies and to propose methods of their use in the educational process.

The research program includes several main stages:

- at the first stage, visual forms of the material were selected, which were used in the training process for the next 6 months;
- at the second stage, these forms were used for 6 months in different age groups: older teenagers (15-16 years old); university students (25-30 years old); employees of organizations (45-50 years old);

- at the third stage, additional data were collected for analysis in different age groups: motivation for learning, the level of perception of the value of learning for the study participants;
- at the fourth stage, the data were systematized and analyzed according to the following criteria: how different visual forms are perceived by students of different ages, with different levels of motivation for learning, with different levels of perception of the value of learning;
- at the fifth stage, general conclusions were formulated based on the results of the work carried out.

The following materials were used for the study:

- the methodology of studying the attitude to academic subjects of G.N. Kazantseva (suitable for students of different ages);
- a questionnaire for evaluating the value of learning, designed specifically for research (defines 3 levels: low, medium and high level of learning value);
- a questionnaire for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching through the use of various forms of visualization (teachers and students themselves were interviewed).

The sample of the study was 412 respondents, 26 of them were teachers with at least 5 years of experience and 386 students of different ages:

- older teenagers (15-16 years old) – 116 people – 50 girls and 66 boys;
- students of higher educational institutions (25-30 years old) – 150 people-70 boys and 80 girls;
- employees of organizations (45-50 years old) – 120 people-80 women and 40 men.

The study was conducted for 8 months from November 2020 to May 2021.

Visual materials were divided into two main dichotomous groups:

- active visualization (transformation and transformation of visual data by students themselves) and passive visualization (just perception of visual data (graphs, drawings) without active interaction with them);
- visual images that are significant for students (for example, cases with participants of their age or characters in pictures of the respondents' age) – universal visual images (just pictures of nature, happy people).

The results of the study are correlated and confirmed by the results of the studies analyzed in the "Discussion" section below.

3. Discussion

The concepts of information literacy and digital skills that have emerged as a result of the digital transformation of all spheres of human life and the formation of the information society in the context of their formation and development are united by the use of digital information and communication technologies in the learning process. In one of the recent studies, a research team distinguish four stages in the development of educational technologies using information and communication technologies (Kačínová, 2019; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2018). The first stage is characterized by the growth of computer learning, which is associated with the mass use of computer technology in the learning process, the second stage is characterized by multimedia learning, the third stage is the emergence of computer networks that made it possible to use collaborative learning tools and the fourth stage is ubiquitous online learning in the digital age. In the modern conditions of digitalization of education, improving the digital skills and competencies of teachers is of particular importance. The transition to distance learning leads to the need for teachers to more actively study and use various information technologies in teaching.

The study by M. Beardsley, L. Albó, P. Aragón, D. Hernández-Leo identifies factors that can contribute to the introduction of digital technologies of distance learning by teachers based on the Fogg behavior model (Beardsley et al., 2021). According to the Fogg model, the effectiveness of target behavior depends on a combination of three factors: motivation, abilities and triggers. The need to use digital technologies in the learning process has significantly increased the motivation of teachers to master the latest information technologies and apply them in their teaching activities. A study by M. Beardsley, L. Albó, P. Aragón, D. Hernández-Leo shows that teachers' motivation to participate in activities related to digital technologies increased during the distance learning period. The research reveals that some teachers have been already sufficiently motivated to use digital technologies in teaching, while the motivation of others increased significantly. The forced transition to distance learning has led to the fact that almost all teachers have mastered digital educational technologies and, realizing the undeniable advantages of these technologies, will

actively use the acquired digital skills in their teaching practice in the future, regardless of changes in external conditions. In their study, O. Zawacki-Richter, U. Alturki, A. Aldraiweesh determined that the most popular questions in the study of information technology training were online learning, online courses and open educational resources (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2017).

Online learning promotes effective knowledge transfer and self-regulation of the educational process, helps students to improve information literacy (Humrickhouse, 2021). Quite a lot of research is devoted to distance learning technologies. In the scientific publications of the last ten years, the emphasis is on the development of computer learning environments and the integration of information and communication technologies of learning in various subject areas. The active discussion of the problem of distance education in the scientific literature began with questions on the use of distance technologies in higher education, and then other levels of education, for example, school education, were included in the range of issues. The main thing is to ensure a high level of interaction and cooperation between students and teachers, as well as between students (Money, Dean, 2019; Zawacki-Richter, Naidu, 2016).

Another popular topic of research that is of particular interest to researchers is mobile learning. In the work of H. Crompton, D. Burke, a review of studies related to mobile learning was conducted, it was determined that this topic is of considerable interest to modern scientists due to the fact that the number of mobile devices has increased significantly, mainly mobile device users are people aged 18 to 29 years, which is a typical age for students of various educational institutions (Crompton, Burke, 2018).

The studies have shown that the problem of using digital devices is relevant, and there are also two points of view on the usefulness of mobile devices in the learning process. Some authors believe that traditional teaching will be more effective, since the use of mobile devices in the classroom distracts students from performing educational tasks, and another group of authors points to the undeniable advantages of integrating mobile devices into the educational process, since they have a great potential to promote innovative teaching methods (Pedro et al., 2018). A promising direction in education is e-learning, which opens up new opportunities for both teachers and students (Rodrigues et al., 2019). Digital skills and competencies need to be developed not only at the school or university level.

The development of the skills to navigate in the information space, to search for the necessary information, to critically evaluate it, to understand how to use the information found in the context of their scientific ideas is a necessary skill for young scientists and graduate students when writing their scientific papers (Farooq, Maher, 2021). The multicomponent and meta-objective nature of the concept of information literacy allows students to strengthen the processes of self-education and forms a responsible attitude to the information reality. For more intensive training of information literacy, non-standard teaching tools, such as visual learning technologies, should be used.

A study by J.J. Loftus, M. Jacobsen, T.D. Wilson showed that during visual learning, spatial ability reduces cognitive load and potentially affects the student's performance when performing learning tasks using visual technologies (Loftus et al., 2017). The use of a cognitive-visual approach in teaching allows you to maximize the possibilities of visual thinking of students based on the cognitive function of visibility (Wu, Rau, 2018). Visualization technology has been used very successfully for learning a second foreign language (Sato, 2016).

The cognitive-visual approach allows us to design a visual learning environment, which involves the use of both traditional visual aids and special techniques and methods. The advantage of using visualization technologies in educational activities is the opportunity, on the one hand, to develop visual thinking of students, and on the other hand, to develop skills of working with modern information technologies, when students independently use computer and information technologies to create graphic images in a visual environment.

In the work of E. Gandolfi, K.W. Kosko, R.E. Ferdig shows that the use of video in teaching enhances the perception of educational material by students, increases their attention and generally improves the quality of the educational process (Gandolfi et al., 2021). The student can operate with a much larger amount of information compared to traditional methods of teaching. The analysis of the literature shows that one of the latest information technologies related to the creation of visual images, currently used are virtual reality technologies and augmented reality technologies. The goal of these rapidly developing technologies is to expand the physical space with additional objects, in the form of images created using digital devices and software. To support

visual training courses and modules, special visual learning tools are being developed, which are used to model scenarios of collaborative learning using visual technologies (Molina et al., 2018).

The advantages of using visualization technologies, one of which is virtual reality technology, are explored by G. Yang, Y.-T. Chen, X.-L. Zheng, G.-J. Hwang. Their study showed higher learning outcomes and higher motivation to learn from a group of students who used virtual reality technology compared to a group that used traditional teaching methods (Yang et al., 2021).

The use of virtual reality in the learning process helps to better study abstract concepts and increases the interest of students in studying both the physical and mathematical sciences and the humanities and motivates them to learn (Liono et al., 2021). Educational institutions successfully use augmented reality technologies, which have proven their effectiveness in the context of motivating students and successfully mastering training courses (Dalim et al., 2017; Garzón et al., 2019).

The active introduction of augmented reality technologies in the field of education is determined by the capabilities of this technology, as well as the ease of its use through mobile devices, such as smartphones or tablets. Augmented reality combines physical and digital reality to create an image, three-dimensional objects, allowing you to better perceive and understand the surrounding reality. Unlike virtual reality, which is an artificially created environment, augmented reality expands the existing environment by supplementing it with virtual elements, for example, three-dimensional models of buildings, cars, animals or people. The potential of augmented reality allows it to be used not only in the higher education system, but also in schools, although it is in universities that this technology has shown the greatest effectiveness (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2019).

An analysis of the literature on the use of the visual component in the learning process showed that researchers mainly analyze the use of virtual and augmented reality technologies in the context of their technical capabilities, while methodological issues of visualization of the educational process are practically not studied.

4. Results

The results of the study are presented in detail below.

As part of the first stage, visual forms of the material were selected, which were used in the learning process for the next 6 months at various humanitarian courses, where a large amount of textual information and abstract concepts (history, sociology, fundamentals of management, philosophy) were selected. Among the recommended forms, teachers were asked to use pictures, clips (passive visualization), infographics, scribing, sketching (active visualization), as well as tasks and methodological materials with typical universal pictures or maximally adapted to the needs of the audience (adults who studied management, for example, considered cases, visual sketches based on their own or the most similar professional experience). In total, 100 visual forms and images were selected for each age group within the framework of the disciplines, subjects and courses being taught, and approximately 20 tasks were developed in order to use active forms of working with images.

During the second stage, these forms were used for 6 months in different age groups: older teenagers (15-16 years old); university students (25-30 years old); employees of organizations (45-50 years old). Individual data were not collected here on purpose, but teachers freely observed the activity of students, their interest in the material and the manifestation of creative initiative. The observation data were analyzed, systematized, processed using frequency analysis and presented in the table (Table 1).

Table 1. Data on the results of observation of students during the use of visualization in teaching

Monitoring parameter	Older teenagers (15-16 years old)		University students (25-30 years old)		Employees of organizations (45-50 years old)	
	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization	After using visualization
student activity	24 %	46 %	43 %	68 %	15 %	35 %
interest in the material	30 %	50 %	27 %	55 %	19 %	59 %

manifestation of creative initiative	12 %	33 %	29 %	50 %	7 %	30 %
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The data in [Table 1](#) confirm that the use of visualization maximizes interest in learning, activity and creativity when performing various tasks.

As part of the third stage, additional data were collected for analysis in different age groups: motivation to learn, the level of perception of the value of learning ([Tables 2, 3](#)).

Table 2. Data on the results of assessing the motivation of students during the use of visualization in teaching

Motivation level	Older teenagers (15-16 years old)		University students (25-30 years old)		Employees of organizations (45-50 years old)	
	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization
High	15 %	29 %	30 %	55 %	5 %	35 %
Medium	45 %	60 %	30 %	40 %	35 %	45 %
Low	40 %	11 %	40 %	5 %	60 %	20 %

These results confirm the change in the level of motivation, which allows us to use visual forms of work in groups with a particularly high resistance to mastering new material, especially of those older 45 years.

Table 3. Data on the results of students' perception of the value of learning

Learning value level	Older teenagers (15-16 years old)		University students (25-30 years old)		Employees of organizations (45-50 years old)	
	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization	Before using visualization	After using visualization	Before using visualization
High	5 %	40 %	10 %	25 %	7 %	40 %
Medium	30 %	50 %	30 %	60 %	23 %	55 %
Low	65 %	10 %	60 %	15 %	70 %	5 %

The data in [Tab. 3](#) confirm the change in the level of assessment of the value of learning by students personally for themselves, which allows us to recommend starting to use visual forms of work in training as early as possible from an earlier age. This will allow us to implement the concept of "lifelong learning" at a more effective and conscious level.

As part of the fourth stage, the data were systematized and analyzed according to the following criteria: how different visual forms are perceived by students of different ages, with different levels of motivation for learning, with different levels of perception of the value of learning.

- active visualization (that is, working with the transformation of images is more memorable, but it should be dosed, since it takes a lot of intellectual effort and requires systematic and imaginative thinking at a sufficiently high level). It is easier for teenagers and students to use active visualization as their own intellectual product, less often people of the adult age group (it is more difficult for them to be active, creative; it is easier to do something according to a pre-created template). All these conclusions can be explained by the age characteristics of the study participants, as well as the peculiarities of the mentality and upbringing of the older group of people, their cultural patterns of behavior;

- passive visualization (perception of visual images without active processing) was perceived by all respondents with less interest, but at the same time it significantly increased the

memorability of the material, but not its semantic assimilation. Passive visualization is used 6-7 times more often in the activities of teachers than active visualization, since it requires less effort and time spent on preparing the material. Also, passive visualization requires less creativity and creative study of methodological materials from the teacher. It is easier for teenagers and people of the adult age group to perceive passive visualization (it is easier for them to do something according to a pre-created template, without using additional efforts);

- visual images that were important for students (for example, cases with participants of their age or characters in pictures of the respondents' age) are used by teachers quite rarely, but if they were used in an active form, then they were remembered by students as much as possible, increased their interest in the material, contributed to the manifestation of creativity in performing tasks. All this can be explained by the value value of this visual material for students. It is easier to work with such images as teenagers and students, as well as people of the adult age group. All students tried to be active in learning, non-standard solutions, to move away from pre-created templates;

- universal visual images (just pictures of nature, happy people, people doing their own thing) were well absorbed, did not cause a strong emotional response, rather, they were perceived as an additional distracting background (according to the results of observation in all groups of respondents, it was found that diagrams, graphs, text were remembered better when there were no additional background images that distracted them). Universal images were well perceived at the beginning and at the end of presentations, lectures – they created a certain educational mood, but were quickly forgotten. This can also be explained by the huge amount of streaming information that people perceive every day, to which the psyche has learned to adapt. This could be observed in all age groups;

At the fifth stage, general conclusions are formulated based on the results of the work carried out, they are presented below.

5. Conclusion

The conducted research allowed us to draw a number of conclusions:

- respondents of each age group recognize learning using visual technologies as more effective and interesting;

- respondents with initially high motivation to study, but its low value for themselves (who are forced to study due to external circumstances) reacted more often and were involved in the active process of working with visual material, which, in general, increased the value of studying for them personally, and a sincere interest in it grew;

- respondents with initially low motivation to study, but its high value for themselves ("I don't really want to make an effort, but it's important for me") more often worked comfortably in the format of passive visualization-where it was not necessary to make efforts, develop a creative approach, create their own;

- respondents with initially low motivation to study and its low value for themselves ("I don't really want to make an effort, I don't care") more often worked comfortably in the format of passive visualization and reacted to universal images – where no effort was required, they refused to use active visualization, it was difficult to get involved in the educational process based on it;

- respondents with initially high motivation to study and its high value for themselves ("I really want to make efforts, this is important for me") more often worked comfortably in the format of active visualization, found new meanings and interest, developed their product, made new projects and more often not just reproduced the learned material, but also tried to apply it as much as possible in new situations.

All the data obtained indicate that it is possible to use a multi-level system for organizing visual information, data, and materials used in teaching different age groups. It is especially necessary to focus attention on the use of active forms of working with images in adolescent groups and in groups of older students in order to increase motivation, awareness in learning and interest in the material that is caused by internal motivation, and not by external circumstances. Also, visual materials allow you to adapt faster to the learning process, new topics, complex materials and it is easier to explain what is not clear when interacting with teachers.

Visualization is a universal language of work, training and any activity, which has repeatedly proved its effectiveness.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 283-288

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.283
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Methodology, Technology and Practice of Organizing Media Education Seminars and Workshops for Teachers on Promoting Interethnic Tolerance in the University Student Community

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Abstract

The relevance of improving the methodological training of present-day university teaching staff is due to the dynamic changes taking place in the system of higher education. The article presents the experience of conducting scientific and methodological seminars and workshops for the pedagogical community. The purpose of the seminars for teachers on promoting university students' interethnic tolerance by means of media education is to familiarize teachers with the leading methods, technologies and practical techniques of media pedagogy based on analysing media texts of different types and genres in the context of developing the culture of interethnic communication, constructive dialogue of university students in the media sphere. The authors describe the methodological and organizational aspects for teachers to use in their further professional activities in the course of integrating media education into social sciences and humanities.

Keywords: media, media education, interethnic tolerance, university students, seminars, workshops, teachers.

1. Introduction

Among the risks associated with digitalization and mediatization of modern society, media manipulation, "hate speech", xenophobia, and fake information that incite interethnic enmity are being highlighted nowadays. These risks may pose a particular threat to the younger generation whose interests and leisure activities are increasingly linked to social networks communication, the blogosphere and intense involvement in various media-related activities.

The "Strategy for the development of education in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025" indicates that the socio-cultural and civic education of modern youth is directly related to promoting a culture of interethnic communication, the development of a respectful attitude of the younger generation to the national dignity of people as well as "the formation of a stable system of moral and meaningful attitudes of the individual allowing to resist the ideology of extremism, nationalism, xenophobia, corruption, discrimination on social, religious, racial, national grounds and other negative social phenomena" (Strategy..., 2015). This strategy actualizes the issues of fostering interethnic tolerance and dialogue of cultures among young people.

When education is aimed at promoting interethnic tolerance among university students, it is necessary not only to teach the younger generation, but also to purposefully prepare teachers for this activity. At the same time, it is important for teachers not only to be aware of media education techniques and methods, but also to know how to integrate them into various academic subjects

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and creatively apply the studied material in classrooms. To this end, in the 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 academic years we organized training seminars and master classes at the Rostov State University of Economics in which teachers of various academic subjects took part (Chelysheva, 2020; Mikhaleva, 2020).

We will attempt to summarize the experience of these seminars and workshops, present media education methods and technologies for increasing interethnic tolerance among university students in this article.

2. Materials and methods

The main material for this article is practical guidelines of seminars and master classes for teachers aimed at promoting interethnic tolerance in the university student community by integrating media education; methodological tools for media education; technologies and methods of conducting practical classes with elements of media education contributing to fostering interethnic tolerance.

The practical approaches presented in the article are based on the methodology for students' performing literary activities, drama and role-play, visual and imitation activities on the material of media culture focused on the key concepts of media education: media agencies, media categories, media language, media technologies, media representations, media audiences, etc.

3. Discussion

According to contemporary media education studies approaches (Akhmedzyanova, 2011; Bazalgette, 1992; Buckingham, 1993, 2014; Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2019, 2020; Fedorov, 2007, 2015; Fedorov et al., 2020; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020; 2021; Gálíková Tolnaiová, 2021; Halloran, 1998; Kačínová, 2019; Khilko, 2013; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021; Masterman, 1996; Ramasubramanian, 2007, 2011; Rubtsova, 2013; Silverblatt, 2001; Vinichenko, 2011, 2017; Weber, 2018; Worsnop, 2004; Vrabc, Bôtošová, 2020; Zhmyrova, Monastyrskiy, 2012), media education plays an increasingly important role in the process of overcoming and preventing the risks of interethnic intolerance. It implies developing a culture of communication with media production including critical thinking and analytical skills. Unfortunately, modern universities do not actively use the potential of media pedagogy and they rarely integrate media education methods when teaching young people. Taking into account the possibilities of media education in enhancing the creative potential and upbringing the moral qualities of the individual, the goals associated with applying media education for promoting university students' interethnic tolerance are actualized in the contemporary sociocultural situation.

The integration of media education into academic subjects of the humanities and social sciences related to the study of history, psychology, pedagogy, sociology of culture and others, can play an important role in this process. We conducted a number of training seminars and master classes for teachers within the research project "Issues of Student Youth Interethnic Tolerance Reflected in Russian and English-Language Media Education of the Post-Soviet Period (1992-2020)" devoted to this problem.

4. Results

The purpose of these teacher training seminars and workshops was to acquaint teachers with the leading Russian and foreign methods, technologies and practical techniques of media pedagogy (Buckingham, 1993, 2014; Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2019, 2020; Fedorov, 2007, 2015; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020; Gálíková Tolnaiová, 2021; Kačínová, 2019; Masterman, 1996; Silverblatt, 2001; Worsnop, 2004; Vrabc, Bôtošová, 2020 and others) based on critical analysing media texts of different types and genres in the context of promoting the culture of interethnic communication, a constructive dialogue of students in the media sphere.

In particular, the teachers were offered the following topics during the seminars:

1. Possibilities of integrating media education into the academic subjects of the humanities and social sciences.
2. Interethnic tolerance as a complex quality of a student's personality and the potential of media education.
3. Media education as a means of teaching interethnic tolerance to university students: methods and technologies.

4. Media education based on the material of cinema, television, photography, advertising: the practice of promoting interethnic tolerance among university students.

The structure of the seminars consisted of the theoretical, methodological and practical blocks. The theoretical block was devoted to studying and analysing the materials on the topic of interethnic tolerance and media education. The methodological block was devoted to familiarizing the audience with the methodological and teaching tools of integrated media education, forms and methods of media education to use in lectures and practical classes with university students in order to foster their interethnic tolerance. The practical block of seminars was aimed at students' performing creative tasks of various types for the audience to have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the creative atmosphere of the media education lesson, test and choose the most optimal techniques and technologies for further work based on the key concepts of media education: media agencies, media categories, media language, media technologies, media representations, media audiences, etc.

Working with the key concepts of media education can take many different forms. This can be a game exercise to study the possible success of a particular media text; competition for the best mini-script of social advertising on the topic of interethnic relations; a theatrical sketch that conveys the process of creating a feature film about the interethnic dialogue; selection of musical accompaniment for showing a series of photographs; creating a blog or a chat on the topic of interethnic relations; development of pedagogical situations that demonstrate different models of behaviour in international teams which can be used to illustrate the topic of an article in a magazine, etc.

The analysis of media texts based on the material of feature and documentary films, the press, advertising, photographic art, television and other media production is an important factor in enhancing the audience's interest in the issues under consideration when training teachers.

The study and discussion of media texts of different types and genres on the topic of interethnic tolerance was carried out during the seminars and master classes; the methods of brainstorming, open discussions, reviews, essays, analytical work with media critical materials were also actively used.

For example, in the course of an open discussion, the audience was asked to identify the most pressing challenges associated with the risks of the modern media space in the context of intercultural and interethnic dialogue. Among them, the teachers identified a decrease in the so-called "threshold of tolerance" which is characteristic of some media production.

Indeed, examples of negative attitudes towards representatives of other ethnic groups can often be seen in advertisements, articles in the press where "hate speech" is used, in some episodes of feature films, etc. That is why, it is so important to develop analytical skills and critical understanding of current events reflected in media texts, the ability to distinguish facts from the so-called "fakes" often found on social networks and blogs when working with media texts.

It seems to us that in order to familiarize teachers with the techniques and technologies for developing analytical skills, one of the optimal forms of work is the study of critical material about media production: reviews, articles, blogs, etc. Discussing and analysing both professional and amateur texts will allow teachers to get a deeper understanding of interethnic relations. At the next stage, it is possible to offer the audience to prepare their own media critical materials which can subsequently be analysed with university students in the course of studying some academic topic in a particular academic subject. This type of activity could become of good help for teachers preparing students for independent activities focused on media material.

Preparation for conducting a discussion at an integrated media education lesson may include a series of supporting questions for the upcoming discussion; search and classification of illustrations (frames from feature films and documentaries, photographs, advertisements and other media texts) to organize a subsequent discussion with students during a lecture or practical lesson. In our opinion, such preparatory work for the upcoming classes arouses great interest of teachers as it allows them to expand the arsenal of didactic materials and find new areas of application for media education techniques within the subject taught.

The teachers got interested in various forms and methods of organizing media education classes during the seminars. They had the opportunity to get acquainted with the algorithm for planning media projects; the main stages of arranging competitions for the best media text on the topic of interethnic tolerance; the specifics of organizing theatrical and creative work, games and role-play with media texts in the classroom; the analysis of media texts of various types and genres, etc.

5. Conclusion

So, the training seminars and master classes for the pedagogical community were aimed at acquainting the teachers with the media education potential in the context of promoting university students' interethnic tolerance: expanding horizons, developing creative and communicative abilities, developing critical thinking.

During the seminars and master classes, a whole range of objectives related to fostering university students' interethnic tolerance, moral and civic education focused on media texts of various types and genres were solved:

- to form students' conscious rejection of the ideology of racial, national, interethnic, interfaith intolerance and extremism through the critical analysis of media texts;
- to destroy social prejudices and ethnic stereotypes in the student environment;
- to teach young people to distinguish between various methods of media manipulation and propaganda of interethnic intolerance in mass media when analysing media texts;
- to expand the cultural, historical and social experience, ethnocultural horizons of the student audience;
- to encourage active civic engagement in young people;
- to develop a positive national identity and a sense of patriotism among students;
- to involve young people in socially significant activities in order to form their culture of interethnic and interpersonal interaction.

6. Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the grant of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR, project No. 19-013-00030) at the Rostov State University of Economics. Project theme: "Issues of Student Youth Interethnic Tolerance Reflected in Russian and English-Language Media Education of the Post-Soviet Period (1992-2020)". Head of the project is I.V. Chelysheva.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 289-298

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.289
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



On My Own: Acquiring Technical Digital Skills for Mobile Phone Use in Chile. Parents-children Perceptions

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Abstract

Despite its relevance, the difficulty in reaching consensus on the definition of digital competence slows down its implementation. The need of prior development of specific skills to advance in digital development has been recently reported. The acquisition of skills involves making the most of the opportunities offered by the digital environment. This article shows the results from a research conducted on 501 parent-child dyads in Chile in which minors aged 10 to 14 reported their self-perceptions on who (parents, siblings and peers) taught them certain technical and operational digital skills on mobile devices. Parents were also surveyed to know their perception about this children's social mediation. Socio-demographic variables are also analysed. Chilean minors have a clear perception of autonomy in the acquisition of digital competence, parents underestimate their ability to influence, and other socialization agents such as siblings play a significant role. Age, gender and socioeconomic level to a lesser extent mark differences in the acquisition of these skills. In addition to providing a comparison on the perception parents and children have on the extent to which minors are accompanied while on their mobile phone, the article goes beyond parental mediation strategies and collects parental reflections on types of mediation.

Keywords: digital competence, technical skills, safety skills, mobile phone, children.

1. Introduction

Access to and use of internet and the appropriation of different digital devices among Chilean families, as is happening in other Western societies has increased significantly in recent years. Not surprisingly, 87.4 % of Chilean households have paid access to the internet and reaches 94 % in those households in which there are children going to school, a trade school or university (Subtel, 2017). On the other hand, the study developed in 2016 by *Kids Online Chile*, coinciding with the tendency of our results, shows that 92 % of children aged 9 to 17 could access the Internet at home via a mobile phone (Cabello et al., 2017). This new digitalised household has had an impact on children's uses and practises and on their digital skills development both, as individual internet users as well as individuals influenced by different social mediators such as the family or peers.

Digital competences and digital skills acquisition by children has been identified as an essential precondition for minors' development and their general well-being (Livingstone et al., 2018; Smahel et al., 2020). A research developed in Chile (Cabello et al., 2018) shows that sociodemographic factors such as age and socioeconomic status are significantly associated with different level of skills with

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children showing higher levels of digital competence as their age increases and among those with the highest socioeconomic status. Evidence also shows that children owning a mobile phone with internet access developed higher digital skills (Cabello et al., 2018).

Parents, as social mediators of their children's online activities try to find a difficult balance between their children's online safety while aiming to maximise their digital opportunities and digital skills. We consider essential to analyse under children and parents perspectives how children acquire specific safety and other digital skills regarding the smartphones use, with special focus on their level of autonomy performing these skills as well as the implication of different individuals (parents, siblings and peers) with teaching them these skills.

In sum, this article aims to understand how children have adopted smartphones in the household and how involved parents get in this process, the most frequent activities developed on their smartphones and the perceptions that parents and children have about the same minor's technical and operational digital skills on these devices.

2. Materials and methods

The aim of this study is to determine children's digital skills regarding online safety and privacy in using smartphones, namely children's and parents' self-reported ability to manage various aspects related to smartphone configuration and online safety, as well as other operational skills implicit in their use. Other elements implicit in the process of acquisition and development of these skills have also been taken into account, such as internet connection features, smartphone ownership, range of minors' online activities, as well as the influence of sociodemographic factors (age, gender and socioeconomic status.)

To answer this objective, the following research questions were proposed:

1) What abilities do children self-report and what abilities do parents perceive their children as having regarding the operational digital skills required to configure mobile phones, install applications, and protect themselves from advertising messages?

2) What abilities do children self-report and what abilities do parents perceive their children as having regarding their children's operational digital skills with regard to online safety and privacy on smartphones?

3) Are there significant differences in the responses among minors based on individual sociodemographic factors (age, gender and socioeconomic status)?

Quantitative methodology with data collected in face-to-face surveys was used. The universe selected for this study were households with minors ages 10 to 14 in the Metropolitan Area of Santiago de Chile. A 501 households sample size was defined for the survey, each home of which was to include and survey a residing child who met the sought profile and one of their parents or legal guardian (501 minors and 501 adults.)

According to the 2017 Chilean Census, the latest available, the Metropolitan Area has 373,129 homes with children ages 10 to 14 distributed as follows in the geographic sectors or macrozones commonly and locally used: Center = 47,148 homes; North = 50,553; East = 69,954; West = 73,877; South = 131,597.

Each macrozone was assigned 100 cases and the sample was distributed proportionally according to the percentage of households with children ages 10 to 14 per borough (locally known as "comuna") that make up each macrozone. This distribution resulted in a probabilistic design by areas (macrozones) with an error of $\pm 4.4\%$ under the assumptions of simple random sampling and 95 % confidence. The field work was performed between May and July 2018.

A close-ended question with a multiple responses answer was designed for this study. The question was "Who taught you to do the following activities?", and SPSS analyzable multiple responses were: Never done it (1), Don't know how to (2), Learned by myself (3), A parent (4), A sibling (5), A friend (6), Another person [another relative: uncle/aunt, grandparents, cousins; at school/teacher] (88), DK / NA (99).

During the visit to each household, and prior to surveying the adult and the minor separately, parents signed a parental consent form previously approved by the Ethics Committee of the University seconding this research project. With regards to format, both groups answered the same survey; in relation to the question, both groups were asked the same questions, but from different approaches. Given the object of research in this study is minors, the questionnaire was aimed at them, and thus, they were asked about their own habits and experiences with mobile devices.

Contrastingly, parents/guardians were requested to answer according to their perception of the same reality. Specifically, children and adults were asked about the items listed in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the elements of the analysis

Item	Minors ($\alpha=.803$)				Adults ($\alpha=.915$)			
	N	M.	S ²	DT	N	M.	S ²	DT
Phone settings configuration	485	3.44	1.37	1.17	467	3.48	1.43	2.04
Privacy settings configuration	491	2.81	1.94	1.39	442	2.76	1.62	1.27
Adblockers activation	490	2.33	1.72	1.31	427	2.55	1.54	1.24
Email account creation	472	3.09	2.15	1.47	457	2.88	1.62	1.27
Social media sign-up	484	3.22	1.92	1.39	465	3.11	1.29	1.14
App store management	491	2.63	1.79	1.34	457	3.04	1.13	1.06
Apps installation	485	3.19	.93	.96	474	3.23	.92	.96

The Bonferroni test was used to determine the existence of significant differences when working with different bases, between the responses of the two samples established and on which the surveys were applied. The statistical data presented in this analysis belong to the first phase of a broader investigation collected in the Fondecyt Initiation N ° 11170336, financed by the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT) of the Government of Chile.

This article aims to contribute to a better understanding of role children have in the mechanisms of media, considering at all times their developmental state and moment in their education and striving to respect and defend their dignity and rights as a human beings. To safeguard the integrity of participants and researchers prior to collecting the data here analyzed. Written authorization was requested from the guardian who signed an informed consent and the minors themselves were also asked for their assent. These documents were reviewed and validated by the Ethics Committee of the university to which this research project is linked (Universidad de los Andes, Chile).

3. Discussion

Concerns have been raised due to the intensiveness of the use of screens, mainly with regard to the sheer amount of time devoted to them ([Chassiakos et al., 2016](#)) while the potential negative effect of screen time over youngster' wellbeing has been recently questioned ([Orben, Przybylski, 2019](#)). It is what young people do while enjoying themselves with these screens rather than the amount of time spent on them that seems to be worthy of analysis ([Blum-Ross, Livingstone, 2018, 2016](#)).

Besides this, the current lack of common definitions and understanding among the scientific community of concepts such as digital skills, digital competence and digital literacy increases the difficulty for the design of global and systematic strategies that can help in the development of these concepts among minors ([Donoso et al., 2021; Haddon et al., 2020](#)). Evidence shows that the level of digital skills of minors is positively associated with the frequency and variety of activities ([Livingstone et al., 2019](#)) in which minors get involved online ([Cabello et al., 2018](#)).

The acquisition of digital skills which lead to digital competence is an essential precondition for minors' development and general well-being ([Livingstone et al., 2018; Smahel et al., 2020](#)). Among the antecedents that can facilitate or hinder its acquisition, individual characteristics of minors such as sociodemographic factors (age and gender), social characteristics (socioeconomic status and parental mediation), characteristics of the country where they live and others related to their own use of the internet, access, as well as their perception of effectiveness in the use of the internet, and preference for online social interactions ([Cabello et al., 2020; Haddon et al., 2020; Garmendia et al., 2019; Livingstone, Helsper, 2010; Mascheroni et al., 2020; Trucco, Palma, 2020](#)).

This research devotes special attention to those skills associated with the process of acquisition and the ability of the child when using technical and safety possibilities of the smartphones, that are part of the technical and operational skills proposed in the context of the EU Kids Online project ([Van Deursen et al., 2016](#)) and later reviewed and updated ([Helsper et al., 2021](#)). Besides the technical and operational skills these authors also identified navigation and information process skills; communication and interaction skills and content creation and production skills.

Online safety skills become particularly relevant in the case of access through smartphones (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014), as the use of these devices increase the degree of individualization and make it difficult to reconcile parental involvement with respect for the limits of privacy and autonomy of their children (Haddon et al., 2018). This situation becomes a challenge for parents (Berrios et al., 2015; Condeza et al., 2019) who are expected to act as “facilitating” mediators (Livingstone et al., 2017; Martínez et al., 2020; Rodríguez-de-Dios et al., 2018;) of the digital activities their children get involved in, to strengthen the development of skills for digital competence (Ferrari, 2013; Van Deursen et al., 2016) and at the same time, to be the guardians their own children’s online safety and digital well-being (Smahel et al., 2020).

While the role of parents as mediators of their children’s online activities has been widely studied by parental mediation specialists, with a focus on issues such as child protection and online safety (Berrios et al., 2015; Jiménez-Morales et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2020) very few studies have considered the perception of parents about their role in the process of acquisition of digital competences or skills by the child compared with children’s own perception.

4. Results

As stated in the methodology, 501 homes in the Metropolitan Area of Santiago de Chile were found to meet research criteria and accepted to participate. At each household, a minor (ages 10 to 14) and one of their parents or guardians was surveyed, which resulted in 1002 respondents.

Samples of minors can be described as follows, 300 (60 %) were ages 10 and 12, and 201 (40 %) were ages 13 to 14; 230 (46 %) were boys and 271 (54 %) girls. Most frequently, children live in households with four or more members (N = 388; 77.2 %) and socioeconomic levels were distributed as follows: upper stratum (C1): 7.2 % (N = 36); middle stratum (C2 and C3): 46.9 % (N = 235); low stratum (D): 42.9 % (N = 215); NS / NC: 3 % (N = 15). Regarding adults, most were women (N = 411; 82 %), and the child’s mother (93 %).

By far smartphones (99.2 %) is the device with the highest penetration rate in Chilean homes. About 50 % of the sampled homes have a laptop and tablet, and desktop computers (40 %) are less common among the individuals surveyed.

Specific operational online safety skills are analyzed here, such as the ability to configure the device itself, privacy settings, or ad-blockers, and others such as the ability to create email accounts or sign up on social networks, download applications or manage applications stores. Three dimensions were studied in relation to the general configuration of mobile phones, and most frequently minors stated they had learned by themselves. As shown on Table 2, more than 50 % asserted having configured their mobile phone settings on their own, 35.7 % for privacy settings and 36.1 % for the activation of ad-blockers. Regarding privacy settings, it is noteworthy that one in three minors acknowledged that they have never configured the privacy settings of their phone or that they did not know how to do so, a pattern that becomes even more evident when asked about the activation of ad-blockers: practically 40 % said they had not tried to use any of such services and 11.6 % said they were unable to operate them. Beyond their self-sufficiency, for all three phone configuration actions, children indicated parents were their main reference. The accompaniment provided by siblings, in terms of percentage is higher than that of friends, for both parents and minors surveyed.

In their responses, parents recognized that their children essentially learn to handle mobile phones by themselves. For all three dimensions analyzed, adults mostly chose “I learned by myself”, as their children’s answer especially when referring to phone settings configuration (50.7 %). It is interesting to note that the role of parents tends to be more valued by minors than by the adults themselves.

Along these lines, adults considered that their largest contribution is in configuring privacy settings, which coincides with what minors also highlight. However, adults tended to overestimate their minor’s ability to manage ad-blockers: statistically significant differences were found between the number of times adults and minors chose “I have never done it” and “I don’t know how to do it” as answers to this dimension.

When responses from minors are segmented by gender, age and socioeconomic level, certain significant differences are found, especially those associated to age. As Table 3 shows, children ages 13 to 14 tend to perform activities on their own to a greater extent than those ages 10 to 12, who seem to rely more on their parents. Regarding gender, ad-blockers configuration is more widespread among boys than girls. With regard to socioeconomic level, although statistically

significant differences were practically absent, parental mediation seems to be more present among higher strata, while sibling mediation tends to outweigh the former in lower levels.

Table 2. Perception by adults and responses by minors on the accompaniment provided to minors while acquiring digital skills related to online safety in the use of mobile phones

		ADULT (%) (N=501)	MINOR(%) (N=501)
Phone settings configuration	Never done it	11.2	8.2
	Do not know how	1.6	1.2
	Learned by myself	50.7	50.5
	A parent*	0.2	18.8
	A sibling*	20.2	13.0
	A friend *	9.4	5.2
	Another person*	1.2	3.2
	DK/NA	5.6	0.0
Privacy settings configuration	Never done it	24.0	27.7
	Do not know how to	4.6	5.4
	Learned by myself	35.7	36.7
	A parent	16.8	16.2
	A sibling	6.8	9.4
	A friend	0.4	2.6
	Another person	1.2	2.0
	DK/NA	10.6	0.0
Adblockers activation	Never done it*	27.1	39.1
	Do not know how to*	6.2	11.4
	Learned by myself	36.1	31.9
	A parent	9.8	8.4
	A sibling	6.0	5.4
	A friend	0.0	1.6
	Another person	0.8	2.2
	DK/NA	14.0	0.0

* Statistically significant result between Adult and Minor sample. Results are based on two-sided tests with a significance level of .05. Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

As in the previous section, the analysis of more specific actions on smartphones, such as creating email accounts or profiles on social networks, installing apps or browsing application stores, reveals the extent to which self-learning is relevant among minors. For all the dimensions studied in this section, the most frequent response was "I learned alone", especially when referring to accessing catalogs and downloading and signing up on social network apps, for which more than 40 % of the sample declared to have done these activities independently. However, for the creation of email accounts, minors stated relying more on parents (20.8 %) and siblings (14.4 %).

Indeed, for these activities, parents are the second source from which to learn, especially for creating email accounts, as 1 in 5 minors turned to them for help. Likewise, in the rest of the actions analyzed in this section, parental figures rank second. Friends play a more significant role in this type of skill acquisition, for example in the creation of profiles on social networks (6.8 %), an influence parents do not seem to be aware of. As noted in the previous section, the relevance of the role of siblings follows that of parents, especially in the creation of email accounts.

Table 3. Segmentation by gender, age and SES of the minor's responses about the accompaniment minors receive while acquiring digital skills related to security in the use of mobile phones

		GENDER (%)		AGE (%)		SES (%)			
		Boys	Girls	10 to 12	13 to 14	C1	C2	C3	D
Phone settings	Never done it	7.8	8.5	10.0	5.4	0.0	7.6	7.7	10.7
	Do not know how to	0.4	1.9	1.7	0.5	2.8	1.1	0.7	1.4

configuration	Learned by myself	52.4	48.9	43.8	60.4*	55.6	53.3	53.1	46.0
	A parent	19.0	18.5	22.4*	13.4	33.3	19.6	17.5	16.7
	A sibling	13.0	13.0	13.4	12.4	2.8	13.0	13.3	14.9
	A friend	4.8	5.6	5.4	5.0	0.0	4.3	5.6	6.0
	Another person	2.6	3.7	3.3	3.0	5.6	1.1	2.1	4.2
	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Privacy settings configuration	Never done it	28.6	27.0	33.8*	18.8	19.4	39.1*(C3)	20.3	30.7
	Do not know how to	6.9	4.1	6.7	3.5	8.3	2.2	5.6	6.5
	Learned by myself	32.9	40.0	26.4	52.0*	38.9	22.8	43.4*(C2)	36.3
	A parent	15.6	16.7	20.1*	10.4	27.8	19.6	18.2	12.1
	A sibling	10.4	8.5	8.7	10.4	2.8	13.0	7.7	10.2
	A friend	3.5	1.9	1.7	4.0	2.8	2.2	3.5	1.4
	Another person	2.2	1.9	2.7	1.0	0.0	1.1	1.4	2.8
Adblockers activation	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Never done it	36.4	41.5	44.1*	31.7	27.8	46.7	37.8	40.0
	Do not know how to	9.5	13.0	11.7	10.9	19.4	8.7	13.3	10.2
	Learned by myself	36.8*	27.8	25.8	41.1*	30.6	25.0	35.0	31.6
	A parent	9.1	7.8	10.4	5.4	13.9	9.8	8.4	7.4
	A sibling	4.3	6.3	4.7	6.4	2.8	7.6	2.8	6.5
	A friend	1.3	1.9	1.3	2.0 %	0.0	2.2	1.4	1.9
	Another person	2.6	1.9	2.0	2.5 %	5.6	0.0	1.4	2.3
DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	

* Statistically significant result between columns within the same variable (Sex, Age, SES). Results are based on two-sided tests with a significance level of, 05. Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

Table 4. Perception by adults and responses by minors on the accompaniment provided to minors while learning other digital skills on their mobile phones (email account, profile in social media or management of app stores)

		ADULT (%) (N=501)	MINOR(%) (N=501)
Email account creation	Never done it	22.8	23.0
	Do not know how to	2.4	4.6
	Learned by myself *	37.7	28.3
	A parent	20.0	20.8
	A sibling *	8.0	14.4
	A friend *	.4	3.2
	Another person *	1.6	5.8
	DK/NA	7.2	0.0
Social media sign-up	Never done it	13.6	17.0
	Do not know how to	1.0	2.2
	Learned by myself *	51.9	44.1
	A parent	16.0	15.8
	A sibling	8.8	10.8
	A friend *	1.6	6.8
	Another person *	1.4	3.4
	DK/NA	5.8	0.0
App store management	Never done it *	12.6	31.3
	Do not know how to*	1.4	5.2
	Learned by myself *	56.5	41.1
	A parent	12.0	12.0
	A sibling *	8.0	5.8
	A friend	.8	2.6
	Another person	1.4	2.0
	DK/NA	7.4	0.0
Apps installing	Never done it	7.6	7.4
	Do not know how to	1.0	1.0
	Learned by myself *	58.7	66.3
	A parent*	18.0	12.2
	A sibling	8.4	7.8

	A friend	1.0	2.2
	Another person *	1.0	3.2
	DK/NA	4.4	0.0

As happened when collecting data on other dimensions, parents stated that their minors learn these skills on their own. In most of the cases analyzed, the percentage of parents who responded that minors learned on their own is greater than that declared by the minors themselves. Significant differences are indicated in Table 4, and point at parental overestimation of their children's ability to learn on their own. Similarly, adults also tended to overestimate how easily and knowledgeably minors interact with app stores.

As happens when parents are asked about how minors learn to configure their smartphones, and equally noteworthy is the fact that many chose not to answer the questions presented for the analysis of this dimension, either due to ignorance or for other unknown reasons (between 4.4 % and 7.4 %).

Table 5. Segmentation by gender, age and SES of the child's responses about the accompaniment minors receive while learning the digital skills stated

		GENDER (%)		AGE (%)		SES (%)			
		Boys	Girls	10 to 12	13 to 14	C1	C2	C3	D
Email account creation	Never done it	23.4	22.6	28.1*	15.3	19.4	35.9*(D)	21.7	19.1
	Do not know how to	3.9	5.2	5.7	3.0	5.6	3.3	4.9	5.1
	Learned by myself	35.9*	21.9	21.7	38.1*	30.6	22.8	32.2	27.0
	A parent	16.5	24.4*	22.7	17.8	36.1* (D)	21.7	22.4	16.7
	A sibling	13.9	14.8	13.4	15.8	0.0	14.1	11.2	19.1
	A friend	2.2	4.1	2.7	4.0	2.8	0.0	0.7	6.5* (C3)
	Another person	4.3	7.0	5.7	5.9	5.6	2.2	7.0	6.5
	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Social media sign-up	Never done it	16.0	17.8	22.4*	8.9	16.7	12.0	16.8	19.1
	Do not know how to	2.6	1.9	3.0	1.0	2.8	0.0	.7	4.2
	Learned by myself	46.8	41.9	36.1	55.9*	50.0	56.5*(D)	41.3	39.5
	A parent	16.9	14.8	19.7*	9.9	19.4	16.3	18.9	13.0
	A sibling	10.4	11.1	9.7	12.4	5.6	6.5	13.3	12.1
	A friend	3.9	9.3*	6.0	7.9	5.6	7.6	4.2	8.4
	Another person	3.5	3.3	3.0	4.0	0.0	1.1	4.9	3.7
	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Applicati on store management	Never done it	21.6	39.6*	34.4	26.7	25.0	26.1	29.4	36.7
	Do not know how to	3.5	6.7	5.0	5.4	5.6	7.6	4.9	3.7
	Learned by myself	46.3*	36.7	38.8	44.6	47.2	45.7	45.5	34.9
	A parent	15.6*	8.9	12.7	10.9	13.9	14.1	14.0	10.2
	A sibling	7.4	4.4	5.4	6.4	0.0	3.3	4.2	8.8
	A friend	2.6	2.6	2.0	3.5	5.6	3.3	0.0	3.7
	Another person	3.0	1.1	1.7	2.5	2.8	0.0	2.1	1.9
	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Apps installati on	Never done it	6.9	7.8	9.4*	4.5	2.8	3.3	5.6	11.2
	Do not know how to	1.3	.7	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
	Learned by myself	67.1	65.6	61.2	73.8*	66.7	65.2	72.0	63.3
	A parent	11.7	12.6	14.7*	8.4	25.0* (D)	16.3	14.7	7.0
	A sibling	5.6	9.6	8.0	7.4	2.8	10.9	4.9	9.3
	A friend	3.5	1.1	2.0	2.5	0.0	2.2	1.4	2.8
	Another person	3.9	2.6	3.7	2.5	2.8	2.2	1.4	4.2
	DK/NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Segmentation by gender, age and SES reveals that age is the variable that once again marks significant differences: the older children are, the more they tend to learn on their own. As Table 5 shows, the percentage of minors ages 10 to 12 who have never created an email account, signed up on social networks or installed apps is significant. This situation changes, however in the sample ages 13 and 14 in which the percentage increases. In any case, it should be noted that 36.1 % of minors ages 10 to 12 revealed having signed up for social networks by themselves, an age at which

registration is theoretically not allowed. Signing up for social media is also the routine for which minors aged 10 to 12 declared they had had most support from their parents (19.7 %) followed by apps installations (14.7 %). Minors ages 13 and 14 confirmed having received help from their parents (17.8 %) and siblings (15.8 %) in creating an email account. However, when creating profiles on social networks, they turn to siblings (12.4 %) more than to parents (9.9 %).

Although the gender variable does not seem to be decisive, boys tend to be more independent than girls in acquiring digital skills. Regarding the socioeconomic level, although no statistically significant differences were found, it is once again observed that the percentage of minors who declared having learned with their parents tends to be lower in the most disadvantaged strata. In these cases, minors tend to rely more on siblings.

5. Conclusion

This paper seeks to provide evidence on the role played by next of kin, peers and others (parents, siblings, peers) in the process of acquiring an ability among Chilean children. Minors' perception was completed with the parents' view on the mediation they believe their children had received throughout the process.

According to the data, Chilean homes could be an ideal place for the development of children's digital skills given the wide variety of mobile digital devices that can be made available. Both the variety of technologies available for minors at home and the chance to access the network autonomously is related to the acquisition of digital skills (Haddon et al., 2020). Particularly noteworthy is the high penetration of smartphones, which has increased 7 percentage points compared to that reported in previous studies (Cabello et al., 2017) and now practically reaches 100 %, and is the most widely owned device among minors.

As far as operational digital skills related to smartphone online safety and privacy are concerned, most of the minors surveyed stated that they autonomously configure general and privacy aspects of their mobile phone, and activate ad-blockers. Parental involvement ranks second when it comes to more specific operational skills of the use of the smartphone, such as creating an email account, signing up on social networks or dealing with the acquisition of apps.

Interestingly, the autonomy minors perceive for themselves is shared by their parents, who seem to be aware that minors tend to learn on their own. In addition, minors mentioned parents as having been responsible for their digital learning more than the adults refer to themselves, which is consistent with previous research that showed that parents underestimate to a certain extent their self-efficacy in managing their use of internet compared to that of their children (Garmendia et al., 2019; Mascheroni et al., 2016).

The role of older siblings as digital mediators seems of interest. The data collected shows that for specific skills a higher percentage of children chose their siblings over friends for advice. This is particularly relevant in the specific field of digital competence development given that there is evidence that points to the importance of the mediating role of peers, family and schools in situations minors consider annoying or upsetting (Smahel et al., 2020; Garmendia et al., 2019).

1 in 3 minors stated not paying attention to the privacy settings of their mobile phone. These would show that, although the mobile phone access scene seems to be dominated by a perception of minors' autonomy, attention to key steps for safe and responsible browsing is not present.

The highest level of minor self-sufficiency was detected in app store management and social networks sign-up, for which almost 60 % of the sample confirmed that they had learned by themselves. It is also necessary to highlight the level of autonomy minors declare when signing up for social networks, an action to which theoretically the vast majority of respondents should not have had access since the legally required age to open an account is 13 to 14 (age varies among platforms and requires parental consent.)

Finally, as in previous studies (Mascheroni et al., 2020; Haddon et al., 2020; Trucco, Palma, 2020), age was a determining variable. In general, minors ages 13 and 14 reported having learned on their own to a greater extent than 10- to 12-year-olds, who stated they turned to their parents to perform the proposed actions. Parents are taken into account more by children ages 10 to 12; however, it is interesting to observe that siblings acquire more relevance among those 13 and 14.

Segmentation by gender reveals that more boys than girls tend to claim themselves to be independent in learning digital skills. By socioeconomic level of the household, the parental role in the acquisition of the analyzed skills in lower economic strata is less prevalent. There is a need to know to whom minors resort for their training in digital competence.

The added value of this study lies in introducing into the debate about children's digital skills acquisition the parents perception about it and their role. However, the exploratory approach of the study and methodological limitations do not allow the authors to discern the level of trust parents place on their children's self-learning capacity, if they consider that it applies both technically and critically and if it is sufficient. Having answers to these new research questions by applying qualitative methods and delving into the role that parents play in the development of their children's digital competence with the mobile phone would be of great advantage.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 299-310

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.299
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Internet and the Smartphone: Really Generate Addiction to the Students? A Theoretical Reflection

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Abstract

Nowadays, communications have innovated with the emergence of the internet and mobile telephony (smartphone). Undoubtedly, this technological innovation has favored every sector of the worldwide population, thanks to the various forms of interaction in communication. Therefore, the aim of this essay focuses on the analysis of the literature about constructs of the internet and Smartphone addiction, and how this symptom has become present in the user population. For this purpose, a review of the literature on the subject is carried out, which allows us to identify some aspects that relate to both constructs. In the final reflections from the analyzed literature, we observe that some elements that most influence internet addiction are: leisure, online games, random games, cybersex, social networks to interact with other people, and sometimes to search for information. About this, it has already been reported in several studies, however, a question arises, has little been seen or at least it was not located, that the use of the internet is being the preferred channel of people to their academic training?, or just forced by the global health contingency? Today, the worldwide activity will no longer be the same after the COVID-19 pandemic that we are suffering from, and it is possible that the teaching-learning processes will frequently be taught through the different electronic media, hence this technology is emerging to be an agent of change in education worldwide.

Keywords: addiction, internet, mobile phone, smartphone.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this essay focuses on the theoretical debate about Internet addiction (IA) and with it, the addiction to excessive use of mobile phones, known as Smartphones (AS). Therefore, these two constructs are analyzed in order to identify some aspects that relate them, since internet connectivity is the gateway to the different applications that are installed on the Smartphone, among which are the social networks to name a few of them, and is one of the applications where some attachment is generated that ultimately detonates in addiction.

That is why the Internet and Smartphone binomial have been configured into a tool for communication. We must consider that today several applications (apps) are being designed for all kinds of uses, ranging from social networks, internet sales or electronic commerce in which companies have adopted this type of service, to name a few of the uses of these technologies.

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On the construct of internet addiction, one of the main referents in this field is Dr. Kimberly Young who founded the Center for Internet Addiction in 1995 (The Center for Internet Addiction Recovery) and professor at St. Bonaventure University. Her studies on the new disorder that was emerging in relation to the addiction that was presented by the excessive use of the Internet caught the attention of the scientific community giving way to the development of studies on the subject in question.

Recently García-Santillán (García-Santillán, 2020) conducted a study in which he sought to measure the level of Internet addiction in high school students in a public institution. A total of 203 students between 14 and 18 years of age were evaluated. For this purpose, the instrument used was the Internet Addiction Test by Young (Young, 1997), with which a data matrix was obtained, which was evaluated for internal consistency, resulting optimal in theoretical terms, and then the data were analyzed by means of an exploratory factor analysis with component extraction.

The findings reported by García-Santillán (García-Santillán, 2020) gave evidence of the non-existence of some level of IA, in addition the analysis yielded a structure of six factors, different from what Young (Young, 1997) had originally proposed, although other studies had already reported similar behavior with the obtaining of six factors (Widyanto, McMurrin, 2004). A similar case is the study by Navarro, García-Santillán and Molchanova (Navarro et al., 2020), who carried out a study involving 463 university students from different career and semester profiles in Sonora, Mexico. The results show a factorial structure of four factors with a very acceptable variance (50.35 %). They also identified in most cases, that the level of internet addiction is in a range of mild to moderate, with no gender difference.

In another study García-Santillán, Mexicano-Fernández and Molchanova (García-Santillán et al., 2021) reported a factorial structure of six components that explained 63 % of the total variance that coincides with the proposal of Young (Young, 1998), however the indicators are integrated differently in each factor. The level of Internet addiction that they identified is not within the normal range, i.e. the highest percentage is mild, which does not generate an alert that should be given immediate attention and also reported not having found a difference in relation to gender.

While internet addiction may be constituted as one of the disorders that is becoming present in the population, then it could be thought that the excessive use of smartphones goes hand in hand in this type of addiction, since it is precisely the internet, the conduit through which contact with other people has been established, either through social networks, emails, and any type of platforms that allow communication between people. This idea can be placed in a construct that explains that the excessive use of smartphones is derived from the ease that gives the internet connectivity for the user to interact with people. About the addiction to the smartphone, studies have been reported that have suggested that it is necessary that its use is moderate, and not fall into excess. While it is true that it is a fundamental communication tool for people's lives, it is clear that its use should be regulated. Cerit, Bilgin and Ak (Cerit et al., 2018) point out that proper use, brings an increase in productivity, which will be an element of motivation. There are even those who do not turn off their phone when they sleep, and get annoyed if they are asked to turn it off, they already show excessive codependence towards their smartphone.

The use of the smartphone has been used in the educational field, although this has been on a smaller scale, since students often check their phone inside the classroom, but for purposes other than academic, they do it to be consulting their social networks *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* among others (Alkhunzain, 2019). When connecting to social platforms, it necessarily has to be through internet connectivity, then the technological relationship that exists between the internet and the Smartphone leads them to be constituted as a binomial that goes hand in hand.

However, several studies have analyzed it separately, i.e., internet addiction has been referred to in the seminal studies of Young (Young, 1997; 1998) from the field of psychology and in the clinical field as a disorder. Currently addictions are not limited to the uncontrollable use of substances; there are also behavioral habits that tend to interfere significantly in the daily lives of those affected. These urges are often accompanied by loss of control (Shah et al., 2014).

It is from these considerations that it is interesting to make a brief theoretical discussion on both constructs (IA and AS), to answer some concerns about the way in which both issues come together in something that we could call the addiction to mobile connectivity, which ultimately is summarized in the binomial of the Internet and the smartphone.

2. Discussion and results

State of the art of internet and mobile phone (Smartphone) addiction

About the construct of Internet Addiction

On the construct of Internet addiction, some studies have shown that Internet addiction (IA) occurs more in men than in women, i.e., addiction in men occurs more because they are more interested in online games, gambling, cybersex and sometimes to search for information. On the other hand, addiction in women is more related to certain behaviors such as: sending messages, checking blogs, chatting, updating personal pages and searching for information (Choi et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2002; Fattore et al., 2014; Ginige, 2017; Goel et al., 2013; Heo et al., 2014; Johansson, Gotestam, 2004; Martins et al., 2019; Mo et al., 2020; Müller et al., 2016).

In the same idea about addiction, some studies have tried to explain the relationship between the level of IA and social anxiety in both men and women, for example the work of Weinstein et al. (Weinstein et al., 2015) whose purpose was to explain the association between IA and social anxiety in two samples composed of 60 women and 60 men, they found that there is a correlation between IA and social anxiety, however they found no differences by gender, similarly they found no preference for some social networks with high level of social anxiety. For their part Chen and Nath (Chen, Nath, 2016) focused on discovering the differences in the properties of IA from a cross-cultural perspective, for this they collected data 488 students from the United States, 453 from Africa and 209 from China, the results indicate that they are totally different according to their culture, economy and technological context.

Gedam et al. (Gedam et al., 2016) carried out a comparative study on IA between 597 medical and dental students, from which the results show a severe level of IA in dental students compared to medical students, in addition, this study reported that women presented greater IA than men among dental students, perhaps due to the existence of more women than men in that institution. Students with IA prefer to use the internet to play games or to browse their social networks, rather than for educational purposes.

There are also countries where access to the internet is limited and this could be a determining variable in the presence of the IA phenomenon. In this regard the work of Chen and Nath, (Chen, Nath, 2016) reported interesting findings in the comparative study they conducted with African, North American and Chinese students, where the IA score stood out in Africa (2.42), compared to the United States (2.28) and China (2.25). Interesting findings emerge from this study, as African university students make use of the Internet to modify their mood, different from the use in the USA and China. Furthermore, these results suggest that IA is not only present in places where internet access is restricted, neither that one should be online for too long, for example in this study 20 % of African university students mentioned that they spent at least two hours online per day as opposed to 42 % of Chinese university students and 40 % of American university students (Chen, Nath, 2016).

In their study Chen and Nath (Chen, Nath, 2016) found that emotional dependence on the internet was the most important indicator when it comes to IA, on the other hand, the problem with time management was the indicator that stood out most in terms of IA in Chinese university students, as they mentioned spending the most time online on a daily basis and showing a low level in terms of multitasking efficiency compared to the other two places, so the loss of control and giving in to desires and impulses before the internet makes sense to get that score. Regarding the American university students, the indicator that stood out the most was psychological and emotional conflicts, they obtained a low level of dependence on the internet for relaxation or mood enhancement purposes, however the use of the internet generates a bad mood despite the social interaction, being defensive and in denial about the IA's behavior.

Connectivity to social networking, online gaming and cybersex

The excessive use of social networks brings addiction; such is the case of the study developed by Muller et al., (Muller et al., 2016), who applied two questionnaires to 9173 adolescents aged 12-19 years. The main findings showed that IA had been generated by the excessive use of social networks and that their use was related to symptoms of psychosocial distress, they also reported that the extroverted personality is associated with the frequency of using the social networking service.

There are countries where a higher percentage of cases of IA has been detected, according to different studies that have provided empirical evidence about it, for example the case of China and South Korea, which according to Ginige (Ginige, 2017) are the most affected countries in terms of IA. Similarly, they refer that although in the United States it is considered a silent epidemic, most of the

research points to IA in activities such as games, gambling, cybersex and social networks, and this occurs more frequently in those children and young people who had parents with low educational level.

On the other hand, the internet is a very functional tool for both children and adolescents, so it is not advisable to prohibit its use. Online games are usually very attractive and addictive, as they are designed for the player to become the character or avatar you want, in the same idea, there are games that allow you to compare mansions, cars, which means having a virtual "second life", which allows people to spend or invest in that second "virtual" life even at the expense of their real life that is in decline.

The use of social networks is one of the activities that are probably more related to AI, applications such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *WhatsApp*, *Twitter*, *My Space*, chats, among others, where endless notifications will appear that will invariably be a distractor in the daily activities either academic, work or family of those who use it, because their life can revolve around receiving and sending messages at every moment, without leaving aside the children and young people who are exposed to strangers and can cause them some harm (Ginige, 2017).

In the study by Panea-Pizarro et al. (Panea-Pizarro et al., 2020), they focused on analyzing whether there was an association between the presence of an eating disorder, IA and *Facebook* addiction in women with an eating disorder by applying a test to 124 Spanish women. The results showed that the use of social networks such as *Facebook* can be associated with body dissatisfaction but not with the eating disorder, although it is associated with excessive time spent online by social networks, so their use leads to a sense of social and emotional support, they feel less lonely and this is positively related when they have an eating disorder.

Another activity that is associated with IA is cybersex, in addition to relating to alcohol, drugs, having more sexual partners, low self-esteem, and having poor interpersonal relationships in real life (Ginige, 2017).

Chia et al. (Chia et al., 2020) associate IA with a high level of individualism, manifested by a greater need for autonomy, achievement and mastery and less need for affiliation in Western countries such as America and Europe than Southeast Asian countries. In addition, Chia et al. (Chia et al., 2020) noted that both adolescents and adults were found to be more attached to online games unlike children; this may be because with it they build an identity and social relationships or also to compensate for some needs that are not satisfied in their real life as Ginige (Ginige, 2017) had pointed out.

Social anxiety, depression and mood

In the work of Yücens and Üzer (Yücens, Üzer 2018) they surveyed 392 medical undergraduates, and their results suggest that addictive internet use may be a way to decrease negative emotions, they also find a relationship between IA with social anxiety and depression, on the other hand, phobic social avoidance is a predictor of IA, finally they point out that impulsivity is not associated with IA. Similar the case of the study of Longstreet et al. (Longstreet et al., 2018) who points out that the positive rewards that are received by being online are the driving force behind AI behavior acting negatively, stressing who makes use of that tool and avoids facing the events of his real life, the internet comes being the facilitator and promoter of an avoidance behavior, where they seek positive experiences, a sense of relief from routine tasks but that most of the time does not come to pass.

In addition, IA was related to loneliness (24 %) and depression (21 %) and positive emotions such as satisfaction and happiness decreased as long as the IA score was high. Another finding is the existence of a gender difference with respect to IA, with men being more likely to experience a decrease in positive emotions than women. Similarly, men and women use technology differently, women are motivated to experience positive emotions when they set out to use the internet and men look for what to entertain themselves when they use it and not necessarily because they feel sad, unlike women when they feel depressed use the internet to shop (Longstreet et al., 2018).

In the same idea Martins et al. (Martins et al., 2019) developed a research with the purpose of determining the prevalence of IA in Portuguese adolescents and assessing how parental control could be related to IA. For this purpose, he had the collaboration of 1916 participants, whose age range was between 15 and 18 years. In the selected sample, 53.3 % of the participants were slightly female, but when it came to IA, it was the men older than 15 years who were found to have IA. This increased when their family structure was also single-parent; they had repeated a grade in school, showed poor well-being, had problems sleeping or slept less than the recommended amount of time. Sixty percent claimed to use the internet before bedtime, 26 % of AIs were less likely to have

any parental control, 28 % were less likely to keep track of the time they spent online, and almost half were unlikely to have restrictions on the content they searched for online. Along the same lines, those teens who used the internet in gatherings such as at mealtimes were twice as likely to be AI and three times as likely to use it in the same environment, regardless of whether there was another family member who also did so.

The study by Ndasaukaa et al. (Ndasaukaa et al., 2019) focused on evaluating the psychometric properties of the IA scale in Urdu language, for this purpose 506 questionnaires were administered to students living near a province in Pakistan. Through exploratory factor analysis, four factors were identified: salience, conflict, tolerance and mood modification; in addition, a correlation was found between IA and duration of internet use; the item with the highest score was: "fear that life without internet will be empty, boring and sad", this may be because it is a feeling that students have in common in relation to the internet.

In China, Li et al. (Li et al., 2019) assess for six months a sample of 1545 Chinese students. In their study, they examined longitudinal associations between depression, anxiety, and IA, considering gender and obesity, the findings point out that over time, anxiety and depression are positively associated with IA; however, obesity was not related to IA; on the other hand, gender seems to be the key to understanding IA, as males showed a higher mean IA score at baseline and also a faster and decreasing rate of change over the six months of study relative to females, unfortunately the study could not explain this situation due to lack of other extraneous variables.

In relation to maternal mediation, adolescents' perception of invasion of privacy, defensive response to this invasion of privacy and IA, Liu (Liu, 2020) examined this behavior for two consecutive years. The findings showed that restrictive mediation by the mother was related to the adolescent's perception of invasion of privacy, which was related to generating defensive responses and this in turn led to greater IA, and there was no difference by gender: The results suggest that parents should respect the adolescent's privacy limits, in addition to adopting mediation strategies that are based on communication in order to be able to regulate the adolescent's behavior on the Internet.

Mo et al. (Mo et al., 2020) conducted a study in which 11 % of the students who participated were classified as AI, the most alarming figure was the age of 13.78 years, which could represent a public health problem, so those students who were classified as AI were more likely to increase the time on the Internet, reducing in turn the time for academic purposes and a decrease in their school aspirations. Participants with IA have low self-esteem and prefer to be online to maintain virtual communication which affects their school performance; social skills and self-esteem, for this study were men were more susceptible to suffer from IA.

Based on a random sample, Chi et al. (Chi et al., 2020) invited a total of 2,059 Chinese students. In their study, they found that those adolescents who did not live with their parents, experienced more family conflicts, less family communication or low academic achievement were more likely to fall into IA, and there was also gender difference, males were more IA than females, suggesting that more attention should be paid to those adolescents who have low school performance as well as improving their family relationship, which would reduce being prone to IA.

Recently studies were conducted in the Mexican context, in the northern region of the Mexican Republic Navarro-Ibarra, García-Santillán and Molchanova (García-Santillán, Molchanova 2020) carried out a study to determine the level of Internet addiction. This study involved 463 university students, who were administered Young's (Young, 1998) IAT test. In their findings they identified a factorial structure of four factors that explain 50.35 % of the variance, also the highest percentage of cases that measure the level of Internet addiction, was in the mild and moderate range. In addition, it was shown that there is no gender difference in addiction.

In the same idea, García-Santillán (García-Santillán, 2020) evaluated the Internet use behavior of high school students to determine if there is an underlying structure of variables that explain the existence of some characteristics of Internet addiction. The study involved 203 students ranging in age from 14 to 18 years old who were administered Young's (Young, 1997) IAT test. The findings showed a large percentage of students who are not in the range of Internet addiction, also identified a structure of six factors, different from the seminal author of the scale and other studies that have reported findings with different number of factors.

There are various positions and findings about internet addiction. What is clear is that the excessive use of this technology has already captured the attention of researchers who have developed a considerable contribution to the field of knowledge, recognizing the great contribution that Dr. Kimberly Young has left us. It is for this reason that the contributions to this field, give us

the guideline to identify in the studied populations the levels of addiction to this phenomenon of the Internet and with it to be able to design prevention strategies. In addition, the internet connection is made from a smartphone, hence the importance of discussing this variable of addiction to the Smartphone.

On the construct of Smartphone addiction

According to Kim et al. (Kim et al., 2014), smartphone addiction is understood as the problematic or excessive and obsessive use of any mobile phone device. In addition to the above Billieux et al. (Billieux et al., 2015) refers that frequent use of Smartphone cannot be defined as a pathological behavior, unless it is accompanied by symptoms that are characterized as addictive disorders.

Demirci et al. (Demirci et al., 2014) conducted a study where they identified that the highest levels of addiction to Smartphone is given in women and with respect to their excessive use, this was more than 16 hours compared to those who only used it 4 hours.

On the other hand, on the topic of Smartphone addiction, Kim et al. (Kim et al., 2014) conducted the design of the Smartphone Addiction Propensity Scale (SAPS) which was applied to 795 students in South Korea. The participants were high school students, 461 males and 324 females. The results revealed that excessive use of digital media devices can have negative social, physical and psychological consequences in the lives of adolescents, as well as lead to delinquent behavior.

In the study of Lopez-Fernandez (Lopez-Fernandez, 2015), adapts the short version of the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS-SV) to Spanish and French, the surveys are administered online to 281 and 144 volunteers over 18 years old and from both countries respectively, the results show excessive Smartphone use of 12.5 % for Spaniards and 21.5 % for the Belgians, no differences by gender were found, it was found that the Spanish are those who have more Smartphone and triple the time of use compared to the Belgians, however the Belgians use in an addictive way the Smartphone compared to the Spanish, that is, the Belgians presented abstinence, loss of control and tolerance, while the Spanish presented tolerance, then loss of control and finally abstinence.

There were 448 university students in South Korea who completed the Smartphone Addiction Scale, the results obtained by Choi et al. (Choi et al., 2015) are the risk factors for Smartphone addiction in women such as internet consumption, alcohol consumption and suffering from anxiety symptoms, negatively associated with depression and temperance (involves self-regulation), on the other hand, in men the risk factors were associated with internet addiction and Smartphone addiction with anxiety symptoms, with gaining knowledge, negatively associated with strength-courage (has to do with vitality and courage). The differences may be due to the high availability and use of the smartphone as a tool to maintain interpersonal relationships.

In the same idea, Penjira et al. (Penjira et al., 2016) conducted a study whose purpose focused on investigating the impact of self-regulation (self-control of the individual) and compulsivity (discomfort, distress, anxiety, tension) on smartphone addiction. For the study, 157 Thai university students participated and were surveyed, with 57.3 % being male and the remaining 42.7 % being female. Data analysis was conducted using multiple regression analysis, the resulting conceptual model explained 60.4 % of the variance in Smartphone addiction and only compulsivity is found to be a determinant of Smartphone addiction.

The negative consequences and psychological feelings of not being able to use the smartphone are characteristics of a compulsive behavior, which can affect interpersonal relationships depending on the amount of time spent on the smartphone, according to the findings obtained by Pavia et al. (Pavia et al., 2016) after applying the Smartphone Addiction Inventory (SPAI) to 485 Italian university students. In Ankara, Turkey, the online application of a questionnaire was conducted to analyze the roles of Smartphone use, self-regulation, general self-efficacy and cyberspace in Smartphone addiction, there were 598 university students who answered and the results showed that those students with self-regulation skills will show less addictive behavior to Smartphone, In addition, both the time spent on the Smartphone and cyberloafing (cyberloafing, i.e., wasting time during the student or work day checking social networks, personal messaging, among others) will affect the addiction to the Smartphone (Gökçearslan et al., 2016).

The research by Yehuda et al. (2016) reported that smartphone addiction was highly correlated with internet addiction, due to the easy access and availability of information at the time it is required, which makes it a way to increase their addiction by quickly satisfying their need.

Meanwhile Hawi and Samaha (Hawi, Samaha, 2016) conducted a study at the University of Notre Dame-Louaize, Lebanon, which involved the participation of 293 university students who were tested using the Short Scale of Smartphone Addiction (SAS-SV). In their findings they showed that both males and females were susceptible to being addicted to smartphones, they also identified that those students at high risk of smartphone addiction were less likely to achieve a higher cumulative grade point average or to be awarded a distinction. In addition those students who spend more time on their Smartphone, then participation in group activities and the amount of reading related to academic assignments will be reduced, also it hinders to maintain adequate concentration in their studies (Hawi, Samaha, 2016).

In the work of Kahyaoglu et al. (Kahyaoglu et al., 2016) surveyed 785 students, of which 91.7% had a Smartphone, similarly they identified that the highest level of addiction in Smartphone use, was in students aged 20 years or younger, the highest scores revealed that addiction affects social life, verbal communication and presents academic difficulties. Similar the work of Elhai et al. (Elhai et al., 2017) who surveyed 308 English-speaking North American participants of Amazon's Mechanical Turk who were at least 18 years old, their aim was to investigate two types of smartphone use: process use involving non-social functions such as news consumption, entertainment, relaxation and social use involving social networking and messaging, in their findings they discovered that the latter was strongly associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression, on the other hand, non-social process use was linked between the severity of anxiety symptoms and Smartphone addiction.

At the University of Bangladesh, Arefin et al. (Arefin et al., 2017) collected 247 questionnaires from Business students, of which 54.25% were males and 45.75% were females aged 18-27 years. Out of 35 variables identified in Smartphone addiction, they categorized into five factors which were found from the rotated factor matrix analysis, which are:

1. Disruption of daily life: it is the most important factor with respect to Smartphone addiction for having obtained the highest value, which indicates that the use of the Smartphone is not only a concern of academic performance but also disrupts the physical strength, family relationships, timely presentation in classes and planned work, including variables such as *"my family relationship has decreased"*, *"I feel pain in my wrists"*, *"the lack of planning hinders my concentration"*, *"I feel tired or unable to sleep enough"*.

Positive anticipation: variables such as *"feeling pleasant or excited"*, *"life would be empty without my Smartphone"*, *"I can get rid of stress"*.

3. Withdrawal: this section involves abstinence, which includes variables such as *"I feel impatient and restless"*, *"I take my Smartphone to the bathroom"*, *"I can't stop using my Smartphone"*, *"I feel anxious about not being able to receive important calls"*, among others.

Cyber friendship: it is composed of variables such as *"the relationship I have with my Smartphone friends is more intimate"*, *"I constantly check my Smartphone"*, *"I check my social networks"*.

5. Increased impatience or tolerance: the main characteristic of this section is that the increased use of the Smartphone generates impatience among students to perform their usual activities, as they consume more of their valuable time, it includes variables such as *"I feel the need to use my Smartphone"*, *"I have always thought that I should shorten the time I use the Smartphone"*, *"I spend my breaks thinking, just give me a few more minutes to keep using it"*.

This study showed that the regular academic performance of students will be hindered by the excessive use of the Smartphone, as they use it more than they plan, it is also an obstacle to their family relationship, since their need to use it is so great that they take it to the bathroom, even at school at recess time they use it when it is supposed to be time to relax or use it late at night. All this can generate tension, pain in wrists or neck, impatience and poor school performance, in addition to the above, research suggests that they should reduce the excessive use of the Smartphone to perform their daily activities without difficulty (Arefin et al., 2017).

In Istanbul Turkey Darcin et al. (Darcin et al., 2017) conduct a study in which 367 university students were surveyed in order to determine the relationship between Smartphone addiction, social phobia and loneliness. The results showed that 95% had an account in one of the social networks, in addition, social phobia as Smartphone addiction was related, because younger people use it excessively to access their social networks compared to those who only used it to surf the internet or phone calls. Another aspect highlighted by Darcin et al. (Darcin et al., 2017) is that people with social anxiety preferred to use their Smartphone for texting while people with feelings

of loneliness preferred to surf the internet or play games, this feeling of loneliness was correlated with a high risk to Smartphone addiction in most of the study sample, having that feeling of loneliness can be associated with social anxiety, which in turn generates the excessive use of Smartphone to avoid face-to-face communication. More than half of the respondents refer that they use Smartphone during classes or meetings, also that they use it at night in their bed, which showed a risk behavior in sleep behavior, also 65 % of the students mentioned that they use it while walking and 12% reported that they use it while driving (Darcin et al., 2017).

It was 324 nursing undergraduates in Seoul, Korea who participated in the research conducted by Lee et al. (Lee et al., 2018), the results pointed out that the level of Smartphone addiction showed a lower range than other college students, which means that they exercise self-control to achieve long-term academic results. It was also shown that cyberspace-oriented relationships and social support are positively correlated with nursing undergraduates, which implies that Smartphone strengthens family ties, facilitates proximity of callers and enhances their interpersonal networks through social networking. In addition its use is also for academic issues where they consult websites to obtain specialized and advanced knowledge, so probably benefits are obtained to develop effective teaching methods where Smartphones are incorporated to increase the motivation of university students.

In the same idea Cerit, Bilgin, and Ak (Cerit et al., 2018) conduct a study in a the Faculty of Health, University of Turkey, where they applied 214 questionnaires, of which 172 were women and 42 were men. In their findings they reported to have identified low levels for Smartphone addiction, likewise they point out that in case of increasing the use of Smartphone, this would create an addiction which would probably cause to decrease the communication skills of nursing college students. These findings seem to be in line with many studies (Choi et al., 2015; Darcin et al., 2017; Demirci et al., 2014; Gökçearsan et al., 2016; Kahyaoglu et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Yehuda et al., 2016 and others).

It is clear that the excessive use of mobile phones must be addressed in the different contexts where a population vulnerable to this phenomenon is located, since with the implementation of strategies according to each need, this damage could be reversed if it exists, or in its case, as a preventive measure. For example we can cite what refers Alkhunzain (Alkhunzain, 2019), who points out that college students consume more than eight hours on their Smartphone, that is, its use is becoming more and more frequent, since apparently it is becoming an essential element for daily life therefore its addiction is common. In a study where 174 Saudi university students participated, aged between 19 and 23,99 males and 75 females, Alkhunzain (Alkhunzain, 2019) shows the findings obtained where women were the ones who spend more time in using Smartphone on a daily basis, he also found that for learning purposes, its use is reduced. Alkhunzain's (Alkhunzain, 2019) findings point out that Saudi students are addicted to Smartphone as they do not turn it off even if they sleep, they get stressed or upset if they are asked to put it aside for a moment or for a certain time, they become anxious about their battery level, 80 % of their addiction is not due to academic reasons, it was identified that they constantly check their Smartphone, the applications they use the most are *WhatsApp*, *Twitter* and *Sports*, in addition, 81 % of respondents use it to browse their social networks.

On this topic, some more recent studies and according to the time in which this essay is developed, Smartphone addiction has been analyzed by Saad (2020) who develops a study in four schools, where 68 students were selected to explore the combined effects of self-regulated learning and academic procrastination regarding Smartphone addiction, in his findings he concludes that those students who use the Smartphone in excess, it is very rare the time that they can achieve high academic performance with what they can delay the completion of the assigned tasks, so training students in strategies to self-regulate learning effectively, will be fundamental and beneficial for them.

On Smartphone addiction García-Santillán and Escalera-Chávez (García-Santillán, Escalera-Chávez, 2020) developed a study with the purpose of determining the level of addiction to the use of mobile phones and whether this differs by gender. For their study they used the SAS-CV scale (Smartphone addiction scale - short version) designed by Kwon, Kim, Cho and Yang (Kwon et al., 2013), which consists of ten items with a Likert response format. Unlike some previous studies (Alkhunzain, 2019; Hawi, Samaha, 2016; Kahyaoglu et al., 2016), high levels of addiction were not found, although this does not mean that they are exempt from it, on the contrary 43 % presented medium levels of addiction, which without being alarming the data, if it may require preventive attention so that it does not escalate to a bad. In relation to the difference by gender, they reported

the existence of a gender difference in item 1, which refers to the fact that due to the use of smartphones, students do not plan their work.

Smartphone addiction may be associated with personality aspects, probably due to the feeling of wanting to be seen and be connected with people, even studies have been reported that have shown a higher prevalence in women (Beranuy et al., 2009; Chóliz et al., 2009; Takao et al., 2009) which has brought severe negative consequences of Smartphone abuse.

Finally, in the Mexican context, García-Santillán and Espinosa-Ramos (García-Santillán, Espinosa-Ramos, 2021) conducted a study, in which, by way of preamble, they justified the need to carry it out because of the global health crisis caused by COVID-19, and although their study does not analyze the pandemic crisis as such, it does raise the concern to know what is happening with students and above all, what is the use they are giving to the mobile phone (Smartphone). For their study they had the participation of 184 high school students from a public sector institution in the Port of Veracruz, Mexico. In their findings they identified three components: physiological, dependence and distraction and also showed that there are no differences by gender.

3. Conclusion

At the end of this essay we can reflect on these two variables: the Internet and the Smartphone or smartphone. Both variables are related, since we could say that one is connectivity and the other is the tool to connect. In addition, the entire population has already adopted it beyond being a simple fashion, as a tool for work, status, permanent communication with family, friends, service providers, as payment platforms for some services, to be connected with the whole world if it were the case, just to mention some of its uses and attributes.

It is clear that today the use of the Internet has become not a fashion, but a necessity for the daily work in any activity that develops the human being, from the simple domestic use, to the academic, business and all kinds without overlooking any activity that could not have been mentioned, in short, in everything is present the need to use this technology.

In a tour on the use of this technology, we could even start inside the home, that is, from its domestic use in which all members of the family parents, children and other members that make up the nuclear family, each of them in one way or another use connectivity for different functions or activities. But let's look at a specific population, and this is precisely the children, these little ones who come revolutionized or with a new "chip", since the ease with which they learn to use the internet and use it for their social networks, for children's games and other material according to their age, also becomes a red alert for parents, since cyberspace offers information that is not suitable for minors and if they are not supervised, they could run unnecessary dangers. That is why the care of these minors by parents should not be an optional function, but rather of strict observance.

The internet can be one of the technologies that have come to revolutionize the world, but it can also be a tool that generates disorders in its users, hence the topic discussed in this essay. When we talk about disorders, we refer specifically to the addiction that the internet generates. In addition, the internet is the key factor or element we could say, since it is through this technology that connectivity allows us to enter social networks and all kinds of platforms that are normally used with smartphones, called Smartphone. This communication technology has become a necessity for the population to be permanently connected and this has brought with it the phenomenon of addiction to the Smartphone, hence the importance in this essay to analyze and discuss both constructs.

Something very important that can be identified in the review of the specialized literature, is that its use is considered as a fundamental part of life and will continue to increase in the future, therefore it is vital that it is used effectively to avoid becoming addictive, on the other hand, the Smartphone is used as a communication tool and will provide positive results as long as it is used in a regulated manner. Appropriate use increases productivity and motivation, decreases stress, provides access to online knowledge sources and supports receiving information in clinical practices with access to pathophysiology forms and diseases as suggested by Cerit, Bilgin, Ak (Cerit et al., 2018). Recall that the mobile phone is used for various tasks or applications, the problem would be when the learner's life is influenced by the use of the phone.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 311-320

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.311
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Structural and Substantial Constructs of “Teenage Extremism” Concept in Syntagma of Modern Media Discourse of Transforming Russian Society

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to the problem of teenage extremism as a form of social deviation in the configuration of modern media texts in the transformation processes of Russia (based on the material of online mass media) and specific features of the media messages embodying extremist materials impact on the consciousness of the adolescent audience. The relevance of the reviewed subject is confirmed by the fact that recently the phenomenology of the concept of “teenage extremism” is a discursive object in the research space. A significant increase in the level of attention to the study of extremist counterculture reflection in the media continuum of Russian society in the context of transformational processes is noticeable. The author revealed that there is a tendency of active disputes regarding the disclosure of the essential features and signs of “extremism” concept, which is a confirmation of the complexity, versatility of this phenomenon.

The basic core of the research work is the implementation of the hermeneutic analysis of Russian media space continuum in the practical segment, which recreates the ideological meaning of the image of teenage extremism manifestation. As a result of the research, the author revealed the main tendencies of extremism among adolescents in modern Russian society, specific features and content characteristics, gender, religious, ideological, worldview context of the text of online mass media. The media educational potential in the context of reducing the level of risks in the media associated with the broadcast of extremist manifestations among adolescents to the society is indicated.

Keywords: extremism, teen audience, media text, mass media, extremist material, media educational component, Russia.

1. Introduction

Today, the problem of extremism among adolescents and youth is one of the global problems, though not so long ago, but already firmly taken a position of international importance.

Recently, the subject of extremism has been one of the central topics in the system of modern media space functioning, which determined the actualization of research in the field of effective countermeasures, reflected constructs of the studied phenomenon in the information field.

Various media channels broadcast negative effects, indirectly accompanied by technologies of consciousness manipulation, propaganda and agitational nature, which significantly affect the audience, first of all, that group that has low level of critical thinking, media culture, distinguished by maximalism and persistent attitude towards systematic self-affirmation. At the same time, it is the teenage audience, due to the age characteristics of the personality and the high level of media contacts that is exposed to especially strong influence.

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Undoubtedly, the media are the most powerful tool for influencing the formation of the worldview matrix as an important behavioral regulator of the younger generation.

Media that pay careful attention to the subject of extremism, thus, reproducing certain events through their content, affect the consciousness of the younger generation, forming a model of behavior in society, as well as increasing cases of cyberspace use for extremist information spreading.

It is obvious that the reproduction of events related to extremist content in publicly available media sources, which are most popular among adolescent audience (the Internet, social networks, television, etc.), contributes to changing in perception and increasing the impact on the subconscious level, which provokes the production of constructs of extremist behavioral patterns in the society by the adolescent audience.

At the same time there is a creation of conditions for the increase of quantitative indicator of “teenage extremism” phenomenon basis.

In this regard, we assume that various media products reflecting the content of an extremist orientation, unconsciously or consciously, popularize the ideological and worldview basis of extremism in a latent way.

In our opinion, the value of the reviewed problem lies in the fact that the importance of comprehending the scientific and cognitive search of the representatives of the research community in the focus of the landscape configuration of the modern continuum of Russian media (namely, online mass media), extremist content in the adolescent environment is clearly beyond doubt. Besides, the problem of adolescent extremism has the status of a critical social phenomenon of the international level.

Moreover, it should be added that the poor knowledge of “teenage extremism” phenomenon in the focus of destructive influence on the consciousness and behavior of the teenage audience by various media channels broadcasting negative forms of social reactions, actions and interactions as legitimate, creates a “ground” for the reviewed problem aggravation.

It means that appeal to modern electronic media texts, reflecting the problems of extremism in the adolescent environment, is determined by the relevance and significance in the context of the semantic content of media messages, destructive influence, and the search for effective tools to “protect” the adolescent audience.

2. Materials and methods

The material of our research: modern texts of the online mass media of Russia, representing the phenomenology of the “teenage extremism” concept: *Interfax, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, RIA Novosti, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, News.ru, Komsomolskaya Pravda* – 110 media texts.

The basic core of the research work is the implementation of the hermeneutic analysis of the Russian media space continuum in the practical segment, which recreates the ideological meaning of the image of extremism manifestation among adolescents.

At the same time, the following methods are very important for our research:

- systematization, comparison, analogy, induction and deduction, theoretical analysis and synthesis, abstraction, concretization, generalization;

- empirical: collection of information (information and literary sources: books, archival documents, articles, Internet files on extremism manifestation among adolescents, etc.).

The purpose of the study is to determine the place and role of the teenage extremism problem as a form of social deviation in the configuration of modern media texts in the transformation processes of Russia (based on the material of online mass media) and the specific features of the online media impact, reflecting the extremist content, on the consciousness of teenage audience.

The research object is the development of the “teenage extremism” phenomenon in modern Russian texts on the online mass media.

The research subject is the genesis of concepts, stereotypical models of the subject media interpretations in Russian texts on the online mass media.

The theoretical and methodological syntagma of the problem is presented:

- analysis of creating-media-text authors’ stages of concentration to the problem under consideration (dichronic method);

- analysis of expressiveness tools and methods of modeling the conceptual foundations of the “teenage extremism” phenomenon system in modern media products of the transforming Russian society (comparative descriptive method);

– analysis of functional potential of the character in interaction with other characters in the media text structure (structural and semiotic method).

3. Discussion

Analysis of modern Russian media space shows that the problem of extremism among adolescents is in the focus of the socio-cultural, legal, psychological, pedagogical landscape of the ecosystem, determining the growth of actualization of the concept under review in the content of the scientists' research field. In turn, "taking" the subject under consideration to the level of one of the central socio-psychological, political problems of the international level.

The situation associated with the manifestation of various forms of extremist activity among adolescents today is of particular concern. We are convinced that it is not eventual, but a fact confirmed by the research community, stating that adolescence is the most favorable period for informative and psychological impact of negative content.

It is very relevant to focus on the semantic load of the concept of "extremism" in the course of research work.

Content analysis of scientific research reflecting the syntagma of the reviewed problem makes it possible to assert that today the phenomenology of the "extremism" concept includes many definitions, the fact that, in our opinion, creates serious problems, which are aggravated by the processes of media convergence.

Nevertheless, for our study, the definition of the concept of "extremism", which is given by "Shanghai Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism" dated June 15, 2001 (i. 3 p. 1 art. 1) is of particular importance, according to which "...extremism" is any act aimed at the violent seizure of power or the forcible retention of power, as well as the violent change of the constitutional system of the state, as well as a violent encroachment on public safety, including the organization of illegal armed groups for the above purposes or participation in them, and prosecuted in accordance with the national legislation of the Parties" ([Shanghai Convention..., 2001](#)).

In 2003, the convention was ratified and entered into force in Russia.

We found that in different countries and in different historical epochs, many different scientific definitions of the concept of "extremism" were presented. In particular, P.T. Coleman and A. Bartoli in their work "Addressing Extremism" noted that "extremism is an activity, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions and strategies that are far from generally accepted. At the same time, the definition of "generally accepted" is always a subjective and political issue, therefore, in any discussion on the topic of extremism, the following is touched upon: some extremist actions can be viewed by different people positively ("struggle for freedom"), while others – negatively ("terrorism"), it depends on the values, political convictions of the evaluator, as well as on his relationship with the actor" ([Coleman, Bartoli, 2003](#)).

In addition, some foreign researchers interpret extremism as a certain kind of pathological disease. Thus, A. Gruen writes: "The lack of identity associated with extremists is the result of self-destructive self-hatred, which leads to a sense of revenge towards life itself and the urge to kill one's own humanity" ([Gruen, 2003: 266-272](#)). Thus, extremism is viewed not as a tactic or ideology, but as a pathological disease, which is based on the destructive structure of all spheres of human life.

So, today there is no single definition of the concept of "extremism".

However, we came to the conclusion that adolescent and youth extremism is a mass phenomenon characteristic of modern transforming society, which is expressed in disrespect towards the rules and norms of behavior existing in the society. The fundamental goal of extremism is "to impose certain beliefs on the population and to attract as many like-minded people as possible to their organizations" ([Deeva, Korobeynik, 2018](#)).

In general, the problem of extremism is the scientific field of various disciplines, in particular, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, political science and a number of other branches of scientific knowledge.

The conceptual foundations of the extremism problem study among adolescents and youth can be found in the scientific works of many Russian and foreign scientists.

In general, the research of scientists, considering a certain amount of conventionality, can be divided into the following directions in the context of interpreting different aspects of the extremism problem:

– study of the causes, essence, types and directions of extremism, the characteristics of responsibility for committing illegal actions of extremist orientation (Russian scientists: Afanasyev, 2007; Borisov, 2011; Chuprov, 2003; Donika, 2008; Kozlov, 2003; Kubyakin, 2014; Tomalintsev, 1996; Valeev, 2011; Zubok, 2005 and others; foreign scientists: Christmann, 2012; Gearon, 2013; Hamilton, Pinel, 2002; Moulin, 2012; Quartermaine, 2016; Schneider, 2002; Staub, 2001; Stein, 2001; Toscano, 1998 and others);

– research on the transformation of the “extremism” phenomenon in the context of modern post-industrial society and the development of global Internet (Emelin, 2018; Kilyaskhanova, 2008; Korosteleva, 2016; Panin, 2002; Podkatilina, 2008; Rudik, Volkov, 2017; Samoshin, Gorovoy, 2016; Vasenina, 2005 and others);

– analysis of aggressive communicative impact on the mass audience (Fedorov, 2003; 2004; Kadyat-Murza, 2000; Sheremet, 2003; Sheynov, 2010 and others);

– study of the specifics of television functioning on the Internet within the framework of the extremist materials coverage (Osipov, 2003; Perfilyev, 2003 and others).

So, a review of scientific researches on the considered problem allows us to assert that today there is a fairly large number of fundamental scientific works, at the same time, there is a tendency of active disputes regarding the disclosure of the essential features and signs of the concept of “extremism”, which is a confirmation of the complexity, the versatility of this phenomenon. At the same time, an insignificant share is taken by the works reflecting the relationship between the dysfunctional state of the media texts (first of all, research covers television, the Internet network) and aggravation of the problem of extremism.

As it was stated above, adolescents and young people, of course, are the active target audience of the Internet space in Russia, in this context the risk of being involved into the extremist organizations increases.

E. Puchkova quite reasonably asserts that recruitment via the Internet is much more dangerous for a modern teenager than via the live dialogue. “For a modern child, the worst punishment is separation from the Internet... Teenagers have no filter in terms of digestion of the information flow coming from the Web. In reality, a teenager spends 8-12 hours per day on the Internet. Of course, a hyperactive student cannot surf the Web without performing intellectual activity there” (Priymak, 2019).

In addition, on October 27, 2021, at the meeting, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation – N. Patrushev noted that “criminal subculture, disregard towards the norms of public morality and ethics, the cultivation of individualism, excessive consumption – all this is imposed on the adolescent environment by various destructive groups, including through the Internet” (Sysoev, 2021).

In this regard, the establishment of effective “contact” of the media with the authorities and society is very important when covering the extremist subject. This conclusion is confirmed in the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of December 31, 2015 No. 683 “On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation”. The document says that in order to provide the national security, the mechanisms are being created to counteract the participation of Russian citizens in the activities of criminal and terrorist groups abroad, “the system of identifying and analyzing the threats in the information sphere, and countering them is being improved”; “measures to protect the population against destructive informational influences from extremist and terrorist organizations are being taken...” (Decree..., 2015). Thus, the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation reflects the multi-aspect counteraction to extremist/terrorist threats; special attention is paid to the information space.

In our opinion, a significant role is assigned to the integration of media educational potential aimed at reducing the level of risks in the mass media associated with the extremist manifestations broadcast to the society among adolescents. The need for the development of analytical skills, independent, critical thinking among the teenage audience in understanding the media texts that include extremist materials is indisputable. We are convinced that the development of media competence of the younger generation is able to solve the important problems not only of an educational and upbringing nature, but also of media proficiency.

4. Results

In the course of research work on the considered issues, we carried out a hermeneutic analysis of modern Internet media texts in the conditions of transformational processes of Russian

society, representing the “teenage extremism” concept phenomenology (1992-2021): *Interfax*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, *RIA Novosti*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *News.ru*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* – 110 media texts.

Typing a query in *Yandex* search system for informational news containing the keywords “Cases of extremism among adolescents”, we got the result of 10 million messages. Obviously, most of the events were presented in criminal informational view.

Today, events related to the extremist actions, which sometimes end tragically in the online versions of the mass media, receive a great resonance and, of course, cause a discussion of the need to strengthen the preventive system and preventive measures aimed at “protecting” teenagers and young people against the effects of the media space having content filled with extremist materials.

As a result of the analysis of media messages on the subject of extremism manifestation among adolescents (based on the material of online media texts) there were determined the substantial features and it was stated that episodic reports are mostly observed in the Russian information flow, while the messages are informative by nature. Moreover, news reports are accompanied by photo and video materials stating the situations of liquidation of extremist organizations, informal groups by law enforcement authorities, highlighting the essence and main directions of the extremist activities by the members of the groups, demonstrating the arsenal of weapons for achieving their goals, indicating the surnames of the main organizers and participants, as well as the names of extremist organizations. An abstract from the news report can be given as an example: “Late January evening, Krasnov and his associates sprayed tear-exciting gas into the faces of two passers-by and severely beat them. The leader filmed the massacre on the camera, then, he took a knife and hit one of the victims with it several times... In December, four Saratov residents (three of them adolescents), who do not hide their extremist views, united in *Pravaya Gvardiya* group, or *Obyedineniye Slavyan Saratovskoy Oblasti* (Association of Slavs in the Saratov Region). Two openly admitted themselves to be the supporters of the pro-Ukrainian neo-Nazi community *M.K.U.* (“Maniacs. The Cult of Assassins”) (Marikyan, 2021).

In addition, one more feature can be distinguished. In media texts, the news content does not cover the information that would consider the problem of extremism among adolescents in the correlation of the destinies of people and families, somehow or other, who are in the ranks of extremist associates. However, all reviewed media texts, without exception, fully perform an informational function, to some extent, stimulating a certain category of citizens to manifest special alertness, rethinking the value dominant, the importance of forming interethnic tolerance, and on the other hand, have a negative impact on the adolescent target audience, in a certain way, forming an interest in this activity.

At the same time, one-aspect nature of extremist content presentation, which is specific for a significant number of the considered media texts, can be designated as one more specific feature. Here we speak about the cases of extremism manifestation among adolescents through the prism of incident and its subjects, without affecting the object and other categories of information sources (parents, victims, etc.) in order to obtain complete information picture. In this context, we can say that the presented media content fully correlates with the RF legislation observance by the media in terms of countering extremism.

The news reports have references to government officials, such as, the Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, the President of the Association of Foreign Students in Russia, etc. Namely, N. Patrushev, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, declared that “criminal statistics show that the number of adolescents, who have committed crimes in the total number of crime participants, remains quite high... The perception of such information from the Internet by immature individuals often leads to asocial behavior, the manifestation of aggression, immoral and rude behavior in public places. It is due to these reasons that, unfortunately, there are frequent cases of tragic events, including attacks by adolescents on their peers in educational institutions” (Sysoev, 2021).

Moreover, the President of the Association of Foreign Students in Russia, K.A. Gabriel, wrote a letter to the Minister of Education, in which he accused the media of publishing provocative information and inciting nationalist sentiments. “There has never been racism in Russia... we hope that... measures... will be taken to resolve... the issue” (V Rossii..., 2021).

It was determined that news reports actively display the cited sources coming from the criminal justice system, using the statements of representatives of these structural units, law enforcement authorities, the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, various Associations aimed at

preventing extremism and terrorism, for example, the Association of Veterans of the Anti-Terrorism Group “Alpha”.

A significant place in the news content of online media texts is occupied by the materials related to taking measures to reduce the growth of extremist manifestations in Russian society; in this segment, there is mainly thematic coverage of the content. As an example, let us take the following: “It is extremely important to strictly suppress the spread of extremist ideas among young people, to take preventive measures to protect them from destructive information and psychological influences, to form in the younger generation a rejection of various forms of antisocial behavior” (Sysoev, 2021).

In general, the author’s position in online media texts: to make a product reflecting the extremism subject in modern Russian society in different configurations.

At the same time, we found that there is clearly open religious and ideological subtext in the news material. Since, we believe that, in general, the phenomenon of “extremism” has a religious and ideological construct by its exclusive nature.

Thus, the ideological matrix of the characters presented in the media texts is adolescents with deliberate inhuman expressions and extremist attitudes.

Among the characters/adolescents we can distinguish the following:

- leaders coordinating the actions of participants demonstrating the extremist manifestations;
- energetic, mobile persons, actively committing systematic extremist actions;
- extroverts – characters open to communication with the aim of involving “new” participants into the extremist groups and promoting extremist views.

The value dominants of the main characters – adolescents/young people – are lack of spirituality, aggressiveness, ferocity, merciless cruelty, while resilience, determination in achieving the set extremist goals.

The landscape of reasons for the implementing extremist actions is reduced to: social immaturity, lack of demand; desire to assert itself; underdevelopment of moral and resolute qualities; lack of positive ethno-cultural identity.

The genre color is very diverse: reportage, interview, note, chronicle message.

Methods of reality creation are shown in different versions of presenting the news message storyline, in particular, the characters are demonstrated during the operation of organization liquidation, interrogating the subjects of extremist actions.

Categories of the main characters – the initiators of extremist group/organization foundation are, as a rule, young people aged 30 and over, the participants in the implementation of targeted anti-social actions are adolescents and youth from 14 to 30 years old, who have extremist and terrorist attitudes.

There is practically no question of appearance, only in some news reports you can find some accents of clothing type, due to the presence of photo or video material. At the same time, the characteristics of appearance of the representatives of younger generation/characters can be represented in several aspects:

1. Visual signs of race. The characters are of European personality type. At the same time, they are characterized by the expression of negative personal characteristics.
2. Constitution and physical health of the characters. The characters are of different body-built types, some of them are in good physical shape, while there are no obvious signs of physical disabilities.
3. Characters' clothing. Some dress not brightly, neatly, others – in accordance with their own need for self-expression.

If we speak about the image of the characters, then in general it is characterized by liberation, openness, propaganda of extremist views, ideas on social networks, in society in the form of distribution of leaflets reflecting the prohibited content.

In addition, the news content very rarely puts emphasis on the marital status of the characters, but this aspect is presented in fragments, without much accentuation, and often, according to the reports, adolescents come from wealthy families.

The story content of the reality of adolescent/adult characters is expressed:

- in the transformation from a relatively calm, balanced person into a cruel, merciless one having in its arsenal sometimes terrible weapons for the implementation of his conceived extremist plans: an ax, a pistol, a knife, homemade explosives;

– characters who eliminate various expression of extremist actions.

At the same time, the problem is settled in two directions:

– firstly, the character, to some extent, implements the conceived plan, of course, this kind of event ends in a tragic way (bodily harm, murder, suicide);

– secondly, the elimination of prepared attacks by extremist motives, which resulted in modification in the context of committing violent crimes, propaganda of extremism, as well as the preparation of the bombing of administrative buildings of government bodies and armed attacks on citizens.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the result of revealing the structural and substantive foundations of the “teenage extremism” concept in the context of modern Russian mass media coverage in the transforming society allows us to make several conclusions:

1. Today, the problem of adolescent extremism is one of the most acute problems at the international level.

In this regard, recently the phenomenology of the “teenage extremism” concept is a discursive object in the scientific and research space. A significant increase in the level of attention towards the study of extremist counterculture reflection in the media continuum of Russian society in the context of transformational processes is noticeable.

2. Today there is no single definition of the phenomenon of “extremism”. The tendency of active disputes regarding the disclosure of the essential features and signs of the concept of “extremism” remains, which is a confirmation of the complexity and versatility of this phenomenon.

3. Extremism and the content of modern media are interdependent phenomena that can function in the landscape of subject-object relations, which complicates the severity and depth of the problem under consideration in the context of the transforming processes of Russian society.

4. Analyzing the content of online mass media, we found that:

- a tendency towards the growth of the “level of extremeness” of adolescents and young people behavior is observed all over the world;

- there is a significant shift in gender manifestations of extremist behavior, which consists in the fact that girls show an active position in maintaining the views and extreme behavior typical for the focus of extremism;

- there was a change not only in the dynamics of attacks, but also in the tactics of such actions;

- the number of deaths as a result of nationalist-motivated violence increased;

- attempts of foreign non-governmental non-commercial organizations and international organizations to use youths to carry out extremist activities have intensified.

5. Substantive features have been determined as a result of online media texts analysis and it has been established that:

- episodic reports are mostly observed; news reports are accompanied by photo and video materials, the essence and main directions of the extremist activities are covered by the group members, an arsenal of weapons is demonstrated, main organizers and participants names, as well as the names of extremist organizations are indicated;

– review of cases of extremism among adolescents does not affect the object of extremist actions and other categories of information sources (parents, victims, etc.);

- mass media texts perform an informational function, on the one hand, to some extent, stimulating a certain category of citizens to show special alertness, and on the other hand, having a negative impact on the adolescent target audience, in a certain way, forming an interest to this activity.

6. The author's position in media texts consists in creation of a product, reflecting the subject of extremism in modern Russian society in different configurations. At the same time, there is clearly open religious and ideological implication in the news material.

Worldview matrix of characters presented in the media texts – adolescents with intended inhuman manifestations and extremist attitudes.

7. The problem is settled in two directions:

- firstly, the character, to some extent, implements the conceived plan, of course, this kind of event ends in a tragic way (bodily harm, murder, suicide);

- secondly, the elimination of prepared attacks by extremist motives, which resulted in modification in the context of committing violent crimes, propaganda of extremism, as well as the preparation of the bombing of administrative buildings of government bodies and armed attacks on citizens.

8. A significant role is assigned to the integration of media educational potential aimed at reducing the level of risks in the mass media associated with the broadcast of extremist manifestations to society among the adolescents. The need for the development of analytical skills, independent, critical thinking among the teenage audience in understanding media texts that include extremist materials is indisputable. We are convinced that the development of media competence of the younger generation is able to solve important problems not only of educational and upbringing nature, but also of media proficiency.

6. Acknowledgments

The study was carried out with the financial support of Russian Foundation of Fundamental Research and Expert Institute for Social Research within the framework of the scientific project No. 21-011-32266 “Problem of Extremism among Adolescents in Modern Audio and Visual Media Texts in Transforming Russian Society”.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 321-328

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.321
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



The Role of Humor in Understanding the Trolling Behavior of Social Media Users in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study explores the use of humor in Pakistan as an emerging strategy of creative resistance to patriarchal oppression and rising authorities in the region and to develop a nuanced understanding of its reception by citizens on the social media handles. By examining instances from the protests of Aurat March through qualitative content analysis techniques and by drawing on literature on humor and protest as well as on the social media engagement, the paper attempts to describe the ways in which humor is implicated in formation and subversion of political subjectivities among urban women in the country. In this context, humor is not to be understood as a non-consequential ornamental element of protest spectatorship; rather, it provides a tool of localization of feminist movement through *de-escalation* and *affect redirection* in a public space hostile to women's voices and public protests in general. However, the findings suggest caution in romanticizing humor as it can also serve to hijack the movement by deflecting attention away from the focal cause of economic, social and sexual justice for women and minorities in the country as well as lead to a negative cultural framing of the protesters and their movement.

Keywords: political humor, subversion, aurat (women) march, social media engagement, feminist movement.

1. Introduction

Humor is not the first emotion that emerges when humans are met with adversity as it is considered to be the emotion of leisure, yet the relationship between humor and political resistance is a well-established one (Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2014). From the student's movement in Germany (Teune, 2007) to the Arab spring (Takovski, 2019) political movements have employed humor as a means of mobilization and communication. Humor in political movements serves to diffuse fear and disarm the opposition from any violent reaction; it also serves to attract great media attention for any political campaign. The extent to which humor serves these functions depends upon the contextual understanding of humor in the society (Hart, 2016). Including in the context, the place of the joker in the power dynamics of the society also affects the receptiveness of humor. This has been shown by the use of humor by the suffragettes and how they were portrayed in the media (Cowman, 2007).

During the 2016 US Presidential Elections humor was used by both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their debates as a means to mock the opposition. David, Love and Killen studied this use of humor on social media by the supporters of both political parties and concluded that humor is a powerful tool for meaningful participation and not just a useless demeaning tactic (Davis et al., 2018). The same trend has been observed in the commemorations of the International

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Women's Day in Pakistan in the past few years. The manifesto of the Aurat March in Pakistan was always full of grave concerns and demands but over the past years the expression of the protestors relied heavily on humor for which the movement got into highlight time and again and mostly negatively (Baig et al., 2020). May be its more about the 'amount' of humor that the activists lost their track and, perhaps mistakenly, the ridicule element exceeded the rest of the humor and started to lose its fun as well as thought provoking irony. Consequently, for many, ended up depicting a picture of its (the movement's) standing against the Islamic Principles (Khan et al., 2020), dividing the nation, every spring, into different groups based upon the various stances people support, and most recently, even led to the unpleasant extremists' encounters as well. Building upon these apparently dichotomous verses, this research aims to explore the perceptions of Pakistani social media users about the Aurat March. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze:

- The incorporation of humor as a tool to express resistance by the protestors.
- The citizens' reactionary behavior to the 'humor' via their engagement on *Facebook*.
- The behavior of people towards both, the philosophy of women rights and Aurat March in particular.

Social Media Engagement. Previous studies (Baccarella et al., 2018; Golf-Papez, Veer, 2017; Mondal et al., 2019) have discussed various misbehaviours spread online including cyberbullying (Bishop, 2014; Gonzales, 2014), trolling (Ansong et al., 2013; Cruz et al., 2018; Lumsden, Morgan, 2017; Sanfilippo et al., 2017), hate speech, and others. Considering such misbehaviours, M. Golf-Papez and E. Veer (Golf-Papez, Veer, 2017) discussed this 'dark side' of the social media by explaining, in the light of the social media honeycomb framework, seven different types of social media brands' functionalities and sprouting of different cyber behaviours which at any point in time turn dark, including cyber misbehaviours (Bishop, 2014; Sanfilippo et al., 2017) like trolling (Boddy, Dominelli, 2017; Golf-Papez, Veer, 2017; Gonzales, 2014; Pudaruth et al., 2018), and hate speech (Bishop, 2014; Mondal et al., 2019; Rasanen et al., 2016). Furthermore, J. Bishop (Bishop, 2014) and M.R. Sanfilippo, S. Yang, and P. Fichman (Sanfilippo et al., 2017) both shed lights over ill-practices of mass media where it through manipulation spreads its agenda into the masses fooling them to believe what may or may not be based on truth.

The most common targets of hate which, unsurprisingly, were the vulnerable and marginalized groups of the society including physically disables and queers, and groups based on class, race, ethnicity, and gender (Mondal et al., 2019). Other than this, individuals were targeted for displaying some specific, not necessarily obnoxious, behaviors. Considering cyberbullying, many scholars have (Baccarella et al., 2018; Golf-Papez, Veer, 2017; Mondal et al., 2019; Rasanen et al., 2016;) concluded implicitly, and reached a common point of concept of a cyberspace which mere existence provide opportunity for motivated trolls and perpetrators of hate speech via granting them a favour or more like a gift of anonymity.

R.H. Gonzales (Gonzales, 2014) pointed that the social media has become a channel for cyberbullying due to its features: an alternative (virtual) reality, anonymity, instant, unjustified use of power, cheap, availability of response generation or feedback, and gathering options like groups formation. It concluded that these channeling features of social media foster cyberbullies to grow in terms of their influence. Linking connections between a real-time and a virtual society, J. Boddy and L. Dominelli (Boddy, Dominelli, 2017) established an understanding of ethical issues like privacy, security, and freedom within the cyberspace. Moreover, E.D. Takyi, T.D. Damoah, E.A. Ampomah, and W. Larkotey (Ansong et al., 2013) defined trolling as it damages, a goal-orientated conversation via disturbing the flow and distracting individuals' attention and direct it at some useless point which is usually a sensitive issue. Especially, it specified about the Career trolling which is unlike the ones who troll simply to get attention, it is to troll to disturb on purpose. These are the intentional troublemakers.

A.G.B. Cruz, Y. Seo, M. Rex (Cruz et al., 2018) also identified a troll's dependency over its context as of great value in understanding trolling. The study concluded that trolling involves three practices which are learning, assimilating, and transgressing where transgressing can have an either effect over the communities within cyberspace, pro-social or anti-social. Likewise, M.R. Sanfilippo, S. Yang, and P. Fichman (Sanfilippo et al., 2017) emphasized on considering the context of the troll before responding to it. The study devised some coping strategies to deal with trolls of different natures (context): deviant, social and political. Based upon participants' responses: avoiding to get into a troll to block a troll, is a range of appropriate responses to deviant

trolls whereas dealing with a political or ideological troll must include elements of facilitation and support as responses to such a troll.

Humor, protest and social media engagement. A. Bayat (Bayat, 2007) explored the patterns of relationship between fun and the conservative authorities. It defined fun as the spontaneous and joyful acts which empower individuals to come out of the discipline and structures temporarily. Defining so it stressed upon the subversive elements hidden within the funny which simultaneously acting as a counter-culture challenges the mainstream culture. This may be the reason for the conservative authorities to take over the resources of generating fun out of fear of losing to the humorous. Although such fear may lead to violence however, quite contradictory, humor facilitates in disarming the authorities.

M.J. Sorensen (Sorensen, 2008) explored the theoretical dimensions and functions of humor deployed as a tool to resist against authorities without inviting violence. For the purpose it analyzed Serbian Otpor Movement of Serbia which started in 1998, and deployed humor to resist Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Serbia and Montenegro. It laid down a layout for innovative theory which explains three ideal functions of non-violent resistance as played by humor. The functions were: facilitation outside the movement; inside the movement, and the third one was, pressuring the authorities. Likewise, M.T. Hart (Hart, 2016) supported deployment of humor in social movements as it may through loosening some tension and overall stress still serves the purpose. Taking such stance, it discussed various aspects of humor as a tactic or tool: humor makes situation less risky (Hart, 2007; Teune, 2007) meanwhile it grabs more media attention (Hart, 2007; Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2014; Teune, 2007;) above all, it is context dependent (Hart, 2007; Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2014). Along with, M.T. Hart (Hart, 2007) also examined the role of humor as a tool in movements and protests, and concluded that humor do facilitate a movement towards success for which a strong sense of collective identity is necessary to be established for successful framing, that is, the proper delivery of the message to the other end attracting most attention possible. R.V. Kutz-Flamenbaum (Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2014) also had similar conclusions. It investigated the relation between humor and seriousness considering various aspects of the interplay between both to examine the patterns in which social movements have been manifesting humor.

Furthermore, there are studies which attempted to examine humorous content shared across social media on political issues. J.L. Davis, T.P. Love, and G. Killen (Davis et al., 2018) determined the patterns of incorporating humor by party supporters (democrats and republicans) in their comments on social media. However, it criticized humor and social media for one similar aspect such that both provide scrutiny-free entry to anyone into the politics. Humor also needs to be organized in order to maintain an organized and well-planned social movement, likewise, S. Teune (Teune, 2007) examined the organization of humor depicted by Spassguerilla by analyzing 3 protests to determine the tact and contextual interaction within the humor demonstrated in the movement.

A. Takovski (Takovski, 2019) analyzed Facebook page and Twitter hashtags for the Colorful movement alongside 15 social activists' perceptions over incorporating humor in protests. For which it described four functions that humor plays: ideological, social, psychological, and communicative. However, humor isn't the sole player: success of a movement is determined by the organization, planning, commitment, and the sense of context and target and this study seeks to shed light on the aforementioned themes, issues and perspectives.

Theoretical Framework. Political humor is used as a lens of inquiry. Political humor has been described in two overarching categories across literature. They are pro-social and antisocial (Graham et al., 1992), unifying and dividing (Meyer, 2000), based on communion and individuality (McAdams, 1988), or related to affinity and having power (Chapel, 1978; Ekstrom, 2009). The basic distinction for all of these is humor that brings people together versus humor that divides. Although there is evidence that bringing people together is more effective as a strategy (Chapel, 1978; Dudden, 1985; Gardner, 1994; Goodchilds, 1972; Martin, 2004; Robinson, 2010; Stewart, 2011; Yarwood, 2001), still, divisive humor is frequently used.

2. Material and methods

This study followed an exploratory research design and had incorporated qualitative methodology for addressing the objectives about the use of humor as a subversive tool by women in Aurat March and to understand the perceived influence of the Aurat March over the social media users in Pakistan. The population of this study is posters and placards used in Aurat March from

past four years, 2018 to 2021, and Facebook posts of 2021 published on the official page of Aurat March. The data was collected from the three posts on the official Facebook page of the Aurat March and two posters and placards each used in the Aurat March from last four years were included. Purposive sampling technique was used. Only those posters, placards and posts that the research team considered to be rich in humor and subversive ideologies and those that received the most reactions were included in the study. The content analysis technique has been used to analyze the words and images used in the posts/placards/posters.

3. Discussion

The Aurat March in Pakistan is being organized for four years now challenging status quo of the country as far as the gender construction and its execution is concerned. The basic norms challenged by Aurat March are the miseries faced by women in the society since centuries, sometimes in the name of religion and culture (Bari, 2021). Right now, where there is fourth wave of feminism circulating in the whole world, the region of south Asia is still confused in by the emerging challenging nature of women themselves. The fundamental notions confronted by the Aurat March are domestic violence, honor killings, gender discrimination, right to education and freedom of mobility (Bari, 2021).

However, the protestors used ridicule and humor as a way express their discontent with the system. The posters from the 2018 Aurat March show the initial use of humor as mild but meaningful. A poster literally states *“Pray the rosary of consent daily”*. The image on the poster reflects a form of spiritual worship to please God. Praying rosary is a common practice in the Muslim culture of Pakistan and is usually associated with spiritual leaders. Using this as a humorous form to imprint in the minds of people that consent is an important part of any sexual relationship is a tool which combines the sensitive religious symbol “rosary” with the overtly sexual symbol of consent. Again, making fun of the rosary was a bold move because of the rising religious intolerance in the Pakistani society. Besides, Pakistani society isn’t ready to listen about issues like ‘marital rapes’ yet. As an activist movement, Aurat March, if not intentionally, has really failed to assess the surroundings and conveying their message in a more diplomatic way.

Another poster, used in 2018, is relatively straightforward. It states *“Paratha Rolls not Gender Roles”* which cleverly uses homonyms “rolls” and “roles” to reject the long-established gender roles that have been the driving force of patriarchy. This poster is lighter in its implication as compared to the previous one as it does not tap on any sensitive aspect of our culture.

Aurat March 2019 showed the consistency in the trend set in the previous year however the humor was more aggressive this time. Two of the posters taken from 2019 show how the humor of the 2019 Aurat March was leaning more towards ridicule than innocent laughter. The first selected poster is in Urdu and it says *“Here, I have sat appropriately”* the image on the poster represents a woman sitting with both legs opened which defies the feminine way of sitting in Pakistani culture. This poster basically mocks the years old ideology of appropriating women’s behavior according to the standards of the society and calls for a new normal for women. Other than that, this poster also, stereotypes the men for having only sexual interests. The use of this ridicule in the face of a patriarchal, conservative society was a bold move by the protestors but this humor was not inconsequential.

The second poster also uses a very sensitive feminine symbol in the Pakistani society, a “Dopatta”, to highlight the bigotry of the patriarchal system of Pakistan. A “dopatta” is a piece of cloth which is an integral part of the national dress of women in Pakistan. A “Dopatta” has a high cultural value in the Pakistani society as it represents modesty of the women. The media, to this date portrays women wearing a dopatta in a positive light (Ashfaq, Shafiq, 2018). This poster says *“If you like the Dopatta so much, wrap it around your eyes”*; this is an attempt of ridiculing the patriarchal men who time and again label the women who do not wear a Dopatta as immodest and deviant.

The humor employed by the protestors, as predicted by S. Teune (Teune, 2007) could create a sense of in-group for the protestors but it created exclusiveness from the out-group and the call for inclusiveness faded with this widely unaccepted sense of humor. Due to the criticism faced by the 2019 Aurat March slogans, a debate began before the 2020 International Women’s Day on the nature and appropriateness of the slogans for the current year. The use of hostile humor in the 2019 Aurat March polarized the feminist movement in Pakistan and divided a line between the

“*Mera Jism Meri Marzi*” and “*Mera Jism Allah ki Marzi*” group. These two slogans represented the liberal and the conservative women who were pit against each other.

However, the whole controversy did not stop the flow of humor in the Aurat March but it could be observed that the posters of the 2020 used less hostile humor as compared to the previous year. The first selected poster shows this by pointing to a Bollywood movie dialogue which became very famous after the success of the film. The dialogue states “every woman dreams for a pinch of *Sindoor*”. “*Sindoor*” is a cosmetic powder worn by married women in India and this dialogue represents the typical patriarchal mindset that every woman dreams of being married, traditional feminine identity. The post here mocks the dialogue by adding a negation which reverses the meaning altogether. This poster highlights the modern ideology that marriage is not an achievement and this patriarchal mind set is to be criticized in the modern world.

The slogan on the second poster is in Urdu. It states “*Before preaching modesty to me, have a look at your search history*”. Search history has come to denote pornographic material in the present world of digital media. Different memes around the social media globally have given a unanimous meaning to this word. Using this hidden meaning to communicate to explicit bias is an easy way to call out all those without having to use the exact words which would be considered controversial and immoral by many. The selected play card, presented in 2021, is the depiction of determination within women of Aurat March to revolt against the status quo and end this exploitation of women. Also, it displays a will to influence and lead in the participant women. The play card at right is somewhat more general sarcastic expression against stereotyping the 21st century women in Pakistani society face particularly with reference to the concept of social and symbolic boundary making using the masculine discourse of respect, modesty, chastity invocation of shame and honor. Both of these are sound and humorous although for some Pakistanis phrase ‘Bin Dari’ may come across as inappropriate, hitting beard (considering it a part of Islamic identity), and to some even vulgar.

4. Results

In this part, we have investigated engagement of social media users to find out their response towards the Facebook posts of Aurat March official page. Three posts, video of slogan chanting, tweet of a political celebrity Bakhtawar Bhutto and video commentary of a famous journalist Shahzeb Khanzada, were analyzed. The data was collected on 14th of March 2021 while the posts were shared on 11th and 12th of March 2021.

Table 1. Facebook Comments

Comment Category		Post 1		Post 2		Post 3		Sum
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Supportive	Typical	28	16	13	11	06	05	79
	Critical	00	00	00	00	00	01	01
	Vulgar	01	02	00	00	03	00	06
Sum		29	18	13	11	09	06	86
Against	Typical	87	14	13	00	15	01	130
	Critical	17	08	03	00	07	00	35
	Vulgar	18	00	07	00	10	00	35
Sum		122	22	23	00	32	01	200
Total Comments		151	40	36	11	41	07	286

Collectively, for both genders, the three posts got 286 comments while separately the first post got most attention which kept on fading till the third post. Further, men showed more interest in the posts both in terms of support and against comments. By dividing those comments into three

categories based upon nature of the comments: typical, critical, and vulgar, it is apparent that most comments, supportive as well as against, were of typical nature whereas vulgar comments were least in number.

There are comments representing different ideologies, different mindsets and different socio-cultural beliefs. Pakistan is an Islamic state so the comments of social media users were clearly showing the anger against the slogans of Aurat March. According to the comments, these types of slogans promote vulgarity. The participants of this March do not have basic understanding of the religion that how much religion protects their rights. So, there is no point of coming on roads. Some users reported that these types of acts are only to demand sexual freedom. Social media was divided, some of the users were against that slogan. There were many who supported such slogans. According to some comments, women in Pakistan can be empowered through such protests, and there is nothing wrong if women are organizing themselves and demanding their rights. One user commented: *“If you are given this loud voice to chant and yell, you already have enough Azadi. The only thing matters that how decently you carry your slogans keeping in view that what platform you choose to get your rights and knowing the true spirit of Islam which has already given so much rights to women than West. I do support this cause but can't be blindfolded of the way you are presenting it and turning such a great cause into a disaster”*.

This particular comment represents a group of people who identify themselves as feminists but do not support the way of Aurat March for the obvious reason: wrong assessment of the situation and failure in keeping up with the society as an activist.

Framing Aurat March to be redolent with western ideology and highlighting it to be detrimental for our own native culture, one of the users make a comment: *“This feminism, secularism and atheism are western ideology and they are trying to forcefully filling these ideologies in our people by name of secularism, feminism and atheism and trying to destroy our culture our nation and erase Islam from Pakistan these all are against Islam”*.

5. Conclusion

The study elucidates that the social media users employ differentiation quite often, contrasting themselves with their opponents, their views with an opponent's views, their own social group with others, and so on. Humor is invoked to make both alliances and distinctions. Goldstein (1976) noted that such use of humor can help speakers transcend the immediate situation and objectify it, promoting the use of reason and thereby making these differences clearer and less colored by previous experience and emotion. One can criticize with humor by ridiculing the opposition through laughter rather than through indignation, anger, or violence (Volpe, 1977). Comic ridicule can also maintain identification and political unity among members of one group while stressing contradictions and differences they have with others (Schutz, 1977).

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 329-337

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.329
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Government Internet-based Communication in Times of COVID-19: the Perspective of University Students from Slovakia and Ukraine

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Abstract

Nowadays, governments recognize the importance of communicating with citizens, especially communication online – given the high popularity of the Internet and modern technical achievements. For the authorities, the Internet expands opportunities to explain and promote their programs and decisions, to establish and maintain dialogue with the public, especially with young people as the most active and promising part of it. For citizens, Internet-based communication is a powerful tool for studying government activities and understanding the public influence on decision-making processes. Its importance is particularly acute in crises, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, as government responsibility grows up, complexity of communication tasks rises, and demands, inquiries, and scrutiny from the public increase. The results of the survey of university students from Slovakia and Ukraine confirm the need in government information at crisis time. According to the study, local government official websites and local government social media sites are prior sources of information and news during the coronavirus outbreak. The obtained data provide implications for a better understanding of how young audiences perceive government online communication during the crisis in light of increasing Internet usage on the one hand, and public demand for open, accessible, and transparent government on the other hand.

Keywords: communication, media, government communication, online, Internet, media literacy, COVID-19.

1. Introduction

Communication between government and the public is an integral part of ensuring citizen participation in the discussion and development of government policy, guaranteeing the right to information, developing civil society, strengthening democracy. Scholars identify government “as an institution that communicates” (Canel, Sanders, 2010: 7), indicate that communication is an important function of government organizations (Vos, 2006: 250), and emphasize that governments must communicate with citizens in a clear, organized, and coherent fashion (Amadeo, 2016: 155).

Moreover, the demand for government communication and information from the authorities has grown rapidly and has become even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholars agree that whenever there is an outbreak, people tend to turn to the media for information, and the media should act as a bridge for people in need to reach health officials and the local government for their problems (Anwar et al., 2020).

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Researchers argue that the most important interactions between citizens and government happen at the local level (Sandoval Almazan, Gil-Garcia, 2012: 72). In fact, local government is closest to the people, many cases can be resolved on the spot, and local government agencies are an important link in decision-making processes about important public affairs. Online communication becomes an indispensable part of the local government current communication activities. As W.L. Bennett (Bennett, 2012: 128) mentions, the emergence of the Internet seems to be leading to a new mode of citizenship, especially among youth. The Internet has a serious impact on government communication: it creates new resources, new forms of organization and directions of communication activities; helps to expand the horizons of information support for the public and to boost the audience.

All this requires studying the government Internet-based communication and understanding its capabilities. Such a particular aspect of government communication online as its perception by the population is very important. This area of inquiry has so far been under-explored and therefore needs more research efforts to be focused on it.

2. Materials and methods

Against this background, the article tries to concentrate on studying how young people perceive the online communication of local governments and how they consume government information during COVID-19. To achieve the goal, the survey method was chosen. We believe this method is optimal for understanding and clarifying opinions, viewpoints, people's attitudes to certain events, phenomena, processes, etc. Additionally, online survey is logistically easier to handle for both the researcher and the respondent, and is convenient and cost-effective (Given, 2008: 846-847). As P. Lavrakas emphasizes, survey research is used to gather information, generate knowledge, and help make decisions (Lavrakas, 2008).

We seek to understand the attitude of young people to government communication, because by researching youth, we identify prospects, including future ways and features of communication between governments and citizens. Therefore, "the youth tends to gain substantial attention in academic research" (Waheed, 2019: 58). Additionally, this cohort is particularly relevant to the present purposes of the study of Internet-based communication, as it has been widely observed that "the usage of the Internet has become inevitable in this day and age" (Waheed, 2019: 57) and many young people have an affinity for communicating online. As J. Östman (Östman, 2012: 1004) states, in contrast to a substantial share of adults, the Internet has always been integrated in youth repertoire of everyday-life media use.

In this study, stratified random sampling was used. The survey involved students of two higher education institutions from two countries – Catholic University in Ružomberok (Slovakia) and Lviv Polytechnic National University (Ukraine). Totally, 232 people answered the questionnaire – 120 Ukrainians and 112 Slovaks. Surveyees of both genders were almost equally represented: 51 % of men and 49 % of women were among Slovak students, and 52 % of women and 48 % of men were among the Ukrainian respondents. As to the age range of participants, the youngest respondent was 18, and the oldest was 25.

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended and mixed questions, and socio-demographic questions (about age and gender). The survey itself was made in September-October 2020. Invitations to take the survey and link to the questionnaire were included in university newsletters, as well as sent to students on their corporate emails. Participation in the survey was exclusively voluntary.

Besides the survey, such methods as relevant data collection, review of the scientific literature, analysis and synthesis, comparison, and generalization were used. Materials of the research are academic books, articles, conference presentations, and online documents, which are mostly latest, authored by scholars from all around the world.

3. Discussion

Although government communication is pervasive and has an impact on every aspect of public life, scholars (Horsley et al., 2010: 269) note that "there is minimal theory-driven research in this critical area of communication". Besides, most papers are devoted to researching communication at the central level. In comparison, the study of local government communication is given less attention by scientists (Graham, 2014: 364). Consequently, the study of government communication is too elitist and central government-oriented (Akhmad, 2020: 102).

However, recently there has been a growing scientific interest in the topic of government communication. In particular, the academic literature highlights how government officials use the Internet and social media to communicate with the public. Scholars (Agerdal-Hjerminde, Valentini, 2015; Amadeo, 2016; Graham, Avery, 2013; Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018; Russmann et al., 2020) state that social media are highly regarded as a beneficial communication tool for local governments. Despite the fact that social networks, as media researchers (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020: 71) emphasize, are becoming sources of various kinds of fakes, today many local governments have adopted social platforms as part of their communication strategy.

It is important to underline that trust in local government is traditionally greater than in government at other levels. For instance, according to opinion polls, the level of trust in local authorities in Ukrainian society is higher than in the national level. Experts explain this, firstly, by the closer ties between government members and local residents, and secondly, by the fact that the government activity and the results of it are better seen at the local level (Association..., 2020). Similarly, a public opinion poll in Slovak Republic (AKO, 2021) showed that more than 80 % of respondents are satisfied with the work and communication of local governments in the pandemic of coronavirus disease. These results give reason to think that in Slovakia citizens feel that local government is close to their problems. This strengthens the people's trust in local government bodies. Such findings indicate: "people trust what they know – what is familiar to them" (Paglinawan, 2020: 78).

In times of crisis, economic, political, social upheavals and changes, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, effective and clear government communication is indispensable for informing and updating residents. During this period, it is particularly important for the governments to increase communication activity and give relevant and accurate information to target audiences, thus helping to minimize communication noise and to maximize desired effective and coordinated actions.

Studies (Bickham et al., 2020; Palen et al., 2010) confirm that people rely on official sources during a crisis. Again, people trust the local authorities more. Scientists (Bickham, Francis, 2021: 195-197) revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the USA's local and state government officials were deemed most trustworthy, compared to federal government representatives. The results also suggested that people trusted information received from the government about public health issues, and the majority relied on governments for pertinent information.

Researchers also noted the important role of government communication in other crisis periods, such as during previous outbreaks due to other pandemic crises – Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which preceded the current COVID-19. For example, Lee (Lee, 2009: 74) demonstrated how the Hong Kong government's crisis communication lost public trust during the SARS epidemic in 2003. Then local citizens and the media accused it of being "impotent" in handling the crisis. Another study (Kang et al., 2018: 202) examining the role of citizens' perception of government communication during 2015 South Korean MERS outbreak showed that distrust in government and high uncertainty were significantly mitigated by citizens' perceptions of government efforts for dialogic communication in the crisis.

Therefore, informing citizens about the services provided by government agencies, disseminating information on how to respond to the crisis and the changes becomes a good way to ensure quality communication in crisis conditions. Today, governments are increasingly abandoning the vision of information providers. Actually, the government communication activity is not only to inform, but also to have feedback, to conduct a dialogue, "to exchange information and knowledge between different social actors and government entities and to enable participation in collective decision-making efforts" (Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garcia, 2012: 72). The Internet provides a platform for cultivating government openness, direct informing of citizens, dialogue and cooperation. Due to this, government online communication has significant democratic potential, as it promotes transparency of government, creates a forum for feedback and discussion, and expands the range of consumers of government information.

What is more, during COVID-19 pandemic, governments influence public knowledge regarding health education. The pivotal roles that they can play through their communication with the public are promoting physical and psychological health measures and ensuring resilience in people (Anwar et al., 2020). Most importantly, government communication is aimed at managing infodemics. The term 'infodemic' as an abbreviation of 'information epidemic' was first used by D.J. Rothkopf (Rothkopf, 2003) when he wrote about SARS. By infodemic he meant "a few facts,

mixed with fear, speculation and rumour, amplified and relayed swiftly worldwide by modern information technologies, have affected national and international economies, politics and even security...”.

Likewise, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020b) announced the infodemic, noting that the coronavirus disease outbreak and response “has been accompanied by a massive ‘infodemic’ – an over-abundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it”. Undoubtedly, this trend is damaging for people, as it can lead to misleading or even dangerous behaviour, harm their physical and mental health, increase anxiety and worry, cause depression, encourage xenophobia and hate, thus reducing the effectiveness of measures to combat the pandemic.

The paradox is that during the COVID-19 pandemic, web-based technologies are widely used to inform people, ensure their safety, and support communication. Simultaneously, the same technologies enable and reinforce infodemics. In today's digital world, mixed messages, mis- and disinformation overflow the information sphere. WHO (WHO, 2020c) states that in order to tackle the infodemic, governments need to act transparently and consensually to build trust with the public. Effective infodemic management assumes that confrontation of misinformation is carried out at all levels including individual, community, society, government, and “communities and individuals are empowered to be resilient against misinformation, and have the skills and self-efficacy to recognize low-quality information and enact healthy behaviours” (WHO, 2020a).

In light of this, the authorities are obliged to make efforts to fight against the COVID-19 infodemic, including through effective government communications and bringing to people understandable, clear, unambiguous, localized evidence-based information.

2. Results

The survey data reveal that an overwhelming majority (98 % of Slovak and 96 % of Ukrainian respondents) agree that local governments must communicate with citizens. In other words, young people from different countries spoke in favour of the importance of government communication, they hold views that the authorities must inform, explain, discuss, and dialogue with residents.

Similarly, most respondents stated that they were interested in the activities of local authorities. The differences between Slovak and Ukrainian university students were insignificant: Slovaks are very interested (36 %), partly interested (62 %), not interested (2 %); Ukrainians are very interested (27 %), partly interested (70 %), not interested (3 %).

In addition, the answers to the following question were almost unanimous. The majority of respondents consider information about the activities of the governments of the city or village in which they live to be personally necessary – this was reported by 86 % of Slovaks and 79 % of Ukrainians. Besides, 13 % of Slovaks and 19 % of Ukrainians need such information partly, and 1 % of Slovak and 2 % of Ukrainian participants do not care.

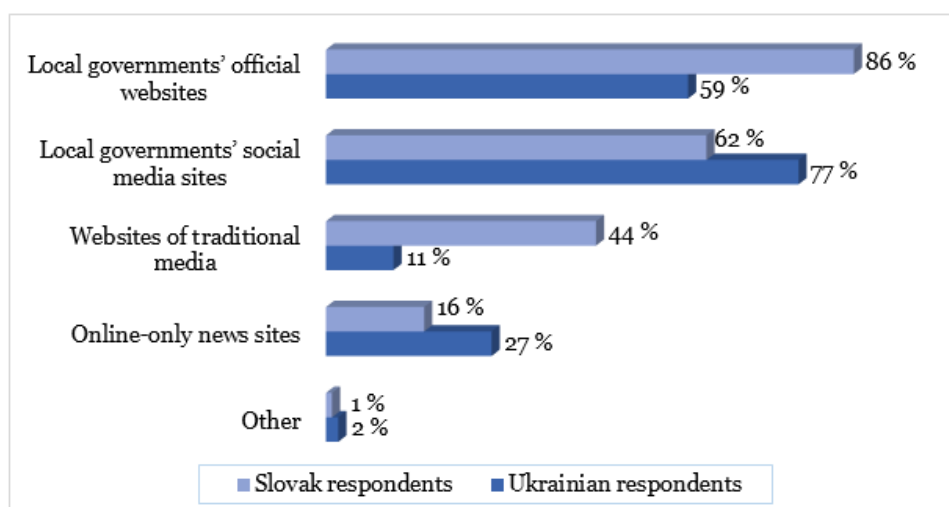


Fig. 1. Respondents' preferences for receiving local government information online

In contrast, responses regarding media preferences showed differences. The majority of Slovak respondents report receiving most of their information from the government organizations through local governments' websites (86 %). Ukrainians most often use social media for this purpose (77 %). Next, the priorities are as follows. Slovak students rely on local governments' social media (62 %), websites of traditional media (44 %), and online-only news sites (16 %). Ukrainians turn to government websites (59 %), online-only news sites (27 %), and websites of traditional media (11 %) to obtain government information. The survey participants are least likely to receive information from email or text messages (1-2 %). Respondents could select multiple answers for this question (Fig. 1).

Noticeably, there are conflicting findings of media use for government information. According to the survey results, young Slovaks tend to access government websites, while young Ukrainians are more likely to use government social media sites. Nevertheless, both government official websites and government sites on social platforms are priority information sources for youth in the COVID-19 period.

It should be noted that the obtained data are partly similar to the conclusions of other studies, and partially contradict them.

According to the sociological service Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF, 2020), the choice of information sources is influenced by the respondents' age; in particular, almost 70 % of Ukrainians aged 18-29 prefer social networks. For comparison: according to a Focus polling agency survey (Struhárik, 2020), most Slovaks turn to traditional media during coronavirus crisis, and students do not trust social networks. Nonetheless, it is common to see that consuming news and information on social platforms is becoming the norm for younger generations worldwide, and they use more social networks for news than their older peers (Statista, 2021a, 2021b). Despite the fact that many social media users around the world report about their lack of trust to social platforms either as media sources or as a way to get news, they continue to access such networks daily to keep up to date with news and current affairs (Watson, 2020). Obviously, the greatest potential of social media is to facilitate the way of obtaining information, regardless of whether it is true or false.

However, as our survey shows, the situation related to government information is different. It is believed by Slovak respondents that local governments' websites are sources of reliable information during the COVID-19 – almost all survey participants from Slovakia (99 %) mentioned it. Conversely, Slovaks view local governments' posts on social media to a lesser extent as sources of reliable information. However, the level of trust in them is still high: 57 % said they consider them reliable, 36 % – partly reliable; and only 5 % consider them unreliable (for the rest it was difficult to answer this question) (Figure 2).

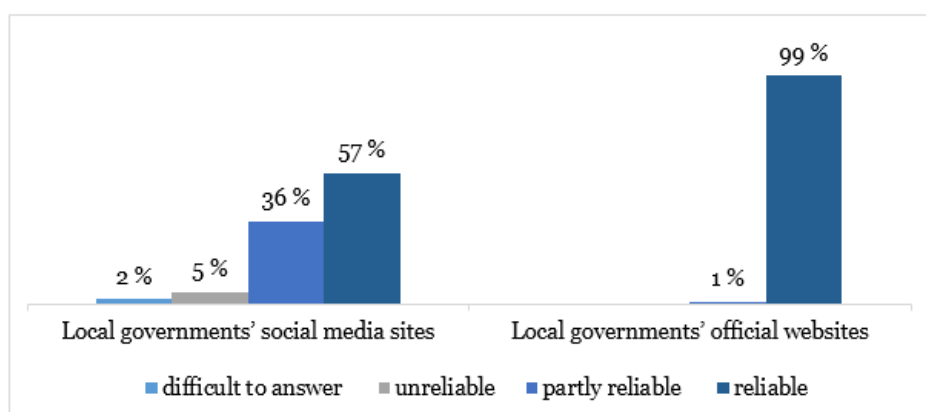


Fig. 2. Slovak respondents' reliability perception of local governments' official websites and local governments' social media sites

In turn, most Ukrainian students view both local governments' official websites and social media sites as reliable sources. Actually, 78 % of Ukrainians consider official websites as reliable, 14 % – as partly reliable, 2 % – as unreliable, and 6 % could not answer. Comparatively, 70 % of students from Ukraine consider local governments' social platforms as reliable, 24 % – as partly reliable, 3 % do not trust them, and 3 % did not answer the question (Figure 3).

The above is in line with the study (Eger et al., 2020: 73), which shows that university students from four countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) usually do not trust social media, however, they tend to trust certain pages they like. Therefore, we are inclined to believe that local governments' sites on social media are among the sources that young people trust. Indeed, social media is not a source in itself. The source is the account, page of the organization or group, etc. on social platforms, and the post that the person or organization makes there.

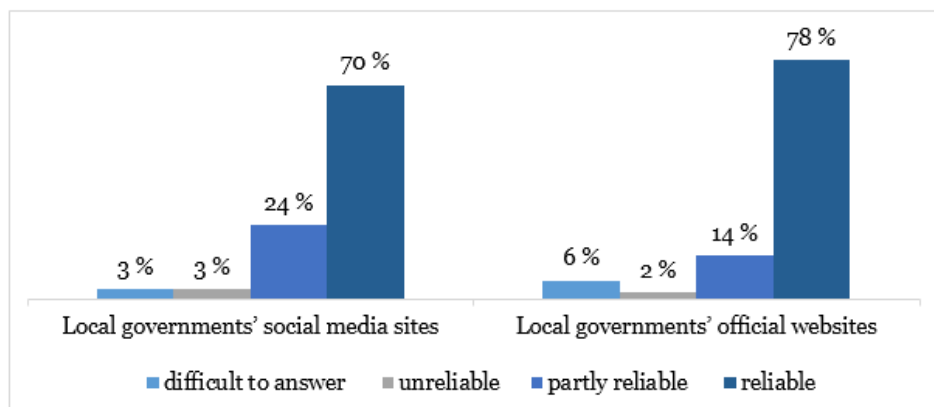


Fig. 3. Ukrainian respondents' reliability perception of local governments' official websites and local governments' social media sites

We share the conclusions of the above-mentioned authors (Eger et al., 2020: 85), that people with higher levels of education (it is assumed that students are such people) are able to better distinguish between real and fake news than the general population and know better what they can expect from the certain sources of information. Moreover, other study (Harmatiy, Kravčák, 2021: 141) shows that Slovak and Ukrainian journalists consider local government's social media as a reliable source of information. This reinforces the idea that people with the knowledge and know-how of media, such as journalists, rely on social platforms and utilize them well.

Another feature of the social media use is that young people love interaction. Web-tools, openness and dialogic nature of social platforms provide such an opportunity, allow expressing opinions, and promote citizen participant. Scientists (Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018: 29) admit that social media are becoming a major channel of online interactive participation, and this is an opportunity for local governments to enhance citizen engagement in political and social affairs. Additionally, social media helps governments study audience reaction. The feedback function, which is implemented through visitors' comments and remarks, allows carrying out the slice of public opinion. Therefore, it is important for the authorities to provide young people with this channel of communication. In this regard, M. Graham and E.J. Avery (Graham, Avery, 2013: 15) conclude that local governments must incorporate social media into their communication in a meaningful way.

Simultaneously, researchers (Sýkorová, Fedorko, 2011: 115) warn that the value of social media should not be overestimated and note that the phenomenon of social platforms "keeps developing, but its significance is often over-rated". Nevertheless, social media is a modern technology, and if local governments work with it professionally, it helps to develop online communications.

The communication of the government of their city/village was assessed by Ukrainians as good (46 %), satisfactory (34 %), excellent (16 %), and for 4 % it was difficult to answer. The Slovak audience evaluated local government communication higher: as good (64 %), excellent (21 %), satisfactory (12 %), and 3 % of surveyees failed to respond. The answers to this question may indicate an attempt by local governments to cover issues objectively and to support effective communication practices in the COVID-19 period. Officials are increasingly realizing that government communication is strategically important and should be conducted professionally. At the same time, respondents' views provide room for improvement of local governments' Internet-based communication in both countries.

Importantly, Slovak and Ukrainian survey participants highly evaluate their knowledge and skills to interact effectively with local government resources on the Internet. Almost all students reported that their knowledge and skills were sufficient for this, and no one considered them

insufficient. It should be noted that government communication is complex and balances between political marketing and the aim “to inform citizens and promote bidirectional communication” (Goncalves, Santos, 2017: 165). Moreover, government Internet resources may contain presentation and PR content, as well as one-sided and beneficial for the authorities interpretation of events and processes. Therefore, citizens should be media literate and possess critical thinking to consume the government information posted online. Today, media literacy and digital competence have become the key skills for people. The development of information and communication technologies requires skilful, responsible and safe use of them.

Hence, as the survey results show, most young Slovaks and Ukrainians believe that local government must communicate with the population, and they rely on government information in COVID-19 period. The findings suggest that university students highly evaluate the reliability of government information, and they consider both local government official websites and local government social media sites as the priority sources. It is worth mentioning that students rated themselves as those having good skills and knowledge in order to consume government information online.

3. Conclusion

The coronavirus crisis has confirmed the viability of government communication and the public demand for reliable information. The results and discussion reinforce the idea that, thanks to governments’ digital visibility and activity, citizens are given additional opportunities to obtain government information. With this in mind, the authorities need to develop their communication capacity, establish effective and consistent online contacts with the public, especially at the grass root level and especially in times of crisis. It is extremely important for governments to establish, develop and maintain communication with young people as an important target audience.

Based on the study’s findings, the following conclusions and recommendations were made.

First, it is important for government agencies to adapt their communication processes both to the appropriate context and to the preferences of young citizens, to build such communication relationships that largely meet the needs of young people. Governments need to reach their audience on the various platforms on which it is located, including social media, and provide quality, substantial and diverse information on locally and timely relevant topics. It is important for governments to constantly understand how their communication actually achieves key democratic goals.

Second, governments need to build feedback, not to neglect an open communication environment on online platforms, and take into consideration the reaction and comments of citizens. People have the opportunity to send messages, to point out possible shortcomings, to offer ideas and express their views. For the authorities, this is an opportunity to learn about the public agenda, and to help in solving problems. Thus, the government ceases to be impersonal and abstract, and is perceived by citizens as one to whom you can write a message, express an opinion, and to ask questions. This strengthens the citizens’ trust in local government.

Third, given the importance of communication, governments should work professionally for communicating their messages. In fact, usually local government bodies, unlike national organizations, do not have full-fledged press teams, press services or social media teams. Therefore, it would be good if local governments had teams of professional public information and communication officers to communicate on a professional basis.

Ultimately, on online platforms, governments should not only inform residents, but also educate. This applies to the youth audience in the first place. Digital media helps protect against misinformation. Because of the rapid spread of rumours and fakes during crises, and due to the high demand for timely and trustworthy information about COVID-19, government platforms are a top source among Internet users seeking credible information and wanting to verify the facts set out on other resources.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 338-353

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.338
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Correlation of Technostress Creators with Employees' Work-Life Balance in the Context of Journalists' Use of Information and Communication Technology at Work: Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Technical pressures otherwise known as “technostress” because of the use of work-related information and communication technology (ICT) are increasingly causing stressful experience to journalists in the newsroom. Existing research has shown that journalists' attitudes and performance are adversely affected by technostress creators, and not much is understood about their effects on non-working lives especially in the Global South context. This study aimed to close this research void by examining the relationship between technostress creators and “work-life balance” with “job self-efficacy” as a mitigating factor. Employing a survey questionnaire, the data was collected from 300 full-time Nigerian and Vietnamese journalists. Key findings showed that (i) technostress creators were negatively associated with work-life balance; and (ii) the negative relationship was moderated by work self-efficiency. These findings enrich the technostress research by providing an insight into the influence of technostress creators on journalists' work-life balance and highlight how to cope with technostress situations.

Keywords: advanced technologies, employees, job self-efficacy, ICT use at newsroom, journalists, self-efficacy, technostress creators, work-life balance.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the rapid developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have had a tremendous impact on organisations and individuals. The adoption of ICT stimulates job and business processes by redefining old organisational structures and creating new jobs. Even businesses that are traditionally left behind in ICT adoption such as journalism, construction and agriculture are now racing towards using it to increase their competitiveness (Apooyin, 2014; Rao, 2007; Mwakaje, 2010). For employees around the world, deployed ICT has made it possible to link at any time “to support and improve business processes and regulatory decision-making” (Hunton et al., 2003; Chandra et al., 2012). Not only is the use of ICT in processing and production levels increasingly becoming imperative in organisations but also becoming essential for the improvement of the quality of life of individuals. For example, the use of ICTs such as smart mobile devices, laptops and other various types of computers and computer-related technologies improve the quality of life – making hustle-free and easier work easier (Molla, Heeks, 2007; Khan, Garvinba, 2010).

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Despite the proliferation of ICT has brought about a great deal of benefits, it is likely to have harmful and unintended consequences on users. Scholars and professionals have consistently expressed worries about the “negative” repercussions of ICT, for example, rising domestic and labour conflicts, stress, “information overload”, cybercrime, phishing, etc. (Brivio et al., 2018; Vranjes et al., 2017). This study focuses on one of the negative repercussions of the use of ICTs known as technostress, which is the stress experienced by end-users of ICT (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Research has shown the “negative” repercussion of technostress creators on workers’ “satisfaction, productivity and organisational commitment” (Brivio et al., 2018; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008) and that, workers get overwhelmed “and develop an intention to quit the work because of technostress” (Ayyagari, 2012; Ayyagari et al., 2011; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008).

Regarding the use of ICT in a private context, studies have shown that technology users experience fatigue, enervation “and stress” because of the overuse of ICTs (Apooyin, 2014; Samaha, Hawi, 2016) despite the use of technology “is optional and users always have the option to stop using it when they feel stressed” (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017). In disparity, however, for the purposes of working in or for organisations the use of ICT is compulsory. Hence, employees must use and interact with ICT that is innovatively and constantly changing. Hence, factors causing technostress are increasingly becoming a serious organisational issue, which affects “the physical and mental” wellbeing of workers (Apooyin, 2014; Brivio et al., 2018).

The enormous achievements attributable to ICT in the current information age “has (sic) been allegedly tinted with gloom” because of the implications of ICTs for users who, often, must use them in their routine jobs. In the process of adapting to increasingly complex techniques, however, more users experience physical and emotional stress. For instance, in the past 10 to 15 years, organisations have “experienced significant changes as a result of ICTs and the subsequent digital transformation” (Mcafee, 2006: 1; Matt et al., 2015; Ngoc, 2016). These dynamic changes that are “technological, organisational and cultural” in nature “have redefined work and enterprise models and competition”. For instance, as demonstrated by the relocation from “Web 1.0 to Web 2.0” and from “Enterprise 1.0 to Enterprise 2.0” internet technology and enterprise models, “ICT offers individuals and organisations increased productivity and efficiency” (Mcafee, 2006: 1).

Nonetheless, through “misuse, abuse and overuse”, the application of ICT in organisational jobs can cause a peril to both the workers and the organisation; thus, giving rise to mental health risks and poor performance turnout associated with technostress (Brivio et al., 2018; Gaudioso et al., 2017; Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017; Mcafee, 2006: 1; Pihl-Thingvad, 2015). With reference to this discourse, the question to ask is: How do workers perceive stress-inducing ICTs regarding the balancing between their job and non-job life? This question becomes relevant due to the demanding nature of the job with most workers such as engineers, journalists, technicians, etc. especially in poor countries, who often lead miserable lifestyles and suffer from mental illnesses after retirement (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017).

2. Material and methods

Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Technique: A quantitative survey approach was used to gauge the responses of a sample of 300 full-time journalists from Nigeria. The sample was drawn from a total population of 87,784 journalists (46,784 Nigerian journalists and 41,000 Vietnamese journalists). However, as of July 2021, only 5,784 of Nigerian journalists are registered on the website of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the country’s umbrella union for all journalists. No differentiation was made between the various categories of journalists – print, broadcast, online, freelancers, journalists working in public media organisations, etc. The sample sizes were determined using the Taro Yamane’s sampling technique.

A multistage random sampling was used to draw the samples: (i) in stage one, a sample size of 374 was drawn from the population of Nigerian journalists while 396 was drawn from the population of Vietnamese journalists; (ii) in stage two, the two samples were combined thus, yielding a new population size of 770; (iii) in stage three, a final sample size of 263 was obtained. For convenience purposes, it was rounded up to 300. Thus, a final sample of 300 full-time journalists who used various ICTs at work (such as digital camera, microphone, computer, mobile devices, digital office and industrial printing machines, digital studio news processing and production equipment, etc.) was surveyed.

An online survey number randomising app, 'SurveyMonkey' was used to generate the random numbers for the selection of the samples at stages (ii) and (iii) mentioned above. With the help of the officials of NUJ in Nigeria and Vietnamese Journalists' Association (VJA) in Vietnam, e-copies of the questionnaire were sent via e-mail and WhatsApp to the journalists who had been selected in the final sampling stage but could not be met personally for a face-to-face questionnaire administration due to logistic reasons. The confidentiality of the participants' responses was assured and completed the survey forms. The survey form was in English and was translated (e.g., [Brislin, 1980](#)) into Vietnamese language for participants from Vietnam. The response rate was 99 % (n = 297) having failed to retrieve the questionnaire from three (1 %) participants. The average age of the participants was 29.72 years (SD = 2.67). Nearly one-thirds (28.6 %, n = 85) of the participants are female, nearly half (45.5 %, n = 135) of them were married, a vast majority (88.6 %, n = 263) of them were bachelor's degree holders or higher degrees with only few (2.4 %, n = 7) of them not having a bachelor's degree.

Instrumentation: A five-section questionnaire was designed and used to collect the data from the participants because all the 17 items used in this study's scale were adopted from pre-validated studies, a pilot-test was deemed unnecessary; hence, it was not performed. Section 1 was on the participants' demographics, Section 2 was on the technostress creators construct, Section 3 was on the Work-life balance construct, Section 4 was on the Job self-efficacy construct and Section 5 was on the control variables. The data were collected using a combination of face-to-face self-questionnaire administration and an e-mail administration. The sampling frames for both Nigerian and Vietnamese samples of the participants were obtained from NUJ and VJA, respectively. For the participants that could be reached personally, for a face-to-face administration of the questionnaire was performed whereas for those that could not be reached personally, an e-copy of the questionnaire was e-mailed to them. For a few of them who could not be reached via the e-mail addresses provided, alternative means of communication were employed, especially WhatsApp and Telegram apps.

Measures: (i) Technostress Creators: - The technostress creators variable was gauged with a five-items scale adapted from Ma et al. ([Ma et al., 2021](#)) and Tarafdar et al. ([Tarafdar et al., 2007](#)) in a similar way with some past studies (e.g., [Jena, 2015](#); [Lee et al., 2014](#)). One of the items reads, "I am forced to change my work habits to adapt to new technologies." Possible responses range from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha score was .85, indicating a good reliability; (ii) Balancing Work and Life ("Work-Life Balance"): - Brough et al.'s ([Brough et al., 2014](#)) four-item scale was employed to measure "work-life balance." The scale has been adjudged to have robust psychometric properties ([Chan et al., 2016](#)). One of the items reads, "I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities." Possible responses range from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha score was .92, indicating a very good reliability; (iii) Job Self-Efficacy: - Job self-efficacy variable was gauged with a three-item scale developed by Spreitzer ([Spreitzer, 1995](#)). One of the items reads, "I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities." Possible responses range from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha score was .90, indicating a very good reliability; (v) Control Variables: - Workload variable was controlled "because workload influences work-life balance" ([Ma et al., 2021](#)). Workload was measured using the five-item scale developed by Spector and Jex ([Spector, Jex 1998](#)). One of the items reads, "My work demands a lot from me." Possible responses gauged using a five-point Likert scale range from (1) seldom to (5) several times a day, and had a Cronbach alpha score of .89, indicating a good reliability.

3. Discussion

Concept of journalism in the context of ICT use and work-life balance. Initially, academics were drawn to the study of work-life balance and job satisfaction because of the variables of social forces and changes in organisational goals ([Pollard, 1995](#); [Stam, Underwood, 1993](#)). The entire media industry landscape was transformed as cutting-edge information and communication technology (ICT) transitioned from traditional media to the digital age ([Stam et al., 1995](#)). New job opportunities have emerged, audience demand has shifted, and advertiser requirements have shifted (e.g., see [Barrett, 1984](#); [Beam, 2006](#); [Perez, Cremedas, 2014](#)). As a result of these changes, journalists have been reflecting on the increasingly pressurising job-demands, importance of their profession and the potential of their future career paths. With morale dwindling, many people considered the possibility of layoffs and research into the phenomenon began seriously ([Yu, 2021](#)).

People began to express their dissatisfaction with the journalists and news media in earnest. To gain a better understanding of the factors that led to this, researchers have attempted to present specialised areas of research on negative or positive influences ICT use on a journalist's job performance and work-life balance. For example, one specialised study – “burnout” – in industry (Macdonald et al., 2016) explores the negative effects of technological development on job satisfaction and work-life balance factors (Lim, Lim, 2013). This type of study, according to the press, investigates the negative effects of ICT advancement on job satisfaction and work-life balance (Yu, 2021).

Many academics believe that journalism is more of a value-driven profession than a profit-driven one (Picard, 2005 cited in Yu, 2021). Motivators (also known as intrinsic factors) are necessary for people to be happy in their jobs and be able to maintain work-life balance, according to Herzberg's motivation and hygiene theory, whereas hygiene issues (also known as external factors) are indicators of job dissatisfaction (or job dissatisfaction indicator). Journalists have become increasingly interested in how intrinsic factors (such as journalism's professional value) influence work-life balance and job satisfaction in recent decades. The study of journalism as a profession is still in its relatively early stages, with researchers looking into a variety of factors that could affect journalists' work-life balance and job satisfaction (Holyfield et al., 2015). Although work-life balance and job satisfaction are relatively new concept in journalism, they are a well-established concept in the business world (Rogelberg, 2007).

Journalists as a profession are a diverse group of people who work in a variety of environments. Because there were no industry-wide standards and they could be practised in a variety of ways, journalists were studied as a profession rather than an art form in the early 20th century (Cameron, 1967 cited in Yu, 2021). Journalism was defined as “the gathering, preparation, and dissemination of news and relevant commentary, as well as featured material, through mass media such as brochures, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, radio, motion pictures, television, and books” in the late twentieth century (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1989 cited in Yu, 2021). Today, journalism is consistently described as a profession in terms of multiple dimensions, including the public service it provides, the objectivity and independence it upholds, the time it takes to report on issues, and the ethics it upholds (Kovach, Rosenstiel, 2001) in their professional lives, and self-sufficiency (Deuze, 2005). According to Wilinsky (Wilinsky, 1964 in Yu, 2021), professionals can self-regulate due to the basic concept of “exceptional autonomy” and the “rules of associations, licencing, and ethics” in place. Overall, autonomy (the value of journalism as a profession) is a motivating factor for work-life balance and is essential to comprehending journalism studies as a profession. This paper looks at how the concept of work-life balance is being communicated in relation to the impact of ICT-induced technostress in the non-working life of journalists.

Technostress and technostress creators. In modern workplaces, “technostress creators” are increasingly “becoming a major source of stress” (Ma et al., 2021). Technostress creators are associated with negative outcomes such as low job satisfaction and low organisational commitment, lower retention and, as Tarafdar et al. (Tarafdar et al., 2014) and Carlson et al. (Carlson et al., 2017) note, “performance and higher levels of work strain.”

Research on technostress creators has focused on negative effects in the work domain; not much data exists on the influence of technostress creators on the non-working lives of journalists and other employees. A study explored the relationship between a certain factor of technostress creators (i.e., technology overload) and work-family conflict; however, work-life balance is distinct from work-family conflict (Harris et al., 2015). According to Syrek et al. (Syrek et al., 2013) “Work-life balance is a broader construct that reflects people's evaluation of the ways in which they combine their work roles and life roles.” According to Casper et al. (Casper et al., 2018), “It [work-life balance] is a meaningful goal and ideal state for employees [such as journalists].”

Moreover, guaranteeing work-life balance for employees such as journalists is a good way for media management to attract talented job candidates and motivate existing journalists and other employees (e.g., Apooyin, 2014; Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017; Ofili et al., 2014). As ICT is blurring the dividing lines that set off job and non-work life, achieving a balance between work and non-work life is a constant struggle for journalists and other employees all over the world (Anaeto, 2007; Beam, 2007; Hunter et al., 2017). Technostress creators are becoming unavoidable in the modern organisations; so, it is imperative to investigate their influence on work-life balance and help workers find effective coping mechanisms (Anaeto, 2007; Apooyin, 2014; Beam, 2007; Ma et al., 2021).

The literature has shown that technostress can be caused by many factors, some of which include “including techno-invasion, techno-overload, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty” (Brivio et al., 2018: 2; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Techno-pressures like these can cause serious repercussions on individuals and organisations. Cited in Brivio et al. (Brivio et al., 2014: 2), Tarafdar et al. (Tarafdar et al., 2007), Ragu-Nathan et al. (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008) and Gaudiousso et al. (Gaudiousso et al., 2017) cited in Ma et al. (Ma et al., 2021) have defined techno-invasion, techno-overload, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty as follows. “*Techno-invasion is defined as constant connectivity, without boundaries of space and time, which maintains that employees are continuously available to work requests.... techno complexity, [is] the unpleasant feeling that the new ICTs are multifaceted and require tremendous effort to understand. Techno-insecurity is the perception that ICTs and the constant need to remain up to date can threaten an individual’s job.... Lastly, techno-uncertainty causes perceived instability, due to the evolving nature of the work, and associated processes as well as constant introduction of new ICTs*” (Ma et al., 2021)

In addition to technical addiction, techno-invasion at the individual ICT user’s level requires the extension of job-related tasks “into the worker’s private life”, thus, undermining the employees’ (e.g., a journalist’s) work-life balance. Whereas, at the organisational level an overload of “information and communication”, or “techno-overload” entails workers (e.g., journalists) receiving information from multiple channels simultaneously. These workers could experience difficulties managing the excessive communication and information they receive “as it may be unclear how to prioritise or best use the information received” (Gaudiousso et al., 2017 cited in Brivio et al., 2018: 2).

Furthermore, the lack of support during the company’s ICT testing, implementation and use of, for example, newly-acquired ICTs; the absence of other mechanisms to support ICT; the lack of mechanisms to utilise the information provided by the company; the absence of mechanisms to utilise information and communications; the absence of mechanisms to take advantage of the discomfort and fatigue resulting from multitasking, given that ICT allows more tasks to be accomplished in less time, are some of the additional factors contributing to technostress.

The literature has shown that the prompt provision of technical and organisational support in addition to giving room for staff to participate “in ICT implementation activity and appropriate communication management” allows for a reduction in the emergence of “technostress” in the workplace and “encourage greater well-being and productivity” (Brivio et al., 2018: 2). Hence, the need for this study to be conducted to provide a further understanding on the correlation of technostress creators with work-life balance among employees who use ICT in their routine jobs. All these can negatively affect the work and living conditions of employees (Ma et al., 2021).

Theoretical framework. The theoretical underpinning of the Job Demands-Resources Theory (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001) was adopted to examine the relationship between technostress creators and “work-life balance”. The literature (e.g., Ma et al., 2021) demonstrates that job demands may have negative outcomes; considering that, this study drew a hypothetical assumption that the relationship between technostress creators and the balance of work life, or “work-life balance” is negative. While responding to Bakker and Demerouti’s (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017: 275) assertion that “more research is needed to test the Job Demands-Personal Resources interaction”, this study explores whether “job self-efficacy”, an “personal resource” that significantly cushions “the negative relationship between technostress creators and workers’ work-life balance” as Wayne et al. (Wayne et al., 2017) claim.

The Job Demands-Resources Theory uses a positive psychology approach to explain employee experiences in the workplace (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017). Working conditions can be broadly defined as either job requirements or job resources in all occupations, according to the theory’s central premise. Work requirements are those aspects of work that necessitate physical and/or mental exertion and are linked to energy depletion as well as psychological and physiological costs (e.g., workload, disciplinary issues, and time pressure) (e.g., see Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources, in contrast to job demands, are the business elements that enable employees to achieve business objectives, manage work demands and associated physical and psychological costs, and grow and develop in their position (e.g., support for perceived autonomy, professional learning opportunities, relationships with colleagues).

Recent Job Demands-Resources concepts have recognised the role of personal resources in shaping employees’ workplace experiences, in addition to job requirements and job resources

(Xanthopoulou et al., 2007 cited in Granziera et al., 2021). Personal resources, which are subjective assessments of an individual's ability to control and influence their environment (Hobfoll et al., 2003 cited in Granziera et al., 2021), can predict how work demands and work resources affect employee outcomes either directly or indirectly. For example, a journalist's perception of the newsroom climate (a job resource) may be influenced by self-efficacy (a personal resource), resulting in increased feelings of commitment (which is the outcome) (e.g., see Collie et al., 2011). Individual journalists who work in a positive newsroom climate (a job resource) may have a higher level of self-efficacy (a personal resource), which could help them perform better at work (which is the result) (Klassen, Tze, 2014 cited in Granziera et al., 2021).

Correlation between technostress creators and work-life. Brod (Brod 1982: 754) first introduced and then defines the concept of "technostress" as "a condition resulting from the inability of an individual or organisation to adapt to the introduction and operation of new technology." That definition was modified by Tarafdar et al. (Tarafdar et al., 2007) thus: "Technostress is stress from using work-related technology". The scholars discovered that five factors constitute technostress creators, or "technostress creators" namely: "techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty." According to Tarafdar and colleagues, "techno-overload occurs when employees are compelled to work faster and longer due to work-related technologies [ICTS]."

Those techno stressors, based on the proposition by the Job Demands-Resources Theory, can be conceptualised as job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker, Demerouti, 2017), and each occupation has its own set of risk factors associated with negative behavioural outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017). Among these variables are "job demands and job resources." Job demands, as defined by Bakker et al. (Bakker et al., 2005: 170), are "physical, social, or organisational characteristics of a job that impose psychological and psychological ... costs on individuals." These costs result in adverse consequences such as stress, illness, "decreased commitment, and decreased job performance" (Ma et al., 2021; Tarafdar et al., 2019).

Technostress generators are demanding aspects of employment for many employees. To thrive and survive in the information age, technicians and journalists who work with ICT must make sustained efforts to keep pace with rapid technological advancements (Tarafdar et al., 2019). Techno stressors have been linked to unfavourable effects for most categories of workers using technologies, including "decreased job satisfaction" (Ma et al., 2021), as well as decreased performance and productivity (e.g., Ayyagari et al., 2011; Tarafdar et al., 2014; Tarafdar et al., 2011). Along with job performance, managers and employers worldwide are prioritising work-life balance (Apooyin, 2014; Casper et al., 2018; Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017; Wayne et al., 2017). Whereas Brough et al. (Brough et al., 2014: 2728) define work-life balance as "an individual worker's subjective assessment of the compatibility of his or her work and non-work activities, as well as life in general."

This one-dimensional definition of work-life balance is derived largely from the work of Kalliath and Brough (Kalliath, Brough, 2008) within the theoretical framework of occupational stress. Work-life balance, according to Brough et al. (Brough et al., 2014), is a result of "resource fluctuations in work environments [such as work arrangements, or workload akin to job demands in the Job Demands-Resources theory]". Job requirements are a negative predictor of work-life balance (Brough et al., 2014; Greenhaus, Powell, 2017; Syrek et al., 2013). According to one theory, "meeting job demands depletes an individual employee's reservoir of resources", resulting in negative outcomes at work and at home according to Apooyin (Apooyin, 2014), Lehmann-Jacobsen (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017), and ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, 2012) as cited in Ma et al. (Ma et al., 2021).

Since technostress creators represent job demands and job demands have a detrimental effect on work-life balance, this study assumes that technostress creators will also have a detrimental effect on employees' work-life balance. For instance, technological invasion means that employees will generally deal with work-related issues while at home, limiting their ability to be as involved as they wish and having a negative impact on their personal lives. Similarly, techno-complexity implies that employees must "invest time and cognitive effort" in learning "how to use" new tools and "and staying current" on existing ones (Brivio et al., 2018: 1-2). This investment, whether at work or in leisure, may reduce their effectiveness in important work and life roles, thereby affecting their assessment of their ability to balance work and family life. Given the discourse above, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance.

Moderation analysis: “job self-efficacy” as a mitigating factor. It is important to investigate what factors could moderate the negative relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance because technostress creators are unavoidable in modern work environments such as office, work field, media studio, newsroom and even classroom especially for teachers having to use ICTs to teach (a trend which is increasingly becoming inevitable more so because of the necessity for people to maintain social distancing as a “new normal” way of life which has been occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic). This study focuses on personal resources because, personal resources have received less research attention than job resources, particularly in the technostress literature, as noted by Bakker and Demerouti (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017), Apooyin (Apooyin, 2014), and Lehmann-Jacobsen (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017). There is evidence that certain job resources, such as the quality of leader-member interaction, can mitigate the positive relationship between technological stressors (i.e., “technology overload”) and work-family conflict (see Harris et al., 2015). However, little attention has been paid to the role of personal resources in research. Self-efficacy was examined in this study as a potential moderator (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or complete a specific task (Bandura, 1997). Thus, self-efficacy is a critical personal resource (ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, 2012), serving as a moderator in stressor-strain relationships (Siu et al., 2005).

Additionally, this study focuses on job self-efficacy because specific forms of self-efficacy have a higher predictive value than general self-efficacy (Ma et al., 2021), and technostress creators are job-level demands. According to Schaubroeck et al. (Schaubroeck et al., 2000: 515), “job self-efficacy refers to people’s beliefs about their abilities to exert control over” various job situations and events that contribute to their job performance success. For two reasons, this study proposes that job self-efficacy acts as a moderator in the relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance.

To begin, job self-efficacy may act as a buffer against the negative impact of technological stress on employees’ work-life balance. Job self-efficacy reflects employees’ beliefs about their ability to perform job-related responsibilities and tasks (Jex et al., 2001); thus, job stressors such as technostress creators are likely to pose less of a threat to workers with higher job self-efficacy. Not having to invest additional time or effort in response to technological invasion or complexity may protect workers with higher job self-efficacy from resource depletion and, ultimately, diminished work-life balance (ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, 2012).

Two, self-efficacy in one’s job may aid in coping with technostress creators. Employees with a higher sense of job self-efficacy are more likely to use effective coping mechanisms when confronted with job stressors (ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, 2012). Employees with a higher sense of self-efficacy are more likely to employ problem-solving strategies, whereas those with a lower sense of self-efficacy are more likely to employ emotion-focused strategies (Jex et al., 2001). Coping strategies that are problem-focused are more effective at facilitating adaptive responses to job stressors (Kinicki, Latack, 1990).

This study, therefore, presumes that technostress creators are harmful to work-life balance and adaptive responses will be facilitated by job self-efficacy to technostress creators like active coping such and problem solving. Thus, “the negative effects of techno-stressors on work-life balance” may be attenuated. Hence, this study formulated the following hypothesis:

H2: The relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance is moderated by job self-efficacy.

Discussion of the results. The results supported the negative relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance, and the moderating effect of job self-efficacy. That is to say that “job self-efficacy” buffered impacts of technostress creators that are negative on “work-life balance”. Because the study is based on a cross-sectional research design, the possibility for the researchers to establish causal relationships among the variables was, however, limited because of that. Hypothesised association between technostress creators and work-life balance that was negative was tested and a boundary condition of the relationship was identified. The result is marvelous; indicating that as a personal resource “job self-efficacy” can buffer the impact of technostress creators that was negative on the work life balance of employees.

Implications of the results for theory. Several theoretical contributions have been made by this study. Firstly, it enriches research on technostress by expanding people’s knowledge of the

effect of technostress creators on the extra-work domains of employees. The existing research and literature centre on the effect of technostress creators on domains related to work with little attention to “work-life balance”. Exploring the relationship between technostress creators and work-life balance can enrich the world’s knowledge regarding the extensive effects of technostress creators on employees using information and information and communication technologies at work. Although exploratory studies were conducted on the correlation of technostress creators with work-family conflict (see [Harris et al., 2011](#); [Harris et al., 2015](#)), work-life balance is different from work-family conflict “because the former embraces various life roles beyond work roles” ([Casper et al., 2018](#) in [Ma et al., 2021](#)). Thus, research on problems surrounding seeking to understand balancing work and life uniquely contributes to the literature on technostress. Moreover, this study considers all five dimensions of technostress creators. The unfortunate thing is that past studies had excluded others like “techno-invasion” and “techno-overload” ([Ma et al., 2021](#)). Encompassing the whole “scope” of technostress creators causes a better understanding of “their effect on work-life imbalance” as [Gaudioso and colleagues \(Gaudioso et al., 2017\)](#) corroborate.

Secondly, the findings of the present study have contributed toward improving the Job Demands-Resources literature through examining what buffering effect “personal resources” ([Bakker, Demerouti, 2017](#)) have on the relationship between technostress causers and “work-life balance.” Thus, it contributes to our understanding of the individual employee who are more likely to experience higher negative impact of work-life balance because of technostress creators. This study discovered that a critical personal resource known as “job self-efficacy” mitigates the negative effects of technostress creators on “work-life balance”.

Practical implications of the results. The findings of this study have several implications for practice regarding how to assist workers who use ICTs in coping with technostress creators, as the rate of ICT use at work continues to increase in tandem with poor services (e.g., electricity supply, broadband internet service, low remuneration, exorbitant high-end latest technologies, among others), particularly in developing countries.

To begin, the findings imply that workers need to be mindful of the influence of technostress creators on their pursuit of a comfortable work-and-life experience. Because ICT development and advancement are common in many enterprises, managers/employers must consider technology when caring for their employees and, as a result, their performance thus, paving the way for an employee-conscious organisation culture. Organisational culture is the set of processes, professional practices, explicit and implicit rules, organisation, agreements, and ways of thinking shared within an organisation. When these elements are linked to workplace hazards and safety, they help to define a specific safety culture within an organisation, which [Von Thaden and Gibbons \(Von Thaden, Gibbons, 2008\)](#) define as “every member of every group and at every level of the organisation placing a lasting value on worker priorities and public safety.” It shows how individuals and groups adhere to personal responsibility for safety, work to maintain, improve, and communicate safety information, strive to learn, adapt, and actively modify (individually and organisationally) behaviour based on lessons learned from errors, and take responsibility for or strive to be honoured in conjunction with these values” ([Galimberti, 2014](#)).

Furthermore, [Apooyin \(Apooyin, 2014\)](#), and [Richardson \(Richardson, 2017\)](#) suggest, the findings underscore the importance of organisations exercising caution when recommending, presenting and/or managing novel work technologies for use in daily organisational routine businesses. [Turner \(Turner, 2016](#) cited in [Ma et al., 2021](#)) mentions the German company Volkswagen AG as an example of a company that disables work emails after regular business times. Policies like that one can play a big role in managing the level of technostress and mitigating its impact on workers, something that can encourage employees to develop positive work attitude toward achieving eventful work-life balance.

Prioritising and caring about workers’ “premium goal” of achieving a work-life balance amidst stressful technology-dominated work environment helps toward improvement of their well-being, health, and safety as well as their organisations’. Research has shown that work-life balance yields positive organisational results such as increased employee “engagement and commitment” ([Apooyin, 2014](#); [Ma et al., 2021](#)). Prioritising employees’ comfortable work-and-life experience could aid employers in retaining talented employees. According to a [Marie \(Marie, 2019\)](#) survey, 62.4 % of technologically savvy employees leave their jobs in search of a better work-life balance, particularly in developed societies. Thus, organisations would greatly benefit from assisting their employees in coping with techno stressors to avoid work-life imbalance.

The moderating effect of job self-efficacy illuminates the strategies for mitigating the negative effects of technostress creators. Technostress creators are an unavoidable part of modern workplaces because of the innovative dynamism accelerated developments in organisational information and communication technologies coupled with rising intense rivalry between organisations. By considering the finding about the regulatory role of self confidence in work using technology, or “job self-efficacy”, organisations can deal with unavoidable technostress generators through motivating employees who have a high sense of job self-confidence for consideration for tougher ICT-based jobs, because the findings of the present study show that workers who possess higher levels of job self-confidence are less likely to be stressed down by technostress creators.

Also, organisations could boost the job self-confidence of their employees through training. Given that past research (e.g., [Bandura, 1997](#); [Ma et al., 2021](#)) has also demonstrated that employee job self-confidence, or “job self-efficacy” can be enhanced through training, drill programmes meant to raise workers’ job self-confidence may be an efficient means of helping workers to cope with technostress creators, balancing work, and life, and disseminating credible and verifiable information for a better society. Additionally, [Apooyin \(Apooyin, 2014\)](#), [Ma et al. \(Ma et al., 2021\)](#) suggest that organisations could provide “stress management intervention” programmes aimed at assisting workers experiencing stressful “work-life balance caused by organisational techno stressors.

Although ICT has is a critical factor in the creation of technostress for, it can be of immense benefits to both the workers and workplace. Organisations such as news media and others, their employees, and ICT experts can collaborate in the design of new ICTs or the modification of existing systems to include business processes that support these technologies, thus giving rise to positive ICT. Positive ICTs will stimulate rather than prevent, without proper cooperation. ICTs must be designed in accordance with the organisational safety culture to which it belongs and contributes for any technology or process introduced within an organisation. In this context, for example, organisational culture actions have been suggested to regulate the relationship between organisational outcomes and ICT use ([Brivio et al., 2018](#); [Ma et al., 2021](#)). Another example is the shift to the Web 2.0 model necessitates gradually abandoning entrepreneurial processes based on Web 1.0 tools such as email and replacing them with 2.0 tools (such as social media, blogs). This shift may present an opportunity to assess current ICT and related work processes to develop and improve new working methods and technologies to facilitate work-life balance for teaming employees who constantly use ICTs at work. Work processes and techniques based on positive ICTs that are collaboratively designed, on the other hand, make employees’ jobs easier, more satisfying, and less stressful thus, paving the way for a positive work-life balance. Employees may be more engaged in collaborative work processes, as a result. Their work-life balance will be maintained as well as technological invasion, technological stress, and technological addiction will be avoided with well-designed ICT operations (see [Brivio et al., 2018](#)).

4. Results

The descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS version 23, and [Table 3](#) (see [Appendix](#)) shows the results of the study.

Table 1. The Model Comparison Results

No	Models	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSA	SRMR	χ^2	df
1	One-factor Model	2320.55	209	.413	.413	.179	.143	1854.80***	10
2	Three-factor Model (i)	734.43	203	.866	.848	.088	.091	268.86***	4
3	Three-factor Model (ii)	963.64	203	.109	.782	.109	.083	497.89***	4
4	Four-factor Model	355.65	296	.909	.933	.077	.079		

[Table 1](#) contains the data of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which, to test the measurement model was first analysed in Mplus v. 7.0 based on Muthen and Muthen’s ([Muthen, Muthen, 2012](#)) recommendation as cited in [Ma et al. \(Ma et al., 2021\)](#). The scores of the various indices are as follows: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Turker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean-Squared

Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardised Root-Mean Residual (SRMR). The data fit which was as follows: [$\chi^2 = 355.65$, $df = 296$, $CFI = .91$, $TLI = .93$, $RMSEA = .08$ and $SRMR = .08$] was confirmed for the outcome of the four-factor model, indicating a significant loading for all the items. So, it should be noted that the “four-factor” model is the appropriate for the data considering the measurement models comparison (see Table 1) and that, based on the outcomes, the measurements were valid.

Furthermore, the one-factor model consists of “Workload + Technostress creators + Job self-efficacy + Work-life balance”; the three-factor (i) model consists of “Workload + Technostress creators, Job self-efficacy + Work-life balance”; the three-factor model (ii) consists of “Workload, Technostress creators + Job self-efficacy, Work-life balance”; while the model with the four factors consists of Technostress creators: “Workload”, “Job self-efficacy” and “Work-life balance”.

Hypotheses testing. Then general linear modelling analyses was conducted using SPSS v. 23 to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Technostress creators were significantly associated with work-life balance in a negative way: [$\beta = -.227$, $t = -4.264$, $p < .05$]. Regard the first step (step i) if controlling for workload as shown in Tab. 2. Thus, H1 is accepted. Hence, the data in Table 2 confirms the association of work-life balance with technostress creators and job self-efficacy in a significant way: [$\beta = .248$, $t = 3.784$, $p < .01$]. For this, regard the second step (step ii) in the Table 2.

Employing the analytical test of “simple slope”, the present study discovered that the association between “technostress creators” and “work-life balance” which was negative significantly favours employees that relatively have lower levels of work confidence using technology (“lower job self-efficacy levels”): [$-1SD$, $\beta = -.423$, $t = -5.400$, $P < .01$], whereas the relationship was not significant for employees with higher levels of working confidence using technology (“higher job self-efficacy levels”: [$+1SD$, $\beta = -.012$, $t = -.163$, $P < .05$). Hence, H2 is accepted.

These results imply that enterprises such as news media and others, their employees, and technology experts must collaborate in the design of new ICTs or the modification of existing systems to include business processes that support these technologies, thus giving rise to positive ICT capable of facilitating a work-life balance for employees. Positive ICTs will stimulate rather than prevent, without proper cooperation, work-life balance. ICTs must be designed in accordance with the organisational safety culture to which it belongs and contributes for any technology or process introduced within an organisation.

Table 2. Linear Regression Analysis Results (n = 297)

Predictors	Work-Life Balance			
	Step (i)	Step (ii)	Step (iii)	Step (iv)
Variables of Control				
AG	-.059	-.050	-.061	-.057
GDR	.022	.041	.023	.011
MS	-.245**	-.241**	-.206**	-.206**
Education qualification	-.050	-.040	-.037	-.026
Occupation	-.048	-.062	-.010	-.010
Number of hours in a week	-.225**	-.247**	-.231**	-.231**
Workload	-.238**	-.264**	-.073	-.075
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Technostress creators	-.227*	-.141**	-.074	-.071
<i>Moderator</i>				
Job self-efficacy		.191**	.085	.081
<i>Interactions</i>				
Technostress creators x Job self-efficacy		.248**	.089	.086
R2 (adjusted)	.200	.254	.395	.393
ΔR^2	.012*	.017**	.138**	.000
F	10.83**	11.75**	19.69**	18.004**
ΔF	4.63*	7.143**	71.756**	.129

Notes: The scores are expressed in “standardised beta coefficients”: [$*P < .05$, $**P < .01$]

5. Conclusion

The endeavour to seek to strike a balance between work and non-work life could be a valuable ambition for all categories of workers, especially those who use myriads of information and communication technologies with varying degrees of advancement on a regular basis, and managers. Though work-related technologies are nowadays speedily becoming sophisticated leading to the increasingly blurring of “work-life balance for many employees, maintaining a work-life balance continues to become difficult for workers using technologies, a phenomenon that may have a negative impact on their job performance. According to the findings of this study, technostress creators are detrimental to workers’ work-life balance. It is hoped that this research will spur the development of additional studies using a Job Demands-Resources Theory perspective (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017) to add to the body of knowledge on technostress and work-life balance among non-working groups such as students. Thus, this study discovered that technological pressures have become significant sources of pressure, strain, anxiety, worry and stress in contemporary organisations; technostress factors are negatively associated with employees’ “work-life balance”; and that employees with a high level of self-efficacy function are less susceptible to techno pressures.

This paper argues that technostress is a symptom of a safety culture that does not exist. It is self-evident that any intervention to prevent or reduce technological stress from the excessive or addictive use of ICTs at work must first acknowledge that it is a factor affecting organisational performance. After becoming familiar with technostress, the employer can concentrate on the work, technological, and communication processes involved in this situation. Employees will save time and effort by using well-designed processes and ICTs, preserving their work-life balance, and avoiding “techno-invasion, techno-strain, and “technoaddiction” as Brivio et al. (Brivio et al., 2018: 3) notes. This paper further contends that even though ICT, or technology has been shown to be a critical factor in the creation of technostress for employees (e.g., journalists who use various ICT devices and software in newsgathering, processing, and dissemination), it can help the workers and workplace. Enterprises such as news media and others, their employees, and technology experts can collaborate in the design of new ICTs or the modification of existing systems to include business processes that support these technologies, thus giving rise to positive ICT. Positive ICTs will stimulate rather than prevent, without proper cooperation, a work-life balance. ICTs must be designed in accordance with the organisational safety culture to which it belongs and contributes for any technology or process introduced within an organisation.

In conclusion, this study has made contribution to the technostress research in three ways as follows. First, this study is one of the few to demonstrate the presence of a correlation of technostress creators with work-life balance. Important implications are obtainable in the findings of the present study because of significantly salient role technology has and plays in contemporary organisations and the struggle of workers “to maintain a work-life balance” respectively. Also, this study identifies “a key boundary condition” for the relationship between technostress creators and the balancing of employees’ work life, or “work-life balance”. To be precise, it shows that individual workers’ belief in their abilities to deal with technostress (“job self-efficacy”, in this case) may influence their experience in the workplace and home regarding “work-life balance” in the face of technostress creators. Concisely, the present study has filled an important literature void in addition to providing a further understanding of the way employees should go in for work and life comfort despite having to encounter unavoidable technostress because of the use of modern technologies in contemporary organisations.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research: This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the data. The employment of data collected via self-report or self-administrated questionnaire method increases the likelihood of “common method bias” (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, the bias could be mitigated “when interactive effects” are considered (e.g., Grzywacz, Carlson, 2007; Ma et al., 2021). Additionally, because of the replication in this study of the significant interactive effect of job self-efficacy and techno stressors on “work-life balance” (as was replicated in a study conducted by Ma et al., 2021), future research should seek to collect data from a variety of sources, including students. For example, Tarafdar et al. (Tarafdar et al., 2007) discovered a negative relationship between technostress creators and productivity among American samples, whereas Tu et al. (Tu et al., 2005) discovered no such relationship between technostress creators and productivity among Chinese samples. Also, further research should be conducted to determine whether these findings are replicable in other contexts

and wider and diverse groups because the present study focused on practicing journalists who use ICTs at work only. Finally, this study examined self-efficacy in the workplace, a critical personal resource. Other personal resources, such as optimism, personal safety, and self-esteem, may play a moderating role in future research (also see [Ma et al., 2021](#)).

6. Acknowledgements

This study received support from University of Maiduguri, Nigeria and TNUS – Thai Nguyen University of Science, Vietnam. The authors express sincere appreciation to the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri and the Faculty of Journalism, Communications and Literature, Thai Nguyen University of Science for their academic and moral support.

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Appendix

Table 3. The Results of the Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Inter-Correlations (n=297)

S/No	Variables	“Mean”	“SD”	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix	x
1	AG	29.72	2.67	-									
2	GDR	1.22	.56	-.13*	-								
3	Marital status	1.50	.50	-	.04	-							
4	Education qualification	1.22	.42	.49**	-.02	-	-						
5	Job tenure	33.71	28.27	.32**	.06	-.25	-	-					
6	Hours per week	45.34	11.44	.12*	-.10	-.08	.06	.14*	-				
7	Workload	2.12	.74	-.07	-.08	.01	-.10	.11	.31**	(.90)			
8	Technostress creators	4.38	.87	.04	-.05	-.09	-.05	.02	.18**	.31**	(.75)		
9	Job self-efficacy	4.59	.75	.02	-.09	-.06	-.02	.06	.10	.11	-.01	(.87)	
10	Work-life balance	4.79	1.15	.02	.05	-	.01	-.05	-	-	-	.16**	(.90)
						.17**			.32**	.34**	.21**		

Notes: SD = standard deviation; GDR = Gender: [i = male, ii = female]; Marital status: [i = married, ii = single]; Educational qualification: [i = first degree or lower, ii = MSc or higher]; Occupation was computed on a monthly basis. Hours per week were computed on an hourly basis; [*P < .05*, **P < .01, two-tailed test]

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 354-363

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.354
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Information Resilience and Information Security as Indicators of the Level of Development of Information and Media Literacy

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the use of the terms 'information resilience' and 'social resilience' in the context of national resilience strategies. It is shown that information resilience reflects transformations in the system of international relations and the domestic policies of different countries, as well as prospects for the development of information-and-communications technology and its impact on social processes.

Based on the results of a research project implemented as part of this study, a hypothesis was formulated which stated that the majority of the Ukrainian people are not aware of the reality of information threats at this time. This hypothesis was supported based on an analysis of empirical data collected for the study.

The study helped identify gaps between government and society in Ukraine in the following five key areas: values, goals, capabilities, motivation, and communication. It is shown that these gaps have had a significant impact on the overall level of information and national resilience in Ukraine.

The information resilience of Ukrainian society was analyzed at the local level (through the example of Ukraine's eastern and southeastern regions).

It is suggested that the issue of social and information resilience is of particular relevance in the context of information and media literacy amongst the population, especially within small communities.

In this context, an analysis was conducted of the information space of Ukraine's eastern and southeastern regions. The resulting conclusion was that the level of media culture in Ukraine, determined by a number of both subjective and objective factors, is relatively low at this time.

Keywords: resilience, information resilience, information literacy, media literacy, propaganda, sustainable development, education, corruption, cybercrime, democratic institution, political decision-making, democratic deficit, democratization.

1. Introduction

The subject of resilience owes its relevance to the significant transformations in how we see today the role of social institutions in safeguarding the security of the State. The State can no longer count solely on the security and defense sector, as it has traditionally done, but has to engage active members of society in creating resilient social establishments. National, social, and information resilience are increasingly becoming in-demand as concepts through which

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researchers try to express the changing reality in the socio-political and military spheres, on one hand, and bring out a novel perspective for assessing the impact of information-and-communications technology on social reality, on the other.

Information security and information resilience are directly linked with the level of development of information and media literacy in society. In Ukraine, the concept of national resilience is being gradually cultivated as an alternative to the traditional approach to managing national security. At present, the people of Ukraine are inclined to trust civil society organizations more than government, although the concept of national resilience implies building relations of trust between government and civil society (Teperik et al., 2018: 6-8). Without question, it is in the regions, at the level of local self-government, that a source of national resilience ought to be sought and developed.

Central to national security and resilience are information security and information resilience, determined by the level of development of information and media literacy.

Currently, there are gaps in national resilience in Ukraine across the following key areas:

- 1) cognitive environment;
- 2) communications;
- 3) digital environment;
- 4) information environment (Teperik et al., 2021: 2).

At the level of regulatory documents adopted in Ukraine, there is an insufficient level of development of media culture in today's Ukrainian society. In this context, one of the key objectives to be achieved under Ukraine's Information Security Doctrine (adopted in 2017) is "to develop the media culture of society and foster a socially responsible media community" (Doktryna, 2017).

Thus, there is a need in this regard to both monitor and assess the level of development of information and media literacy in Ukrainian society and cultivate and develop knowledge and skills relevant to this area.

2. Materials and methods

Use was made of both qualitative and quantitative strategies of inquiry. A desk study was carried out to investigate and summarize existing research that surrounds the topic of resilience, including analytical research, surveys, reports, etc. The research reviewed as part of this study tends to investigate social resilience at the following key three interrelated levels: global, national, and local (regional). With this in mind, the study involved exploring the key aspects and mechanisms of resilience at the different levels.

Based on the results of the desk study, the following steps were undertaken:

- 1) analysis of key factors in the solidarization and consolidation of Ukrainian society, with a focus on the characteristics of how they manifest themselves in Ukraine's regions;
- 2) analysis of existing scholarly models for fostering and ensuring social and information resilience, including in a climate of transformations in particular spheres of life;
- 3) formulation of the hypothesis and the task for a quantitative study focused on identifying potential risks and threats to social resilience in the context of information resilience and information security.

To identify and explore the factors influencing the process of fostering social and information resilience at the level of particular communities, field research was conducted, which included the following:

- 1) focus groups;
- 2) expert interviews;
- 3) analytical workshops;
- 4) sociological survey;
- 5) analysis of public information.

The data collected helped identify a set of relevant vulnerabilities and gain an insight into the population's assessment thereof. This helped come up with a prediction of the risks to information security at the regional level with the factors influencing social and information resilience in mind.

The analysis of public information and monitoring of social networks and media outlets helped determine the nature of the latest information flows and gain a better insight into current patterns of information resilience and into how it is being ensured in Ukraine at present.

The study was inspired by a hypothesis that, amid current global challenges to security (e.g., COVID-19, economic turbulence, increasing number of cyber-attacks, etc.), people tend not to interpret information threats as a real threat. The pandemic, material difficulties, and poverty are

having an immediate and obvious effect on physical space, with the consequences of these threats being felt by just about any person on the planet. By contrast, information threats are latent in nature. Their destructive effect is delayed in time. That, however, does not make them less dangerous.

In this context, of particular importance is boosting the level of information and media literacy to ensure social and information resilience in Ukrainian society.

3. Discussion

In the literature, the term ‘resilience’ is used in a number of contexts. The concept has already become multidisciplinary, although there is still some variation among researchers in how it is construed depending on the context and area of focus. The term was first used in research on ecosystems. Specifically, C.S. Holling construes resilience as “the measure of the ability of an ecosystem to absorb changes and still persist” (Holling, 1973: 2).

The term is also popular in psychology, where it is generally viewed as the capacity for successful adaptation to adversity and stressful life events (Sonn, Fisher, 1998: 3). S.W. Gilbert defines resilience as “the ability to minimize the costs of a disaster, to return to a state as good as or better than the status quo ante, and to do so in the shortest feasible time” (Gilbert, 2010: 2).

Academic interest in resilience as a concept grew after the September 11 attacks in the US. According to researchers B. Allenby and J. Fink, “developing enhanced resiliency is a rational strategy when the probability and specifics of a particular challenge are difficult to define” (Allenby, Fink, 2005).

Researchers S. Spilerman and G. Stecklov argue that “systems experiencing one catastrophic event exhibit different adaptive behaviors as opposed to systems that try to cope with chronic stressors” (Spilerman, Stecklov, 2009: 169).

In the US, Israel, and the UK, an active component of antiterrorist campaigns is law enforcement agencies enlisting the help of citizens. In Israel and the US, a great deal of attention is given to the psychological aspects of the development of society’s resilience to terrorist threats, which is aimed at minimizing the anxiety and vulnerability associated with the direct or indirect impact of terrorist attacks. Estonia is actively developing mechanisms of social resilience to destructive influence through information and communications (Reznikova, 2019).

A concept that has taken on particular relevance in recent years is social resilience, which tends to be associated with the resilience of individuals or groups. The term was first used by W.N. Adger, who defines it as “the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure” (Adger, 2000: 361).

Some researchers have focused on exploring human systems in terms of the ability to not only react to relevant threats but anticipate and predict them – “the capacity to absorb ... change – the ability to deal with surprises or cope with disturbances” (Glavovic et al., 2003; 291).

In terms of the possibility of utilizing the experience of overcoming crises in the past to minimize losses in the future, social resilience can also be construed as “the capacity of actors to access capitals in order to – not only cope with and adjust to adverse conditions (that is, reactive capacity) – but also search for and create options (that is, proactive capacity) and thus develop increased competence (that is, positive outcomes) in dealing with a threat” (Obrist et al., 2010: 289).

Researchers M. Ganor and Y. Ben-Lavy have identified several key components of social resilience, which include the following:

- 1) communication, meaning the need to inform people of the situation, threats, risks, and available support services;
- 2) cooperation, meaning being responsible on a local level, i.e. relying on ourselves rather than waiting for outside help;
- 3) cohesion, meaning being sensitive and mutually supportive of one another;
- 4) coping, meaning the ability to take action in a consolidated manner using various mechanisms designed to deal with threats;
- 5) credibility, meaning there is a greater need for grassroots leadership.

The researchers argue that “community resilience does not have to be specifically created [as] it grows by itself”, but, at the same time, “resilience cannot be achieved overnight” (Ganor, Ben-Lavy, 2003: 105-108).

Social resilience can also be viewed triunely – as the ability of individuals or groups to cope with difficulties, adapt to challenges based on historical experience, and effect transformation, i.e. create institutions designed to ensure individual wellbeing and safety.

There is a study suggesting that community resilience emerges from the following four primary sets of networked resources:

- 1) economic development (level and diversity of economic resources; equity of resource distribution; fairness of risk and vulnerability to hazards);
- 2) social capital (social support; social embeddedness; organizational linkages and cooperation; citizen participation; sense of community; attachment to place);
- 3) community competence (community action; critical reflection and problem solving skills; flexibility and creativity; collective efficacy; political partnerships);
- 4) information and communication (narratives; responsible media; skills and infrastructure; trusted sources of information) (Norris et al., 2008).

Thus, social resilience engages the internal resources and capabilities of society (e.g., skills, relationships, assets, values, norms, etc.) that have been accumulated over a long period of time and in areas that may seem to have little to do with resilience. Social resilience is often viewed as society's resources and capabilities.

Given the need to analyze the resources that social resilience relies on, it may be worth taking account of the key components of resilience in investigating issues relating to information literacy in the context of information resilience and information security.

Social resilience ought to be viewed in the context of national resilience. Research in this area has produced numerous approaches to and methodologies for defining this concept. Specifically, according to a team of researchers led by G. Ben-Dor, national resilience, as a crucial component of national security, "comprises four major components – patriotism, optimism, social integration, and trust in political and public institutions – which should be retained in times of intractable conflict" (Ben-Dor et al., 2002).

In addition, national resilience is viewed as a dynamic construct that "changes in response to contextual changes" (Fletcher, Sarkar, 2013) and as a phenomenon that depends directly on the sociocultural characteristics of a community; national resilience is positively correlated with community resilience and is predicted by level of religiosity, age, and level of community cohesiveness (Kimhi et al., 2013).

The rapid development of information-and-communications technology signals a need to conceptualize information space and its security. In this respect, information resilience could be defined "as the process of reducing the vulnerabilities affecting information quality through the identification of capabilities and requirements" (Gunderson, 2000).

Information resilience, "as the ability of a network to provide users with continued access to information in the face of various faults and challenges to normal operation", is, alongside a few other forms, a crucial component of social resilience and national resilience in general (Rak et al., 2017).

What is particularly crucial in terms of ensuring information resilience is "the assurance that the communication system will enable the user to access and exchange the relevant information regardless of the failure scenario" (Avizienis et al., 2004).

According to researcher O.O. Reznikova, who has investigated the fundamental difference between national security and national resilience, "within the system of national resilience, the line between the terms 'subject' and 'object' is thin" (Reznikova, 2018: 172). Government, civil society, and business institutions cease to be the object of threats – they will have the qualities and capabilities needed to counter adverse phenomena and processes thanks to their own resilience.

It is important to note that resilience and resistance are two different concepts. Resistance is often construed as a system's capacity to contain the immediate effects of a stressful situation and recover to a state that is similar to the one before the disturbance (Maru, 2010). Resistance can cause a prolonged dysfunction of a system in a changed environment. For its own part, resilience is "the ability to find unknown inner strengths and resources in order to cope effectively with long-term pressures", and is, therefore, "the ultimate measure of adaptation and flexibility" (Ganor, Ben-Lavy, 2003: 106).

4. Results

While they are interrelated spatially, the difference between national security and resilience is obvious. Security is preventive and proactive, whereas resilience is a combination of proactive and reactive measures directed at minimizing the effects of a threat rather than avoiding them.

The present study employs a broad interpretation of 'resilience', which it defines as the ability to withstand external shocks without loss of integrity and functionality.

As part of this study, in association with the International Center for Defense and Security (Tallinn, Estonia) and the Research Center for Regional Security (Sumy, Ukraine), a research project, entitled ‘Resilient Ukraine’, was carried out to explore the influence of civil society’s institutions on Ukraine’s national security (Teperik et al., 2018; Teperik D. et al., 2021).

The project helped identify gaps between government and society in Ukraine in the following five key areas:

- 1) values;
- 2) goals;
- 3) capabilities;
- 4) motivation;
- 5) communication.

These gaps are hindering the achievement of unity of effort and precluding work in synergy aimed at countering hybrid threats to Ukraine’s national and information security. In this regard, a set of recommendations were brought forward to address the need to invest in the development of social and human capital, cultivate grassroots leadership, foster cooperation between communities, and develop new approaches to coordinating relationships at the level of state and local government.

A key focus was on information resilience at the local level (at the level of territorial communities).

Once again, social resilience is about the ability of citizens to self-organize at the local level, adapt to external challenges, and build vertical and horizontal relationships. The issue of social resilience is of particular relevance in the context of information and media literacy amongst the population, especially within small communities.

The level of information resilience, based on the level of development of information and media literacy, was assessed as part of this study in the following seven regional centers of Ukraine: Sumy, Odessa, Zaporozhye, Kherson, Nikolaev, Kharkov, and Mariupol.

A key objective was to monitor the concerns and vulnerabilities of Ukraine’s citizens (Table 1).

Table 1. Vulnerabilities. Perception of threats, %

	Sumy	Kharkov	Mariupol	Zaporozhye	Nikolaev	Kherson	Odessa
Worsening economic situation	67	71.2	81	61.8	68.5	71	83.9
Epidemics	53.7	45.7	60.3	60.3	56	41.2	58.8
Environmental issues	18.5	15.4	33.3	47.2	20.8	13.5	25.1
Cultural and educational restrictions	17.8	12.6	11.6	33.2	24.2	14.8	17.1
Crime and corruption	32.2	38.6	20.2	47	41	38.8	55.3
False information in the media	19.5	16.2	16.3	23.2	14	15.2	16.6
I am not frightened of anything	7.2	2	2.2	17	10.8	3.2	4

As evidenced in Table 1, the people of Ukraine are primarily concerned about the economy, health amid the pandemic, and the levels of crime and corruption in the country. What is worrying is the relatively low level of critical perception of information provided by the media – only 15.6 % of Ukraine’s citizens were found to see danger in that. This is a very low figure, which is testimony to the fact that many Ukrainians readily succumb to propaganda and manipulation nowadays. It also attests to an overall low level of information resilience in Ukrainian society.

On the other hand, this result was conceptualized in the context of the more “vital” issues, i.e. the ones that the respondents were concerned about the most. Of importance in this respect is the issue of one’s critical perception and conceptualization of what is going on, which, in a sense, also predetermines the factors influencing the making of decisions, including political ones.

With this in mind, an index of social resilience was computed (Table 2).

Table 2. Resilience parameters

	Material resources	Professionalism	Motivation	Communication	Index
Sumy	14.4	14.4	16.9	18.3	16
Kharkov	16.8	11	10.5	10.2	12.1
Mariupol	9.7	12.6	12.5	10	11.2
Zaporozhye	30	12.5	14.6	15.5	18.1
Nikolaev	30.1	9.2	9.8	8.5	14.4
Kherson	5.9	4.8	7.1	9.2	6.8
Odessa	13.8	10.7	9.1	9.2	10.7

The study's methodology for computing social resilience parameters was based on a set of indicators grouped into the following four categories: (1) material resources (e.g., investment in the region, average pay, capital investment and projects, etc.), (2) professionalism (e.g., professional workers per unit of population, availability of research institutions, laboratories, etc., stability and predictability in staffing, development of business and entrepreneurship, etc.), (3) motivation (e.g., level of trust in local and state government, development of horizontal and vertical social relationships, etc.), and (4) communication (e.g., degree of development of civil society, activity of civil society's institutions, collaboration between local authorities and civil society, etc.).

Based on an analysis of open data and public information, the index was computed for each parameter, and an overall index of social resilience was derived (using a 100-point scale). As evidenced in [Table 2](#), the index of resilience varies significantly across the regions. The figures attest to an overall low level of development of social resilience in Ukraine, which may be attributed to the idiosyncrasies of the development of the Ukrainian state and society.

In assessing the level of information literacy, and, as a consequence, the level of information resilience, in Ukraine, it may be worth taking a look at the sources of information that generate content consumed by Ukraine's citizens ([Table 3](#)).

Table 3. Population coverage by TV channels in Ukraine, %

TV channel	Sumy	Kharkov	Mariupol	Zaporozhye	Nikolaev	Kherson	Odessa
Inter	34.4	25.8	35.6	18.1	27.5	31.2	17.9
1+1	36.9	20.8	15.3	36.3	36.5	35.2	23.5
Priamyi	4.7	5.8	2.2	4.3	4	4.3	6.3
STB	17.7	17.3	13.3	22.7	9.5	16	13.6
Novyi Kanal	10.7	6	4.7	10.6	4.3	6.8	3
ICTV	14.7	17.5	6.9	23.7	15.2	21	16.7
TRK-Ukraina	18.5	10	14.3	12.6	18.2	17.2	11.6
Ukraina-24	5.2	9.3	6.4	7.8	15.5	8.8	11.4
Pershyi Nezaleznyi	5.7	4	13.1	1.8	3	1.3	4.3
Nash	2.2	13	13.8	2.8	5.2	2	7.8
ESPRESSO	2	3.8	0.5	2.5	0.5	0	4.5
K-1	2.5	1.5	1.2	0.3	0	0.5	0.3
NTN	3.7	4	2.2	0.5	1.5	2.2	1.5
5-Kanal	7.2	2.8	1.5	1.3	0.7	1.3	3.3
Rehionalnyi Kanal	0.2	3	10.4	0.8	0.7	0.2	1.5
Rossiya-24	1.5	1.5	6.9	1.5	0	1	2.8
RTR	2.2	2.5	1.2	0.5	0.5	0	1.8
Pervyj Kanal (Russia)	0.7	3	1.7	1	0.5	0	2
I give preference to none	15	11.8	12.8	8.3	10.2	11.5	13.1
I do not watch television	14.5	29.3	22.7	29	24.2	14	31.3

Television and social networks were found to be the most popular information sources among Ukrainians at this time (80% and 40%, respectively). The high level of trust that the Ukrainian people have in information from TV channels (and the websites run by them) is an illustration of their current information preferences, especially given the latest news topics in the media (Moshniaha, Tymchenko, 2020).

In this respect, one should keep in mind the issue of the spread of false information, information of a manipulative nature, post-truth, etc. Of note is the fact that currently the overwhelming majority of TV channels in Ukraine belong to business establishments and oligarchical groups, which own media holdings and media groups (Kuznietsova, 2020).

Based on the study's findings, 2021 has seen an increase in the use of targeted journalism on TV channels in Ukraine (a rise of 39% compared to the first quarter of 2021). That said, a trend that continues is for commercial materials of a targeted nature, not political, to prevail, which may be attributed to the interelection period. There is an increase of almost double in materials of a targeted nature in favor of the companies, interests, and image of Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov (from 8% in the first quarter of 2021 to 20.8% in the third quarter). The largest share of targeted journalism in Ukraine has been aimed lately at boosting the ratings of current President Vladimir Zelensky (IMI, 2021). Table 3 illustrates the preferences of Ukraine's citizens in terms of their trust and confidence in the country's major TV channels (Table 3).

The average figures in terms of population coverage by Ukraine's major national TV channels are as follows: Inter – 27.2 %, 1+1 – 29.2 %, STB – 15.7 %, ICTV – 16.5 %, and TRK-Ukraine – 14.6 %. Ukraine's top national TV channels, which together currently hold the largest audience share in the country, are controlled by Ukrainian oligarchs or persons affiliated with them (e.g., 1+1 media – by Igor Kolomoisky, Inter Media Group – by Dmitry Firtash and Sergei Levochkin, StarLightMedia – by Victor Pinchuk, and the Ukraine media group – by Rinat Akhmetov) (Kuznietsova, 2020). This fact may suggest that media content on these channels is politically and commercially motivated with a clear orientation toward manipulation and targeted journalism. This, in turn, impacts on the structure and form of consumption and assimilation of this kind of information, as well as the way it is conceptualized and evaluated.

An analysis of the information space of the region under examination indicates that it is conservative and is characterized by a certain degree of stagnation in terms of dealing with contemporary risks and challenges, which has determined its somewhat chaotic and sporadic reaction to changes and transformations currently taking place in socio-political life. At the same time, the region's media space is characterized by an inhomogeneous structure.

Its essential characteristic is that the dominant media resource in the region today is, as mentioned earlier, television, which is the primary source of information for nearly 80 % of its population. At the same time, just one-third of the population trusts information provided by national TV channels, and two-thirds are convinced that television has a negative impact on most people in Ukraine, turning them into zombies.

The determining factor in the choice of the traditional mass media is impartiality and neutrality – this indicator is viewed as decisive by residents of Ukraine's southern and eastern provinces (37 %). The decisive factor for another one-third of respondents was “the closeness of views voiced in the media” to their own beliefs, attitudes, and expectations.

The second most popular information channel in Ukraine is social networks: YouTube (especially among youth) – 59 % and Facebook – 47 %. Facebook and Instagram appear to be less popular in the east and south of Ukraine. At the same time, one is also witnessing a decentralization of social networks in Ukraine, with regional YouTube channels, Telegram channels, blogs, and websites increasingly performing in the top nationally in population coverage.

Based on the survey findings, a large portion (over 80 %) of the population in Ukraine's Zaporozhye, Nikolaev, and Kherson provinces views social networks as the main source of anxiety-producing information, which indicates a high degree of vulnerability to consuming unverified and false information, and, as a consequence, a low degree of information resilience. It is to be kept in mind in this context that social networks act today as one of the key resources for information-psychological influence on people's minds.

A telling fact in terms of information resilience in Ukraine is that 80 % of its citizens do not consume information content provided by TV channels, video blogs, and other sources dealing with issues of combating manipulation and fake news within information space. On top of that, nearly two-thirds of respondents were found to see no point in doing so. Only about 5 % of respondents

were found to deem this type of activity important and monitor media space from time to time for false information, propaganda, manipulation, and targeted journalism.

Thus, an essential characteristic of media consumption in the region at this time is the presence of vulnerabilities at the information, cognitive, and digital levels associated with an overall high level of trust in unverified and manipulative information. Based on the study's findings, this situation is in large part predetermined by the following two key factors: 1) the quality of media education and the level of information and media literacy (both low); 2) the thematic structure of media consumption.

The vulnerabilities of the population in Ukraine's eastern and southern provinces at the information, cognitive, and digital levels (e.g., misinformation, manipulation, propaganda, information-psychological influences of a destructive nature, etc.) are, in a sense, the consequence of unsystematic communication with central government, which determines the development of vulnerabilities at the communication level too. This signals a need to step up strategic communication in the region.

5. Conclusion

The hypothesis proposed in this research study stated that the majority of the Ukrainian people are not aware of the reality of threats communicated through various information channels and sources. At the very least, such threats are not perceived by most people in Ukraine today as high-priority. The majority of respondents to a survey conducted as part of this study chose to give priority to threats arising from material issues, challenges associated with the pandemic, issues facing the justice system, etc.

From the results of a research project implemented as part of this study, the following inferences were made:

- 1) present-day Ukrainian society is characterized by an insufficient level of development of media culture, which is particularly the case in small communities;
- 2) the low level of media culture in Ukraine is due to a number of both subjective and objective factors;
- 3) the key subjective factor identified is Ukrainians' individual preferences for source of information (with television still being a preferred source of information among the majority of respondents, despite Ukraine being a developed Internet market);
- 4) there are a high level of trust among Ukrainians in information they receive, a lack of practice and experience verifying it, and, as a consequence, a tendency to consume false information, to be vulnerable to manipulation, and to be easily susceptible to propaganda;
- 5) many in Ukraine have a poor idea of how the media sphere operates and how media content is distributed;
- 6) Ukraine has an oversimplified prioritizing scheme when it comes to information channels and sources, which mainly relies on unsubstantiated subjective concerns;
- 7) the key objective factors behind the low level of media culture in Ukraine today include the nation's information space being monopolized by oligarchical establishments, its media space having a highly inhomogeneous structure, and a lack of systematic strategic communication.

This state of affairs can be viewed as an inevitable consequence of the generally low level of information and media literacy among Ukrainians and of many of them having the disposition to consume viral media content due to a lack of critical thinking skills, fact checking skills, skills for working with open data, etc.

In the overall context, this is what is behind the low level of information resilience in both the social and personal dimensions, with the latter posing a particular concern given the psychological and other idiosyncrasies of how information is taken in at the level of individual consciousness.

The solution to this problem lies in the adoption by the State of a sound policy designed to ensure information resilience and information security via the mechanisms of an efficient and effective system of strategic communications; development of mechanisms for interaction between government and civil society's institutions; provision of integrated support for the development of mechanisms for media self-regulation based on the principles of social responsibility; enhancement of information and media literacy in society; facilitation of the training of a highly competent workforce for the media sphere.

6. Acknowledgements

This work was produced as part and based on the results of the project 'ICDS Development Cooperation Project 2016–2018' with support from the Research Center for Regional Security (Sumy, Ukraine) and the International Center for Defense and Security (Tallinn, Estonia).

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 364-375

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.364
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Manipulations in Contemporary German Press

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Abstract

On the basis of the previously developed theoretical model of media educational activity, which contributes to the development of media competence of the audience in the process of analyzing the reliability of media texts, the authors of the article suggest the following technology of countering media manipulations and false information, based on tasks related to answering the following challenging questions: What is the source of information? Can you verify the source? What is the main message? What facts are presented to support the main idea? Is there any information missing? What is the purpose of transmitting this message? Who will benefit if people accept this message as true? Who will lose? From whose point of view is the message presented? Does the message refer to logic or emotion? What effect is it aimed at? Does this media text allow you to share different points of view? What values and priorities are transmitted as a result? Based on this model and problematic issues, the authors analyzed 337 articles in German newspapers during the period 2020-2021. Meanwhile, it was found that 98.2 % of the texts (331 out of 337 articles) expressed negative opinions about Russia, about its politics and economy.

Keywords: media competence, students, teachers, media and information literacy, media education, media manipulations, models.

1. Introduction

The problem of media manipulations, in particular, in the press, is far from new, but in recent decades it has become significantly relevant due to the fact that the press of the 21st century is not only paper media, familiar in previous century, but also news Internet sites easily accessible to millions of readers. Thus, with the help of the Internet, the texts of modern newspapers attract the attention of readers who are not in the habit of buying press, subscribing to it and going to the reading rooms of libraries. And, consequently, the manipulative influence of the press reaches a new, previously inaccessible audience. This means that the analysis of media manipulations in the press remains essential, especially for the youth audience.

2. Materials and methods

Materials of this research are articles in German press. Methodology is based on theoretical framework on the relationship, interdependence and integrity of the phenomena of reality, the unity of the historical and the logical in cognition, the theory of the dialogue of cultures. The following methods are used: data collection, analysis, generalization and classification.

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3. Discussion

As maintained by numerous researchers (Albright, 2017; Aldwairi, Alwahedi, 2018; Baake et al., 1999; Berghel, 2017; Bertin et al., 2018; Bharali, Goswami, 2018; Blumeke, 2000; Bowker, 1991; Bradshaw, Howard, 2018; Buckingham, 2003; 2015; Conroy et al., 2015; De Abreu, 2019; Dentith, 2017; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2021; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021; Fletcher, 2018; Flintham et al., 2018; Gahirwal et al., 2018; Goering, Thomas, 2018; Hobbs, 2010; 2017; Jolls, Wilson, 2014; Martens et al., 2018; Marwick, Lewis, 2017; McDougall et al., 2018; Nielsen, Graves, 2017; Pérez Tornero et al., 2018; Potter, 2019; Potter, McDougall, 2017; Ruchansky et al., 2017; Rushkoff, 1994; Sadiku et al., 2018; Salma, 2019; Silverblatt, 2001; Tambini, 2017; Usov, 1989; Vargo, 2018; Waldrop, 2017; Wilson, 2019; Wilson, 2019; Zhou et al., 2019), the view that “we need to forever banish the association of the word “truth” with “politics” – these two terms just don’t play well with each other” (Berghel, 2017: 80) can be supported.

Yet, it should not be forgotten that “fact-checking is predicated on the assumption that people will change their mind when confronted with correct information, which implies a very passive model of the audience: If an audience member reads a fake news story, she believes it; if she is presented with contradictory facts, she will change her mind. Her own agency and predispositions are entirely absent. ... [but] this ignores a wide variety of social and cultural factors, and is not supported by empirical evidence. In fact, fact-checking may have the opposite effect of making stories “more sticky.” ... the more people see fake news headlines, the more likely they are to think they are accurate” (Marwick, 2018: 508).

In 2018, a team of British scientists conducted an experiment in which the audience was asked to read an article containing fake information. The findings revealed that “of those who did read the article either in full or in part, only 55 % believed that the headline accurately matched the content. ... 37 % of respondents had *come across a news story, believed it to be true, then later realized that it was either exaggerated, inaccurate or blatantly false*. Common examples were celebrity news, American news, and again issues related to Brexit and Donald Trump. Here respondents stated that they identified the piece of news in question as fake predominantly by fact-checking against other sources, or using their own reasoning that something either could not be true or seemed implausible. Conversely, 46 % had *come across a news item they immediately identified as fake*, principally based on knowledge of the source..., or being known to exaggerate – ‘because it was the *Daily Mail*’, or again through their own reasoning and judgements of plausibility. Our survey results suggest that social media users are not only incidentally consuming news via sites such as *Facebook*, but they are aware of – and encountering – fake news, some of which is taken at face value. Respondents appear to draw on a number of different strategies in reasoning about the validity of news, including prior assumptions about source reputation, determinations of plausibility, headlines and sometimes the full text” (Flintham et al., 2018).

Russian scientists came to similar conclusions: “it has been experimentally proven that a large percentage of people who read news, read only headlines and thus judge the current picture of the world by the totality of information conveyed by headlines” (Pogorelova, 2018).

Unfortunately, we have to admit: “a significant, and not the worst one, part of our society, under the influence of mass culture and the flow of low-standard, and, often, extremely harmful to the human mind, information pouring on it from the pages of newspapers, from TV screens and from the radio, in a progressive mode loses the ability to complex logical thinking and critical, or “perspective”, analysis of information. And this is also one of the manifestations of the manipulation of consciousness” (Kara-Murza, Smirnov, 2009). As it has been proposed by Kara-Murza, “manipulators are trying to turn us into *consumers of ideas*, into an attentive ear and an iris dilated. ... a manipulator, interrupting the dialogue, presents a solution that is beneficial to him as having no alternative – otherwise, thoughts and reasoning begin. ... One has only to allow oneself to think of different solutions in mind, and the whole structure of manipulation collapses – and selfish intentions immediately become visible” (Kara-Murza, 2002).

4. Results

Based on previous research (Albright, 2017; Aldwairi, Alwahedi, 2018; Bertin et al., 2018; Bharali, Goswami, 2018; Bradshaw, Howard, 2018; Conroy et al., 2015; Dentith, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2018; Gahirwal et al., 2018; Goering, Thomas, 2018; Martens et al., 2018; McDougall et al., 2018; Marwick, 2018; Marwick, Lewis, 2017; Nielsen, Graves, 2017; Ruchansky et al., 2017; Sadiku et al., 2018; Salma, 2019; Tambini, 2017; Vargo, 2018; Waldrop, 2017; Wilson, 2019).

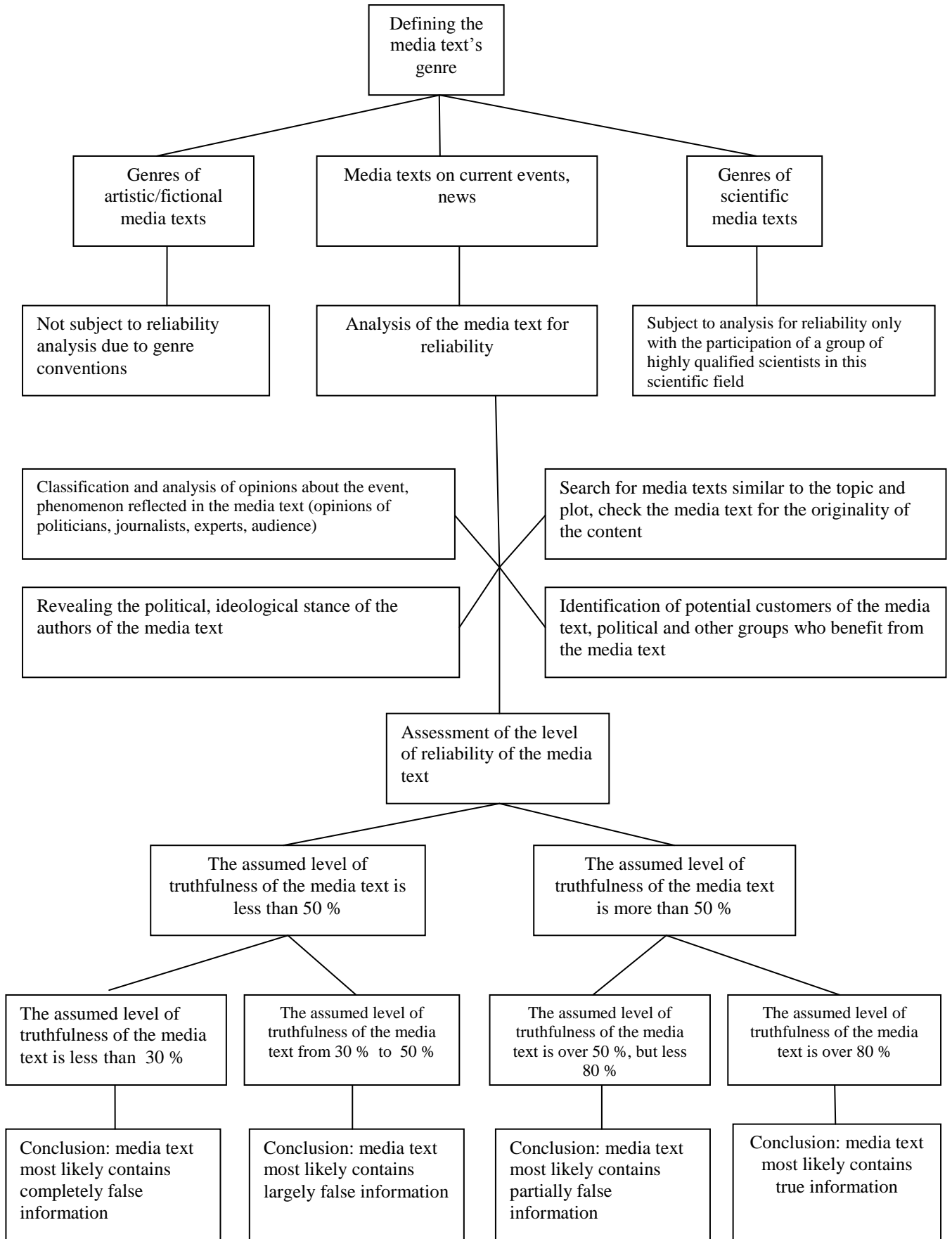


Fig. 1. Model of media education activity, fostering the audience's media competence in the process of analysis of media texts' credibility

we have developed the structural model of media education activity, fostering the audience's media competence in the process of analysis of media texts' credibility (Figure 1).

Further, based on the structural model developed by us (Figure 1) of media educational activity, contributing to the development of media competence of the audience in the process of analyzing the reliability of media and key questions (What is the source of information? Can you verify the source? What is the main message? What facts are presented to support the main idea? Is there any information missing? What is the purpose of transmitting this message? Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose? From whose point of view is the message presented? Does the message refer to logic or emotion? What effect? What values and priorities are reinforced as a result? (Wilson, 2019), we have analyzed 337 articles in German newspapers over the period 2020-2021. Meanwhile, it was observed that 98.2 % of the texts (331 out of 337 articles) expressed negative opinions about Russia, about its politics and economy. Positive opinions of German journalists were expressed only if the article was devoted to the activities of the Russian opposition.

For example, in December 2020, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper published an article entitled (German) "Russland: Wie viel Autorität genießt Wladimir Putin noch?"/(Eng.) "Russia: how much authority does Vladimir Putin still enjoy?" (Scholl, 2020), dedicated to the state of health of Russian President V. Putin.

Media text genre: article on current events in the world, news text.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it?

The source of information in this article is rumors about V. Putin's poor health, received by a German journalist from several unverified sources: "This year, sports fan Vladimir Putin has never taken part in a hockey match. This has fueled rumors that have been circulating in Moscow for several weeks: the 68-year-old president is allegedly seriously ill, so he will announce his resignation in January. ... The liberal television channel Dozhd drew attention to a coughing fit when Putin cleared his throat several times during one of the videoconferences. And one Moscow masseuse, who regularly kneads the parliamentarians, tells her clients that the State Duma is expecting "huge changes". The main source of the rumor is historian Valery Solovey, who boasts of his close ties to the Kremlin. In May, he announced that Putin would have to resign because he was allegedly taking medication with severe side effects" (Scholl, 2020),

Can you verify the source?

Throughout 2020 V. Putin was actively engaged in his professional activities and did not miss any scheduled meetings or events. None of the rumors cited by Scholl have been confirmed.

Does the message refer to logic or emotion?

This article primarily addresses human emotions, simple emotional reactions in response to a "sensational" message invented by unverified sources.

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main goal of the publication (Scholl, 2020) is to convince German-speaking readers that the Russian president is seriously ill and is about to step down.

Is there any information missing?

The article does not provide any alternative information to the false rumors.

Whose point of view does the message present?

This article is presented from the point of view of V. Putin's opponents.

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in the article is accepted as true, the political opponents of V. Putin, of whom there are many in modern Germany, will win, and the mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text will lose.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is close to zero.

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains utterly false information.

In February 2021, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper published an article entitled (German) "Neun Worte über Nord Stream 2"/(Eng.) "Nine words about North Stream 2" (Schuller, 2021), related to the political situation around the 95 % completed gas pipeline running along the bottom of the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.

Media text genre: an article about current events in the world.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it? Can you verify the source?

The article is centered around the personal opinions and recommendations of journalist K. Schuller (Schuller, 2021), not supported by links to any authoritative sources.

Does the message refer to logic or emotion?

This article addresses human emotions and follows the logic of a harsh anti-Russian policy: “The goal of Putin's gas pipeline is to bypass Ukraine as a transit country for gas. When the pipeline is ready, the president will be able to reignite the frozen war against that country without fear of hindering exports to the West. For the eastern NATO countries, the Russian threat would take on a new dimension. ... Germany, being the EU's gravity center, threatens to lose its binding power” (Schuller, 2021).

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main objective of the article “Nine words about North Stream 2” (Schuller, 2021) is to convince German-speaking readers that the construction of the pipeline should be urgently stopped in order to thereby put pressure on Russia and support the Russian opposition: “After the verdict handed down to Navalny in Russia, the chancellor needs to say only one single proposal. So she could set boundaries for Putin, win Biden to herself and unite Europe. ... These words could sound like this: “I cannot support the Nord Stream gas pipeline-2”. ... Thus, having said such a proposal, Merkel would not have had to admit a mistake. Nevertheless, its effect would be enormous. ... At the same time, it would be possible to talk with Putin in plain text. If his Baltic project were threatened, even the Russian president could understand that he cannot show aggression against Ukraine for free, carry out a covert military intervention in Libya, and now persecute Navalny, violating international law. Then Putin would have a reason to seek a compromise. For example, he might wonder if the time has come to actually withdraw his irregulars from eastern Ukraine” (Schuller, 2021).

Is there any information missing? The article does not explicitly refer to alternative points of view, although it does mention that German Chancellor A. Merkel considers the Nord Stream 2 project to be purely economic (Schuller, 2021).

Whose point of view does the message present?

This article presents the point of view of opponents of Russian politics.

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the proposals presented in the article are accepted, Russia's political opponents will win, and a mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text and comparison of different points of view will lose.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is less than 30 % (truthful information here includes the fact that Nord Stream 2 is really being built, that political disputes around it do not subside; the rest of the information is presented by the journalist in an extremely biased manner, usually without any or alternative points of view).

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains the highly ideologized point of view and recommendations of journalist K. Schuller, reflecting the views of Russia's political opponents.

In June 2021, *Die Welt* published an article entitled (German) “Ökonom sieht Russland hinter Amerikas historischem Steuer-Leak”/(Eng.) “The Economist Sees Russia Behind America's Historical Tax Leak” (Beutelsbacher, 2021), dedicated to the tax scandal of American billionaires.

Media text genre: an article about current events in the world.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it?

The main source of this article is ProPublica, a nonprofit organization based in New York, whose purpose is investigative journalism. S. Beutelsbacher writes: “There was a sensation in the USA. The published figures — if true — are discouraging: Between 2014 and 2018, the richest 25 Americans paid only 3.4 % federal tax, far below the taxes that ordinary workers in the US have to pay to the government” (Beutelsbacher, 2021).

Can you verify the source?

Without access to the tax base and investigation materials, it is not possible to check this information for compliance with reality.

Does the message refer to logic or emotion?

This article primarily addresses human emotions of outrage, simple emotional reactions in response to a sensational message.

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main objective of this article (Beutelsbacher, 2021) is to convince German-speaking readers that American billionaires are evading taxes, and “in March 2020, attackers — possibly with the support of the Russian government — also gained access to IRS data. Then the investigators said that there were no signs that confidential data had been stolen. Now, following the ProPublica revelations, the US Treasury wants to launch a new investigation” (Beutelsbacher, 2021).

Is there any information missing? The article does not provide any alternative information regarding the above assumptions.

From whose point of view is the message presented?

This article is partially presented from the point of view of opponents of Russian politics.

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in this article (Beutelsbacher, 2021) is accepted as true, the political opponents of Russia will win, and the mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text will lose.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is less than 50 % (the author is verbally making some reservations: “if they (figures) are true”, “perhaps”).

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains largely false information.

In June 2021, the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper published an article entitled (German) “Wir werden mit dieser EM wahrscheinlich völlig ersticken”/ (Eng.) “We will probably completely suffocate with this EM” (Schmidt, 2021), dedicated to the European Football Championship, several games being held in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Media text genre: an article about current international events.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented to support it?

The main source of this article is the published statistical data on the spread of coronavirus in Russia, the opinions of the German journalist F. Schmidt and an anonymous nurse from St. Petersburg (Schmidt, 2021).

Can you verify the source?

Statistics on the spread of coronavirus in Russia are available, they are updated daily on the official Russian portals.

Does the message refer to logic or emotion?

This article primarily addresses human emotions regarding fear of the Covid-19 pandemic, simple emotional reactions.

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main objective of this article is to convince German-speaking readers that “a year after the end of the strict restrictions, anti-coronavirus measures are being tightened again in Moscow. The number of new infections is on the rise, the lack of confidence in vaccinations is high, and the European Championship could further exacerbate the situation” (Schmidt, 2021).

Is there any information missing?

The article does not provide any alternative information regarding the above assumption that the holding of the European Football Championship will dramatically worsen the epidemiological situation in St. Petersburg and in Russia.

Whose point of view does the message present?

This article is presented partially from the point of view of critics of Russian policy in the field of combating Covid-19.

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in this article (Schmidt, 2021) is accepted as true, the critics of Russian policy in the fight against Covid-19 will win, and the mass audience incapable of critical

analysis of the media text will be affected, though not taking into account the fact that the European Championship was carried out in different countries of the continent, and, of course, there was also a danger of the virus spread.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is not more than 50 % (the straight part of the information is that in the summer of 2021, the epidemiological situation in Russia in fact worsened, and in June 2021 in St. Petersburg some championship matches were held during European Football Championship).

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains partially false information (regarding the fact that the holding of the European Football Championship in St. Petersburg will dramatically increase the rate of Covid-19, which, in fact, did not happen).

In June 2021, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* published an article titled (German) “Joe Bidens heilige Verpflichtung”/(Eng.) “Joe Biden's Sacred Duty” (Gutschker, 2021) on American policy towards Russia.

Media text genre: an article about current international events.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it?

Statements by US President J. Biden and the NATO leadership.

Can you verify the source?

The statements mentioned above were widely broadcast by various media, it is not difficult to get acquainted with them (in the press, on Internet platforms).

Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?

This article primarily addresses human emotions, simple emotional reactions. The main message of the article – the military “threat to Euro-Atlantic security” from Russia and Russia's refusal to engage in dialogue with NATO – is presented absolutely unsubstantiated.

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main purpose of this article is to convince German-speaking readers that “three years after Donald Trump's outburst of rage, his successor dispelled all doubts in Brussels: America is supporting its NATO partners. They are closing ranks - against Russia, but also in the face of China. ... In recent years, this process has only accelerated, as Moscow rejected proposals from the West - including proposals from the alliance - for dialogue and instead intensified its confrontation. This brought the allies together” (Gutschker, 2021).

Is there any information missing? The article does not provide any alternative point of view regarding the political positions of J. Biden and NATO.

Whose point of view does the message present?

This article presents the viewpoint of critics of Russian politics: Russia's “aggressive actions” are classified as a “threat to Euro-Atlantic security”. Thus, “Russia poses the greatest threat to the alliance, along with terrorism in all its forms”. Why this is so is outlined in more detailed paragraphs than three years ago, covering everything NATO is concerned about – from disinformation campaigns to new short and medium-range missiles and recent troop deployments near Ukraine's borders. While the proposal for a dialogue with Moscow remains in effect, the communique unequivocally states: “Until Russia demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities, there can be no return to business as usual” (Gutschker, 2021).

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in this article (Gutschker, 2021) is accepted as true, opponents of Russian politics will win, and a mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text will lose, which does not take into account alternative points of view.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is less than 50 % (the information correctly reflects the political views of President J. Biden and NATO, but completely unsubstantiated draws a conclusion about Russia threatening Euro-Atlantic security).

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains partially false information.

In June 2021, the *Bild* newspaper published an article entitled (German) “Corona macht Putin noch gefährlicher”/(Eng.) “The Coronavirus Makes Putin Even More Dangerous” (Harbusch et al., 2021) on the policy of Russian-German relations.

Media text genre: an article about current events in the world.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it?

Report of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution of the German Internal Intelligence Service and the point of view of three German journalists.

Can you verify the source?

Ordinary German-speaking readers are unlikely to have access to the full text of this report, much less to the mechanisms for checking the information presented in the report.

Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?

This article, primarily appeals to human emotions: "Putin's special services and propaganda media are keeping Germany at gunpoint. In an annual report from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's internal intelligence service warns that the Putin regime is using the coronavirus crisis to spread misinformation and undermine the credibility of the German government" (Harbusch et al., 2021).

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main message of the article is to convince the audience that "in addition to espionage activities, Russia continues to seek to channel political and public opinion in Germany in its favor through the dissemination of propaganda, disinformation, and other attempts to influence" (Harbusch et al., 2021).

Is there any information missing? The article does not provide any alternative point of view.

From whose point of view is the message presented?

This article is presented from the point of view of critics of Russian politics: "In recent weeks, there has been an increase in attacks from a Russian cyber entity on political bodies in Germany. The attacks are aimed, in particular, at the e-mail boxes of political parties and political foundations and are aimed at obtaining data to authorize users and thus gain access to confidential information. ... The goals of all Russian efforts are to discredit the German government, polarize political discourse and undermine trust in government agencies. ... In 2021, Germany is likely to become the center of Russian espionage and influence with the Bundestag elections scheduled for September 26, 2021, elections to the Landtag and city parliaments in six federal lands and municipal elections. ... At the same time, the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic may further persuade the Kremlin to engage in dangerous attacks. The significant political and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic for Russia itself could further intensify Russian espionage activities, especially with the aim of diverting attention from its own problems in the economy and science" (Harbusch et al., 2021).

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in this article (Harbusch et al., 2021) is accepted as accurate, opponents of Russian politics will win, and a mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text, which does not take into account alternative points of view, will lose.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is very low, since it does not contain any evidence of Russia's interference in the political life of Germany (through cyber attacks, etc.).

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains largely false information.

In June 2021, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper published an article entitled (German) "Putins Rendezvous mit dem Lieblingsfeind" / (Eng.) "Putin's rendezvous with the favourite enemy" (Bigalke, 2021), dedicated to the talks between US President J. Biden and Russian President V. Putin in Geneva.

Media text genre: an article about current events in the world.

Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible receivers of the media text, political and other groups who benefit from the media text):

What is the source of the information? What facts are presented in support of it?

The real fact presented in this article is the meeting and negotiations between US President J. Biden and Russian President V. Putin in Geneva, the rest is the personal opinion of the journalist.

Can you verify the source?

The very fact of the meeting and negotiations between US President J. Biden and Russian President V. Putin in Geneva (summer 2021) is easily verified, the rest of the information presented in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article is the subjective opinion of the journalist.

Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?

This article, first of all, refers to human emotions, simple emotional reactions: “The world, as the Kremlin presents it to the Russians, is as bipolar as Putin wants it to be. There is Russia and the United States, and all the rest revolve around these poles” (Bigalke, 2021).

What is the main purpose of a media text?

The main message of the article is to convince the audience that “the Kremlin is inciting hostility towards the United States – and is using it to fight critics in its own country” (Bigalke, 2021).

Is there any information missing?

The article does not provide any alternative point of view.

From whose point of view is the message presented?

This article is presented from the point of view of opponents of Russian politics: “The United States has long been Russia's favorite enemy, relations with Washington are the pivot around which Putin's foreign policy revolves – and, more and more often, his domestic policy as well. After all, the image of the enemy that the Kremlin cultivates not only motivates a sufficient number of Russians to rally behind their president. It also serves an explanation for all kinds of complaints in the country. Critics and Russian opposition are controlled by foreign forces, i.e. the United States – that is the message of its propaganda” (Bigalke, 2021).

Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose?

If the information presented in this article (Bigalke, 2021) is accepted, opponents of Russian politics will win, and a mass audience incapable of critical analysis of the media text will lose, which does not take into account alternative points of view.

Assessment of the level of truthfulness of the media text: the estimated level of truthfulness of the media text is less than 50 %.

Conclusion: the media text most likely contains partially false information.

5. Conclusion

Thus, relying on the developed media educational activity that contributes to the development of media competence of the audience in the process of analyzing the reliability of media texts (Figure 1) and a series of analytical questions encouraging the identification of media manipulations, we have analyzed a number of articles in the German press devoted to Russian foreign and domestic policy. In total, we analyzed 337 articles in German newspapers for the period 2020-2021. Herewith, it was found that 98.2 % of the texts (331 out of 337 articles) expressed negative opinions about Russia, about its politics and economy, which, certainly, does not contribute to the development of mutual understanding and dialogue between Germany and Russia.

Meanwhile, in many cases, the German press uses the following typical manipulative persuasive techniques: *selection*: selection of certain tendencies (in this case, only negative ones), distortion of these tendencies; *labeling* (accusatory, offensive, etc.); *appeal to authority*: a reference (often incorrect) to authorities in order to justify a particular statement; *false accusations*; *framing*; *loaded language*; *name-calling*, etc.

6. Acknowledgements

The reported study was funded by Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) according to the research project № 20-013-00001 “Media education of pedagogical profile students as a tool to resist media manipulation”.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 376-386

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.376
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



The Role of Decisions by the European Court of Human Rights in Shaping the Content of New Media Literacy Education

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in the area of regulating the activity of online media, as well as establish the information, axiological, and legal potential of the Court's decisions for shaping the content of new media literacy education. Insight is provided into a set of factors governing the need for adopting new conceptual approaches to establishing a sound legal framework for the operation of contemporary social media. The authors analyzed the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights dealing with the correlation and balance between the right to freedom of speech and expression *and* the right to privacy and the protection of the honor, dignity, and reputation of physical and legal persons. The authors singled out a set of legal provisions that need to be particularly focused on and promoted as particularly facilitative of the development of media literacy among both professional journalists and ordinary social media users who can create and/or distribute media content.

Keywords: new media literacy, social media, media content, media messages, fundamental freedoms, freedom of expression, right to privacy, freedom of information, European Court of Human Rights.

1. Introduction

With social media having an increasing influence on daily life, user media literacy has become an issue of growing relevance in today's society. The role of Internet sources and social networks in distributing information has grown significantly in recent years. Web 2.0 technology enables users to create and distribute just about any kind of media material on the Internet. With that said, increasingly more users without the professional skills of a journalist who are not properly informed of ethical requirements for this profession are becoming a distributor of information. This includes users who create media content, users who distribute through social networks information prepared by others, and users who leave comments on information sites and pages on social networks. In terms of fostering media literacy, one may need to take into account multiple legal aspects in the area of regulating information activity – above all, in terms of protecting human rights from all kinds of information threats. In this regard, of particular importance are decisions by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). On one hand, they

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serve as a source that provides the most complete analysis of the content of human rights, including in media space, and, on the other hand, they are a flexible tool that helps to adapt European law's best legal practices and achievements to the highly complex and dynamically developing sphere of information relations. The purpose of this paper is to explore the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in the area of regulating the activity of online media and identify, on this basis, a set of legal provisions that are central to fostering media literacy among both professional journalists and ordinary users who can create and/or distribute media content.

2. Materials and methods

In terms of source material, use was made of scholarly publications on media literacy, including those on new media literacy; publications on new media; publications discussing the role of social media; findings from sociological research on the place and role of Internet resources among the core sources of information for the populations of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the US; policy documents and recommendations from the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the European Union; decisions of the ECtHR, commentaries on them, and scholarly articles analyzing the Court's activity.

In terms of methods of enquiry, primary use was made of the formal-legal method, which helped to conduct a proper analysis of certain provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and relevant ECtHR case law in the context of applying those provisions and striking the balance between freedom of speech and expression, on the one hand, and protection of one's honor, dignity, and reputation, on the other. The use of the retrospective method helped to gain an insight into the evolution of media and the development of media space, as well as the development of the legal framework for the regulation of information relations.

3. Discussion

Media literacy has been the subject of research across the world for many years now. It can be defined as "the ability to analyze, augment and influence active reading (i.e., viewing) of media in order to be a more effective citizen" (Aufderheide, 1993: 33). Media literacy is important for all citizens who intentionally, or without knowing it, consume media content (Koltay, 2011: 219).

Since their rise in the first half of the 20th century, the mass media had long been characterized by the following features: they were centralized; content was produced in highly capitalized industrial locations; distribution was tied to production; consumption was characterized by uniformity. The tendencies toward centralization and standardization created the possibility for professionalization of communicative and creative processes and for very clear distinctions between consumers and producers (Lister et al., 2009: 32). This is when there emerged the concept of media literacy, i.e. as a collection of competencies that enable a user to critically conceptualize information, for, because there can exist a conflict of interests, both the source and validity of the information may need to be evaluated.

Not all definitions of media literacy include the requirement to produce symbolic texts, as most ordinary people are consumers of media products and have little to do with the production process (Livingstone, 2003: 13-14). However, much has changed in the media industry in terms of the relationship between producers and consumers of media content with the advent of Web 2.0 technology. In this respect, researcher S. Livingstone notes that "the literacy associated with the use of new media, especially the Internet, is significantly different from that of print and audiovisual media" (Livingstone, 2003: 15).

The emergence of new digital technology has had an impact on the number and diversity of media and has facilitated an increase in the participation of non-professionals in media content creation (Koltay, 2011: 219). New media act today as an alternative to traditional media, enabling people to share with one another what they have created using new media tools (Eristi, Erdem, 2017: 252). This has produced a change in the role of media in society, urging researchers to reconsider the significance of media literacy. Amid the conceptualization of new media, scholars, teachers, and politicians are speaking of the importance of cultivating new media literacy. Yet many researchers feel that the fundamental understanding of what new media literacy remains unclear (Lin et al., 2013). For instance, in the conditions of today, media literacy can be defined as "a person's ability to find in mass media materials the information they are looking for, critically conceptualize it, and verify it, as well as, if need be, create basic media content" (Kazakov, 2017:

86-87). The European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education defines media literacy as “the ability to use individual media unaided, to understand, and bring critical assessment to bear on, the various aspects of media as such and media content, and to communicate – irrespective of the context – and create and disseminate media content” (Report EU, 2008). In other words, the concept of media literacy has expanded given the possibility of users creating and distributing media content products on their own.

Researchers D.-T. Chen, J. Wu, and Y.-M. Wang suggest focusing on both the technical and sociocultural aspects of new media, embracing the idea of a hybrid of consumer and producer (the prosumer), and switching from consuming media literacy to prosuming media literacy. The researchers have identified the following four key components of new media literacy: 1) functional consuming; 2) functional prosuming; 3) critical consuming; 4) critical prosuming (Chen et al., 2011: 84).

Researchers exploring issues related to a change of approach to the content of media literacy education amid the emergence of new media are focused primarily on measuring the level of media literacy and identifying focus areas for media education. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the legal aspects of media content creation. The only legal issue that tends to be of interest to researchers at this time is compliance with intellectual property laws (Lister et al., 2009). Some research has focused on issues relating to the implementation of axiological approaches in legal education using media resources (Zavhorodnia et al., 2019).

The legal literature contains analyses of ECtHR case law dealing with the discontinuation of the publication of print media in the context of an alleged violation of Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Yarmol, 2017) specifically; issues relating to that article being applied in ECtHR case law (Bilousov, Kakhnova, 2021); issues relating to freedom of expression in the context of online journalism under international law (Bila-Kyselova, 2021). Of particular interest is research on issues relating to protection of one's honor, dignity, and business reputation on social networks (Slavko et al., 2020). Yet there has been a lack of research on the influence of ECtHR case law in shaping the content of media literacy education in terms of information distribution via new media.

4. Results

A widening baseline of computer literacy and information technology skills and, importantly, the availability of the proper software and hardware tools have made it possible to produce more “user-generated content” (Lister et al., 2009: 33). Common tools used today to create such content are social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, etc.), special Internet platforms where users can post content (e.g., YouTube, Pinterest, etc.), and mobile applications that let users engage in individual and group communication (e.g., Telegram, WhatsApp, Viber, etc.). What is common to all social media websites and services is that they let users quite easily produce media messages using text, pictures, video, and audio.

Media messages produced by non-professionals, including on social networks, account for a large portion of all sources of information today. To assess the role of social networks and news sites in providing people with information, a review was conducted of the findings from sociological research carried out in Ukraine, Russia, and the US. Based on the findings from a survey conducted in Ukraine, the primary source of information in 2020, just like in 2019, was national TV (75 % of respondents), followed by social networks (44 % – compared with 24 % in 2019), and then online mass media (27 % – about the same as in 2019) (Trends, 2020). Based on the findings from a similar survey conducted in Russia in January 2021, the way has been led by TV (63 % – a slight decline compared with the year before), followed by Internet news sites (45 % – a slight increase), and then forums, blogs, and social networks (23 % – a slight increase) (Istochniki informatsii, 2021). Based on the findings from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in the US in the summer of 2021, a sizable portion of Americans turn today to social networks for news. More specifically, 48 % of adult Americans confessed to getting news from social media “often” or “sometimes” (News Consumption, 2021).

The Report on Media Literacy in a Digital World, prepared for the European Parliament by the Committee on Culture and Education, states that “broad access to communications technologies affords everyone the possibility of transmitting information globally”. This means that “every member of the public is a potential journalist”. Therefore, media literacy is becoming “a necessity not only for understanding information but also for generating and distributing media

content” (Report EU, 2008). S. Livingstone argues there is a difference between the roles of adults and young people in terms of content creation, with the latter tending to use information-and-communications technology more today (Livingstone, 2003: 14). According to M. Zhizhina, “it is the youth audience that actively realizes itself not only as a spectator but also as the blog author” (Zhizhina, 2019). Yet, as stated in the above-mentioned report, “computer skills alone consequently do not lead automatically to greater media literacy” (Report EU, 2008). Therefore, no matter how advanced the digital skills of children and young people may be, there is a need to foster in them critical evaluation skills and instill in them a sense of responsibility toward information distribution (in terms of both creating their own media content and distributing others’ media content on social networks).

D. Gillmor has identified and described some of the key principles of media consumption and media creation. The key principles of media creation include learning as much as one can about a topic, getting one’s facts right, being fair to everyone, thinking independently, especially of one’s own biases, and being transparent. In terms of being transparent, it is noted that bloggers, too, need to adopt more transparency, as “a distinctly disturbing trend in some blog circles is the undisclosed or poorly disclosed conflict of interest” (Gillmor, 2009: 4-8). V. Dreshpak argues that social opinion leaders wishing to uphold their own reputation makes them consume media content in a responsible manner and avoid being turned into a tool of manipulation, disinformation, and information aggression, so it makes sense for them to overall adhere to the same standards and ethical norms as journalists (Dreshpak, 2019).

In general, with the advent of digital media, there is now a need to develop a number of essential media literacy skills factoring in the fact that the blurring between public and private worlds creates new ethical and legal challenges (Hobbs et al., 2013: 9). Some researchers investigating the role of media during the COVID-19 pandemic have stressed the need to make users aware of the legal aspects of using and distributing information obtained on the Internet (Khanina et al., 2021: 117).

Media literacy also incorporates today an understanding of one’s own role as a user of social networks, for any message one posts can become a source of news, so there is a need to have a critical attitude toward both received and imparted information. According to R. Viola, “media literacy means taking up one’s civic responsibility of contributing to a culture of inclusive tolerance and respect online” (Viola, 2016). Researchers P.N. Howard and M.R. Parks have explored the ability of social media to influence politics and note that social media, inter alia, incorporate “the people, organizations, and industries that produce and consume both the tools and the content” (Howard, Parks, 2012). A.A. Kazakov views as the minimum component of media literacy today the ability to create posts on and distribute them across social networks with confidence (Kazakov, 2017: 86-87).

What are some of the components of the ability to compose media content competently? Those who distribute media content are guided in doing so by the need to express their individual or collective aspirations and concerns. According to P.N. Howard and M.R. Parks, “social media are used to produce and distribute content that has individual value but reflects shared values” (Howard, Parks, 2012). However, it is to be kept in mind that a group of people may share values that contravene the moral standards of society or can jeopardize certain public interests. Even if the content distributed does not pose a threat to public security, it may contain false information about particular persons or be in violation of intellectual property rights. Therefore, knowledge of the basic legal aspects of media content creation is to be an important part of media education.

Above all, it is to be stressed that the right to freedom of expression is guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter ‘Convention’) (Convention, 1950). The first paragraph of the article establishes a general right to freedom of expression, and its second paragraph identifies the only bases upon which the right can be restricted.

A person’s freedom to hold views includes a right to adopt a position on a particular issue, guarantees them protection from a certain position being attributed to them based on their past statements and from potential negative consequences that may arise therefrom, and protects them from being coerced into revealing their position. The freedom to receive information, as an element of the right to freedom of expression, implies the possibility for mass media outlets to obtain it using any legitimate means and a right for the public to access information of public interest. The freedom to impart information is not limited to words, written or spoken, but extends to

illustrations and photographs, and even items of cultural heritage, intended to express an idea or to present information. It is to be noted that Article 10 of the Convention protects not only an idea but also the form of expression thereof ([Guide on Article 10](#)).

An important guarantee for the protection of an ability to express one's opinion is provided by the activity of the European Court of Human Rights ([Yarmol, 2017: 158](#)). The ECtHR, which has the power to prescribe individual and collective measures and interpret the Convention, thus has the ability to prevent future violations of human rights ([Batan, 2019: 94](#)). Therefore, it will help to take account, in the context of cultivating media literacy skills, of the ECtHR's legal conclusions relating to distribution of information in terms of its content.

The ECtHR has noted on several occasions that user-generated expressive activity on the Internet provides an unprecedented platform for the exercise of freedom of expression (e.g., *Ahmet Yildirim v. Turkey*, § 54, *Cengiz and Others v. Turkey*, § 49, and *Delfi AS v. Estonia*, § 110). Given its accessibility and its capacity to store and communicate vast amounts of information, the Internet helps to enhance the public's access to news and facilitate the dissemination of information generally (e.g., *Delfi AS v. Estonia*, § 133 and *Times Newspapers Ltd v. the United Kingdom (No. 1 and No. 2)*, § 27) ([Guide on Article 10](#)).

The Internet has fostered the emergence of citizen journalism, i.e. ordinary citizens covering various events and being able to confirm the information using photographs or videos. The freedom of expression of citizen journalists and bloggers on the Internet is of great significance in terms of encouraging public discussion of issues that are important to society ([Bila-Kyselova, 2021: 308-309](#)). The ECtHR has also noted that political content ignored by the traditional media is often shared via the Internet (e.g., *Cengiz and Others v. Turkey*, § 52).

However, it is to be always remembered that the freedom to impart information as enshrined in Article 10 of the Convention may also be subject to restrictions. When tackling a case dealing with a breach of Article 10, the ECtHR has to determine the lawfulness of the interference, its legitimacy, and its necessity in a democratic society ([Case-law, 2015](#)). This so-called 'three-part test' helps to determine if a violation of the Convention's provisions has occurred.

The right to freedom of expression cannot be considered in detachment from the right to respect for private and family life, enshrined in Article 8 of the Convention ([Convention, 1950](#)). The ECtHR has formulated through its case law the following criteria for assessing the degree to which it is acceptable to invade a person's privacy, which are intended to ensure a balance between the rights guaranteed by Articles 8 and 10 of the Convention: 1) contribution of the publication of the information to a debate of general interest; 2) how well-known the person concerned is and what the subject of the report is; 3) prior conduct of the person concerned; 4) how the information was obtained and its veracity; 5) content, form, and consequences of the publication; 6) gravity of the penalty imposed ([Burmagin, Opryshko, 2020: 40](#)). The above criteria were formulated during the hearing of the following cases: *Couderc and Hachette Filipacchi Associés v. France*, §§ 90-93, *Von Hannover v. Germany (No. 2)*, §§ 108-113, and *Axel Springer AG v. Germany*, §§ 89-95 ([Guide on Article 8](#)).

Invoking the above-mentioned criteria through the prism of ECtHR case law can help to see if some persons' freedom of expression infringes on others' right to respect for private life. The Council of Europe's recommendations stress the need to implement a state policy aimed at enhancing media content consumers' skills of selecting and analyzing information. A special emphasis is placed on users of social networking services having to respect other people's rights and freedoms. Cultivating media literacy in the context of using social networking services will help to enhance users' awareness of their rights on the Internet and help them develop a sense of respect for human rights values ([Recommendation, 2016: 224](#)).

Space does not permit a review of the entire ECtHR case law concerning the right to freedom of expression here, so a detailed outline will be provided of a few cases believed to be particularly useful in terms of enhancing the media literacy of new media users.

The case *Delfi AS v. Estonia* helped to establish some of the criteria for determining the responsibility of Internet intermediaries for third party content. The facts of the case are as follows. L., the sole shareholder of SLK (a ferry company), sent a request to Delfi (a high-volume online news outlet) to take down a set of reader comments that could be considered threatening or offensive to L. Despite the fact that Delfi had made efforts to advise users that the comments did not reflect its own opinion and that the authors of comments were responsible for their content and on its website there were rules on posting comments, the comments remained online for six weeks.

Delfi removed the comments from its website upon notification by L.'s lawyers, and, eventually, the court awarded L. a monetary compensation. Afterwards, Delfi went to the ECtHR alleging that its freedom of expression had been violated, in breach of Article 10 of the Convention, by the fact that it had been held liable for the third-party comments posted on its Internet news portal. The Court found that the restriction of the applicant company's freedom of expression had pursued the legitimate aim of protecting the reputation of others and that the article published by the applicant company had concerned a matter of public interest, so the applicant company could have foreseen the negative reactions. Several non-governmental organizations and media companies made joint submissions as third-party interveners in the case. They questioned the possibility of being legally liable for something done by third parties, as well as the possibility of identifying users of Internet resources. The Court pointed out the fact that the comments had been left on a professionally managed Internet news portal run on a commercial basis and noted the insufficiency of the measures taken by the applicant company to remove without delay comments amounting to hate speech and speech inciting violence, concluding that imposing a sanction on the applicant company had been just. In Paragraphs 115 and 116 of its judgment, the Court drew a clear distinction between the duties and responsibilities of (1) information Internet news portals run on a commercial basis that publish news articles of their own and invite their readers to comment on them and (2) other forums on the Internet where third-party comments can be disseminated, including Internet discussion forums, bulletin boards, and social media platforms where the platform provider does not offer any content and where the content provider may be a private person running the website or blog as a hobby ([Delfi v. Estonia, 2016](#)).

A different decision was reached in *Magyar Tartalomszolgáltatók Egyesülete and Index.hu Zrt v. Hungary*. Initially, the domestic courts found the applicants liable after comments had been left on an Internet news portal run by one of them that could harm the reputation of a real estate company. However, the Court found that comments had been moderated on that website in a proper manner and that, despite being vulgar and offensive, the comments in question did not incite violence and did not stoop to the level of hate speech. It was concluded that there had occurred a violation of Article 10 of the Convention, as the domestic courts had failed to strike an appropriate balance between the rights of the real estate company and Index.hu Zrt ([MTE & Index.hu v. Hungary, 2016](#)).

A similar approach was taken in *Pihl v. Sweden*, dealing with the applicant suing a non-profit association on whose blog a post had appeared accusing the applicant of being involved in a Nazi party. The Court found the charge unsubstantiated, considering the circumstance of the blog being run by a small non-profit association, unknown to the wider public, and considering that it had removed the post and published an apology soon after being notified by the applicant of the inaccuracy of the post and that the comment to the post, although offensive, had not amounted to hate speech or incitement to violence ([Pihl v. Sweden, 2017](#)).

In the recent case of *Sanchez v. France*, the ECtHR departed from the rules laid down in *Delfi AS v. Estonia*. The facts of the case are as follows. In 2011, Mr Sanchez, who was standing for election to Parliament for the Front National in the Nîmes constituency, published on the wall of his publicly accessible Facebook account a caustic post about F.P., one of his political opponents. The post drew several offensive user comments directed toward the city's Moslem community. A portion of the comments were deleted by the original posters in response to requests from people they knew, while the rest remained online despite an appeal by gendarmes who responded to a complaint. Eventually, the author of the post and one of the commenters were fined for incitement to hatred or violence against a group of people. Mr Sanchez did not agree that he was liable for not deleting straightaway the third-party comments left on the wall of his publicly accessible Facebook. The applicant also argued that there was no incitement to violence and discrimination and there were just reflections about how Nîmes had changed as a consequence of an increase in the number of migrants from North Africa in the city. Therefore, his actions fell within the right enshrined in Article 10 of the Convention. The Court employed the three-part test to find no violation of freedom of expression under Article 10 in the case. While the Court admitted to attaching the highest importance to freedom of expression in the context of political debate, it nevertheless deemed it highly important that politicians avoid issuing statements that could incite violence. The Court agreed with the conclusion by the domestic courts that the applicant, who had knowingly made the wall of his Facebook account public, could not have been unaware that his account was likely to

attract polemical comments of a political nature and should therefore have monitored his page even more carefully (Sanchez v. France, 2021).

Thus, if a non-professional producer of media content maintains a page that has the functionality of allowing any user to comment on content published on it, it is imperative that all discussions on the page be moderated and statements inciting hatred and violence be prevented from being published on it.

The applicants in the next case, *Akdeniz and Others v. Turkey*, felt they were hindered in their right to freedom of expression due to the preventive measure *contra mundum* imposed by the domestic courts. The injunction banned the publication of any information on a parliamentary inquiry into allegations of corruption against four former ministers while the investigation was ongoing. A journalist and two law professors, who are also popular bloggers and users of social media platforms, requested the lifting of the ban on publishing the materials, which, they argued, would have attracted considerable public interest. The applicants argued that the impugned measure had infringed the right to freedom of expression of them as journalists and scholars in the role of “public watchdogs”. However, the Court noted that “purely hypothetical risks” of the academics suffering a deterrent effect were insufficient to constitute an interference within the meaning of Article 10 (§ 72). At the same time, the Court acknowledged that, as a journalist, political commentator, and TV news presenter, the journalist could legitimately claim that the impugned prohibition had infringed her right to freedom of expression (§ 72). Thus, the Court found that the right to freedom of expression of the non-professional producers of media content (the academics) had not been infringed by the ban on publishing, during said timeframe, information on the situation, one constituting a matter of public interest (*Akdeniz v. Turkey*, 2021). In this case, the Court basically drew a line between the freedoms of expression of professional and non-professional journalists.

In *Kilin v. Russia*, the Court found no violation of Article 10 of the Convention after an Internet user had been convicted of allegedly disseminating a video of a racist nature. The facts of the case are as follows. The applicant posted on the social network VKontakte a video that was a snippet from a documentary film about neo-Nazis. However, the snippet took on independent significance, as it called for violence against people of Azerbaijani origin. After examining the case for whether the restriction of the applicant’s right to freedom of expression had been substantiated, the Court found that the criminal prosecution of the applicant could be regarded as having been intended for the prevention of disorder and crime and for the protection of the “rights of others” within the meaning of Article 10 § 2 of the Convention, specifically the dignity of people of non-Russian ethnicity, in particular Azerbaijani ethnicity. Given the racist nature of the material and the absence of any commentary on such content, the Court doubted that the applicant’s exercise of his freedom to impart information had any appreciable socially redeeming value (*Kilin v. Russia*, 2021). The conclusion that can be drawn from the Court’s decision in this case is that users disseminating on social networks, even “for friends”, information that calls for violence cannot invoke freedom of expression in justification of the form of expression they have chosen. At the same time, expressing a negative attitude toward this kind of information *could* be considered as constituting freedom of expression.

When it comes to distributing information through social media, of particular importance is a proper understanding of value judgments. This equally applies to traditional media and new media.

Of interest in this respect is the case *Instytut Ekonomichnykh Reform, TOV v. Ukraine*, whose facts are as follows. A journalist wrote a satirical article alleging that a member of parliament’s motives behind her change of political stance were profit-motivated. The domestic courts found the information to be untrue. The ECtHR reiterated that the limits of acceptable criticism are wider in respect of a politician than a private individual (§ 17). And, although the author had imputed unworthy motives to the subject of the article in a highly sarcastic manner, Article 10 of the Convention also protects information and ideas that offend, shock, or disturb. In addition, it is an important principle established in the Court’s case law that journalistic freedom covers possible recourse to a degree of exaggeration, or even provocation (§ 62) (*Instytut v. Ukraine*, 2016).

The case *Balaskas v. Greece* has an equally interesting factual background. A journalist published an article calling the headmaster of a local high school a neo-Nazi following a post on the latter’s personal blog. The headmaster filed a criminal complaint against the applicant for slanderous defamation. The court found the applicant guilty of insult through the press.

The domestic courts argued that the applicant's statements had not been necessary. However, the ECtHR concluded that a fair balance had not been struck between the right to freedom of expression and the right to protection of one's reputation. In addition, the Court drew attention to the fact that, as a public official vested with public functions who had previously expressed his views on political matters on his blog, the headmaster had been supposed to expect careful scrutiny of his words and show a higher degree of tolerance toward potential criticism of his statements by journalists. The Court concluded that the interference with the applicant's right to freedom of expression was not "necessary in a democratic society" ([Balaskas v. Greece, 2020](#)). Consequently, any user who publishes media content can become the object of justified criticism, and the more public an author of a publication is the greater is the public significance of discussing such publications and the greater is the likelihood of value judgments being induced.

A case that is of particular significance in terms of determining the boundaries of freedom of expression on social networks is *Melike v. Turkey*. The case concerned the dismissal of Ms Melike, a contractual cleaner at the Ministry of National Education, for having clicked 'Like' on various Facebook articles (posted on the social networking site by a third party). The authorities considered that the posts in question were likely to disturb the peace and tranquility of the workplace, on the grounds that they alleged that teachers had committed rapes and contained accusations against political leaders and parties. The disciplinary commission imposed on her the penalty of employment termination. The domestic court later dismissed Ms Melike's appeal, holding that the Facebook posts to which she had added a 'Like' could not be covered by freedom of expression. However, according to the ECtHR, those were matters of general interest, the applicant was not a civil servant, the content in question had not reached a very large audience on Facebook, and, given the nature of her position, her activities on Facebook could not have had a significant impact on pupils, parents, teachers, and other employees. The ECtHR concluded that there had been no reasonable relationship of proportionality between the interference with the applicant's right to freedom of expression and the legitimate aim pursued, i.e. there had been a violation of Article 10 of the Convention ([Melike v. Turkey, 2021](#)).

When it comes to the need to develop the media literacy skills of non-professional users of new media who can create and distribute media content, it is to be remembered that media literacy is essential for professional journalists as well. Researcher Ye.S. Doroshchuk, who has investigated the competencies that are considered important for future journalists, has confirmed that media literacy is the basis for the development of professional competence ([Doroshchuk, 2017: 86](#)). Accordingly, the legal aspects of information distribution touched upon in the present paper concern not only bloggers and social opinion leaders but any traditional media employee as well. Educational programs for journalists ought to cover the legal aspects of the activity of media as a whole, including in terms of using information posted on the Internet.

The ECtHR has stressed the importance of the Internet for the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and reiterated that the absence of a sufficient legal framework at the domestic level allowing journalists to use information obtained from the Internet without fear of incurring sanctions seriously hinders the exercise of the vital function of the press as a "public watchdog". In the Court's view, the complete exclusion of such information from the field of application of the legislative guarantees of journalists' freedom may itself give rise to an unjustified interference with press freedom under Article 10 of the Convention (*Editorial Board of Pravoye Delo and Shtekel v. Ukraine*, § 64; *Magyar Jeti Zrt v. Hungary*, § 60) ([Guide on Article 10](#)).

When it comes to potential methods and tools that could be employed to ensure coverage of key legal aspects of information distribution, it may help to include as part of educational programs on media literacy a focus on the right to freedom of expression and its relationship with the right to respect for private and family life.

Among P. Aufderheide's recommendations aimed at enhancing the level of media literacy is the input of professional media (i.e., reporters, producers, major networks, and major cable providers), which ought to encourage media education, promote the concept of the active viewer, and provide financial support – at least until the State takes over ([Aufderheide, 2019: 36](#)). In the Seoul Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, UNESCO calls on the private sector, including Internet communications companies, to support human rights to freedom of expression and access to information and privacy by promoting media and information literacy ([Seoul Declaration, 2020](#)).

5. Conclusion

With the advent of the Internet, as opposed to traditional print media and television, changes in the way media materials are created have led to the emergence of additional types of media, like online publications, social networks, video websites such as YouTube, and mobile phone applications, which can be used to create media content easily and quickly. This has given rise to the emergence of the term 'new media', and with that has come the need to define the term 'new media literacy'. Researchers have yet to reach a consensus on how to construe media literacy, with the general trend being one toward focusing on different aspects of this phenomenon depending on the area influenced by it.

Media education is indispensable for the achievement of a high level of media literacy. An important part of political education, it helps people to reinforce their behavior as active citizens who are aware of both their rights and duties. Furthermore, well-informed, politically mature citizens form the basis of a pluralist society. By producing their own content and media products, users acquire abilities affording them a deeper insight into the principles and values of professionally produced media content (Report EU, 2008).

The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has established several standards that are mandatory for countries signed up to it. Enhancing the media literacy of new media users who can create and distribute media content using Web 2.0 technology requires having a clear idea of the limits of the right to freedom of expression. ECtHR case law concerning the right to freedom of speech and the right to privacy has defined these limits quite clearly, serving as a crucial component for cultivating media literacy in terms of information distribution by both professional journalists and ordinary users of new media (e.g., social networks, blogs, YouTube, etc.).

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 387-395

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.387
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



The Study of Perceived Risk and E-Service Convenience Towards Satisfaction and Trust of Online Academic Users in Indonesia

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Abstract

The modernization in information technology (IT) has influenced the changes in the education industry. IT Utilization has provided users with many benefits. There are issues of security and privacy arising. This exploration examines the perceived risk and the e-service convenience of the satisfaction and trust of academic-online users at the University of Indonesia. Data collected by distributing the questionnaires to 220 respondents at two state universities and one private university in Indonesia. The sampling method applied from the convenience and purposive sampling technique, which is distributed to users, namely students, lecturers, and administrative staff. The data analyzed using path analysis. A results show that decision convenience, transaction convenience, and post-benefit convenience have a significant effect on academic-online user satisfaction. There is no influence of other factors such as perceived risk, access convenience, and benefit convenience on user satisfaction academic-online at college. This research also proves that satisfaction has a positive influence on user trust.

Keywords: e-service, convenience, perceived risk, satisfaction, trust, Indonesia.

1. Introduction

Information technology (IT) enables universities as educational institutions to develop internet-based businesses. The Internet has transformed the education industry to establish the basic characteristics of core services and products on how to transform services to consume, distributed, and packaged with professionals (Sathye, 1999). Colleges and companies in this modern era are jointly using IT to improve service quality, attract new customers, and business efficiency (Kannabiran, Narayan, 2005). This industry has a great responsibility to renew Indonesian society by entering the era of science in the 21st century (Nath et al., 2001). In the advancement of IT, one part that stands out is influencing the level of progress, prosperity, and competitiveness of a nation. This technology in the University is very important (Vail, Agarwal, 2007).

In the framework of managing the customer relationship, the information systems of which use is relatively accepted by the users (customers) will increase the value of services provided by the institution in the eyes of its customers. The most well-known and frequently used approach in measuring digitalization civilization is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Highlights the context in the actualization of IT, as someone will suck the sophistication of the computer if this technology provides significant convenience. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) practices TAM through two components (Davis, 1989). These components perceived usefulness and perceived ease of used to see people's desire to use computer technology.

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Recently, the quality of electronic services with the level of customer satisfaction is positive (Carlson, O’Cass, 2010). In addition, consumer attitudes toward websites and intentions to behave towards service contexts (such as specific content-driven) also significantly related. Interestingly, the that service factors are very important for consumers to consider through a series of stages, such as access, decision, benefit, reliability, and convenience (Colwell et al., 2008). The presence of convenience in the service positively affects satisfaction (eg internet and cell phone use).

It developed TAM based on psychological theories that explain user behavior ranging from beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and user behavior relationships (Davis, 1993). With TAM, people expect it to help project individual acceptance and attitudes toward technology. TAM also provides vital information related to the dimensions of supporting individual attitudes (Lee, 2010; Rose, Fogarty, 2006). This model concentrates on users of information systems.

The paradigms that address their decisions about when and how to adopt information systems determined by their own agility. Measures in the performance of information systems from the user side which is divided into two parts, namely user information satisfaction and system usage by employees in completing their work to manage financial data into information (Jhong-Min, 1996).

Respond to customer satisfaction because of the accumulation of consumers who have benefited from services and products. As a real comparison, consumer perception as a reaction to individual trust in technology (Irawan, 2003; Jogiyanto, 2009). Here, there is an effort from them to actualize the convenience and confidence in the decision-making process.

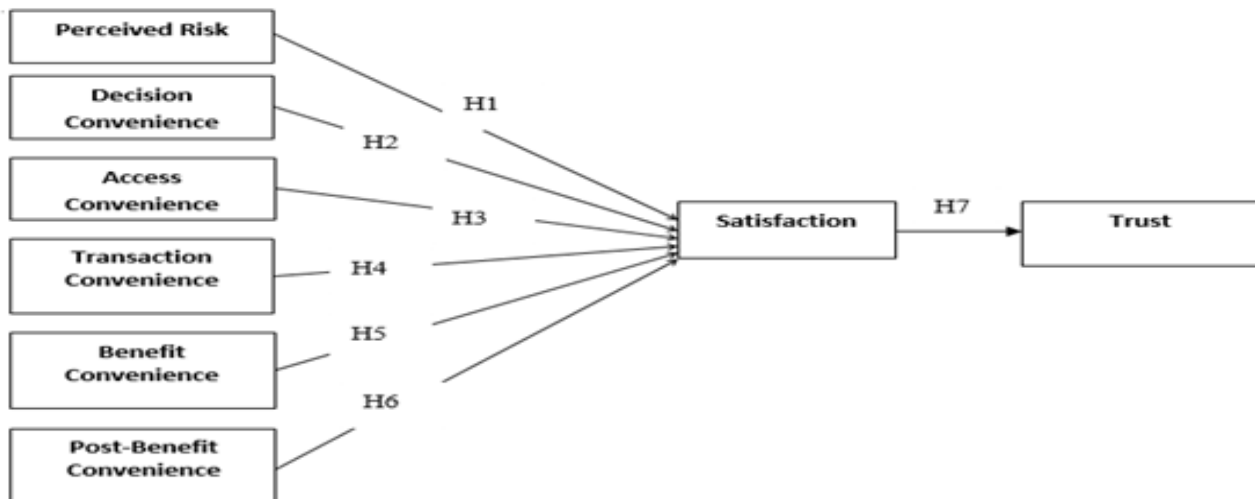


Fig. 1. Research model (Source: author’s elaboration)

We need a study that aims to identify and test the TAM model in universities in Indonesia covering the perception of risk and convenience of e-service on the satisfaction and trust of online-academic users. The development of IT in the education industry, on the one hand, provides many benefits for service users, but on the other hand, the issues of security and privacy can arise. Both of these can affect customer satisfaction and trust. The hypothesis in this study is based on the following framework (see Fig. 1). We summarize the seven vital points that were considered for this study:

- RQ-1. Does perceived risk affect the user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-2. Does decision convenience affect the user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-3. Does access convenience affect user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-4. Does transaction convenience affect the user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-5. Does benefit convenience affect user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-6. Does post-benefit convenience affect the user satisfaction in a positive-significant way?;
- RQ-7. Does user satisfaction affect user trust positive-significantly way?.

2. Material and methods

This research is field research, which is conducted through the survey method. The data collected are primary. The primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires and interviews concerning the variables studied and the characteristics of respondents. The population in this study are internal customers (students, administrative staff, and lecturers) who have used the information technology services from three universities in Indonesia (2 State Universities and 1 Private University).

Table 1. Measurement of variables

No.	Construct-Items and References
PR	Perceived Risk (Belkhamza, Azizi, 2009 ; Tong et al., 2019)
PR-1	Utilizing the onlinenacademic service can bring about the financial loss
PR-2	Friends and colleagues relatively think it's not right for me to use the online academic service
PR-3	The security of my Personal Information is not guaranteed
PR-4	There is a high risk of using online academic service
DC	Decision Convenience (Maqableh et al., 2021 ; Setiawan, Widanta, 2021)
DC-1	The information received makes it easy for me to choose the online academic services I will use
DC-2	It is easy for me to decide on the online academic service that I will use
DC-3	Information is very clear and easy to read
DC-4	This service provider/college allows me to find out the exact costs or special offers
AC	Access Convenience (Balina et al., 2020)
AC-1	Onlineacademic service is always ready when I need it
AC-2	Onlineacademic service is easy to use in many ways
AC-3	Hours / Operating Times / online academic services provide convenience
AC-4	it is easy to make contact with college employees related to online academic service
TC	Transaction Convenience (Miandari et al., 2021)
TC-1	Online academic services make me easy to do activities in college
TC-2	Online academic services can help complete the activities quickly
TC-3	There is no problem in increasing the time to use online academic services
BC	Benefit Convenience (Berry et al., 2002 ; Colwell et al., 2008)
BC-1	Achieving benefits with minimal effort
BC-2	Onlineacademic service can help solve the problem I have
BC-3	The time needed to receive the benefits of online academic services is feasible
PBC	Post-Benefit Convenience (Berry et al., 2002 ; Colwell et al., 2008)
PBC-1	Online academic services have resolved the problems I face rapidly
PBC-2	It's easy to reach the next online academic service
PBC-3	Information technology services in online academics can solve the problems I face
US	User Satisfaction (Colwell et al., 2008)
US-1	I am satisfied with my decision to use online academic service
US-2	My choice to use the online academic service is a wise choice
US-3	I think I have done something right in using the online academic service
T	Trust (Reid, Levy, 2008)
T-1	I strongly believe in the technological capabilities of the online academic service system on my campus
T-2	I trust the reputation of my faculty
T-3	I strongly believe in online academic internet transactions on my campus because it is not risky

We based the sample method applied on convenience sampling or accidental sampling to collect accurate information by chance ([Churchill, 1999](#)) and purposive samples according to the research needs. This research uses path analysis (e.g. [Wijaya et al., 2021](#); [Wijayanti, Darma, 2019](#)). The variables analyzed in this study can be divided into 2 parts, namely: independent variables and dependent variables. We perceive variables in this research: risk, e-service convenience, satisfaction, and trust (see [Tab. 1](#)).

3. Discussion

Initially, the emergence of TAM focused on computer acceptance. Then, the explanation for translating end-user behavior in IT (Yang, Wang, 2019). Theoretically, it is in line with the concept was developed (Lai, 2017). TAM focuses on the perceived usefulness of the core concept that represents the user's subjective perception of IT in the performance capacity of completing various tasks (Alam et al., 2020). Individual subjective perceptions of the ease of IT systems impact profits, which indirectly have a rapid impact on technology users.

The Theory of Reasoned-Actions (TRA) simulates TAM, where the combined behavior of personal attitudes and beliefs broadly influences beliefs between individuals (Nguyen et al., 2018). The basic concept of TRA adopts individual attitudes and behaviors to guide a positive mission.

The TAM method is useful in calculating attitudes in the user's domain and technology adaptation, including in the educational environment. Proposals for implementing TAM vary widely, depending on IT-based services (Chen et al., 2017). An consistently investigated extensively selecting the benefits of TAM to revise and continuing to predict IT acceptance by users (Chao, 2019).

On the other hand, the speculated that TRA classified human behavior. Finally, reasoned that something based on the TRA technique on two factors (subjective behavior and norms) as determinants of individual attitudes (Mi et al., 2018). The attitudes symbolized as negative or positive feelings from individuals to respond to behavior. The emergence of subjective norms as individual perceptions in responding to social pressures. Behavior converted through TRA, has widely applied as an original and extended form to project individual intentions in online purchases (Tommasetti et al., 2018; Taherdoost, 2018). Recently, TRA applied to identify items that influence the desire of those who purchase services over the internet.

The TRA very aligned in exploring various indicators that influence the attitudes of internet banking users in Finland and Indonesia (Yang et al., 2021). In addition, they have used TRA as a basis for developing the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as well as for modifying the TAM model with SN. It is important to note that the ability of TRA to explain the behavior in question is because of the effect of SN inconsistencies in modeling technology acceptance of information systems (IS). In a comparative study of IB adoption in Singapore and South Africa, the results showed SN did not affect IB adoption in both Singapore and South Africa as a hypothesis in their model (Hanafizadeh et al., 2014). In other findings also show that SN is not a significant determinant in other studies (Buabeng-Andoh, 2018).

Assume of Theory Planned Behavior (TPB) is an elaboration of TRA and escalated to legitimize conditions, where individuals do not have full control over their behavior (Asih et al., 2020). We believe TPB to confirm the intentions and behavior of consumers in deciding. As for the TPB are attitudes and behavior, the same is the case with TRA. However, this model also reaches out to behavioral control as a perceived construct. Therefore, TPB gained three constructs in determining user intention, such as behavior, attitude, and Post-Benefit Convenience (PBC). The theory has gone on over time to study different IT systems, such as computer resource centers, electronic securities, spreadsheets, and negotiation support systems.

A decomposition of the TPB model through a new format that is useful for better understanding the relationship between intention antecedents and belief structures (Zahid, Din, 2019). Several researchers have examined the approach to the decomposition of beliefs into multidimensional constructs. They inspires the TPB Decomposition Model. This model provides three sets of belief structures in a multi-dimensional belief construct. These beliefs can refer to as attitude beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs and related to attitude, SN, and PBC, respectively (Dhagarra et al., 2020). The decomposition of the TPB model has many valuable advantages as a representation of the TRA core construct. It also provides an attitude belief dimension derived comprising the five innovation attributes instead of the two ease-of-use and usability factors proposed in the TAM model.

About the importance of information security and privacy in the TAM system in online banking (Satsios, Hadjidakis, 2018). Online services in financial institutions are trust-oriented. Identify of consumers who make online decisions based on trust. A higher level of trust certainly plays an important role in the use and acceptance of IT. In developing countries (such as Indonesia), it is very real empirically (Asih et al., 2020).

Consumer trust shapes it where aspects of security and privacy are key factors in influencing users to adopt IT. Presented of security and privacy widely discussed in practical and academic

fields (Skvarciany, Jurevičienė, 2018). Privacy as an ability to regulate and control individuals. From a consumer perspective, security constructs and protects potential threats. They have proven its ability to protect consumer information from fraud (Ikbali et al., 2020).

4. Results

Table 2 shows the results of the validity test using Pearson product-moment correlations. Here, the instrument, through the assumption of validity referring to the Pearson correlation, concludes that all items in the variable have good reliability and validity.

Table 2. Test of validity and reliability

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
Perceived Risk (PR)		0.659
PR-1	0.691**	
PR-2	0.709**	
PR-3	0.659**	
PR-4	0.757**	
Decision Convenience (DC)		0.754
DC-1	0.770**	
DC-2	0.825**	
DC-3	0.699**	
DC-4	0.748**	
Access Convenience (AC)		0.819
AC-1	0.844**	
AC-2	0.817**	
AC-3	0.804**	
AC-4	0.769**	
Transaction Convenience (TC)		0.677
TC-1	0.766**	
TC-2	0.835**	
TC-3	0.738**	
Benefit Convenience (BC)		0.709
BC-1	0.755**	
BC-2	0.838**	
BC-3	0.795**	
Post-Benefit Convenience (PBC)		0.809
PBC-1	0.879**	
PBC-2	0.858**	
PBC-3	0.824**	
User Satisfaction (US)		0.793
US-1	0.856**	
US-2	0.872**	
US-3	0.801**	
Trust (T)		0.791
T-1	0.889**	
T-2	0.809**	
T-3	0.827**	

Source: calculations from SPSS, Note: **p < 0.10.

SPSS software supports calculations in the influence's model of e-service convenience and perceived risk on the satisfaction and trust of online academic users in Indonesian universities (see Table 3). *H1*: perceived risk has a negative and insignificant impact on user satisfaction, where risk perception has an effect of -0.053 and $p > 0.05$. *H2*: decision convenience has a positive and significant impact on user satisfaction, where the path coefficient is 0.139 with $p < 0.10$. *H3*: access

convenience actually has a positive but not significant effect on user satisfaction because the path coefficient is -0.058 with $p > 0.05$. *H4*: transaction convenience has a positive and significant effect on user satisfaction. We can see this from the coefficient value reaching 0.409 with $p < 0.05$. *H5*: benefit convenience has a positive and significant impact on user satisfaction because the path coefficient is 0.097 with $p > 0.05$. Equally interesting, the output of SPSS also presents the impact of the post-benefit convenience that affects the user satisfaction in a positive and significant way. *H6*: through the probability criterion of 0.10 , the result is $p < 0.10$ and the path coefficient is 0.143 . Finally, *H7*: user satisfaction against trust showed by the coefficient reaching 0.510 and $p < 0.05$. Thus, user satisfaction has a significant influence on trust.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Std. Coef. Beta	T	Sig.	Explanation
H1: PR – US	-0.053	-0.982	0.327*	Not Sig.
H2: DC – US	0.139	1.892	0.060**	Sig.
H3: AC – US	-0.058	-0.632	0.528*	Not Sig.
H4: TC – US	0.409	4.609	0.000*	Sig.
H5: BC – US	0.097	1.273	0.204*	Not Sig.
H6: PBC – US	0.143	1.772	0.078*	Sig.
H7: US-T	0.510	8.750	0.000**	Sig.

Source: calculations from SPSS, Note: * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.10$.

Actualize of risk perception is the first concept that focuses on symptoms such as reference groups, brand loyalty, pre-purchase considerations, and information seeking (Chau, Ngai, 2010; Bauer, 1964). The phenomenon that highlights consumer behavior in involving one risk of all these actions is unpleasant (Cox, 1967; Ho, Ng, 1994; Stone, Gronhaug, 1993; Peter, Ryan, 1976). From the investigated two types of risk in IT including personal risk and performance risk. Personal risks, such as losses to consumers because of behavior in using online systems (Jarvenpaa, Todd, 1996). Second, the performance risk discusses the service or product. Does it meet their expectations?. Of course, this is the primary concern of the system provided by consumers.

Interventions on the user's perceived risk prove that the findings have resulted in a perceived risk that does not have a real impact on users of the online academic system. In fact, there is no expectation from service users in the academic system (Chu et al., 2016). They will continue to use the online academic system services, because they have no other choice to contribute.

The second to sixth hypothesis testing has a relationship with the concept of e-service convenience on user satisfaction. Designed in the conceptual service convenience was proposed if consumers' perceptions of effort and time related to the use and purchase of a service (Kong et al., 2021). The dimensions of effort and time as an advantage in consumer convenience stimulate this. Indirectly, they experience reduced time while controlling work related to service consumption and acquisition (Zeithaml, Bitner, 2000). In the end, the convenience of service leads to added value by reducing the effort and duration of consumers' time in using the service.

The convenience and multidimensional construction lead to service convenience through effort and time that must agree on the activities experienced by consumers during the service use and purchase process (Berry et al., 2002). The five aspects of service convenience include access, transaction, benefit, decision, and post-benefit (Malhotra, Galletta, 1999). These five sections reflect the stages of their activity towards purchasing.

5. Conclusion

The point in this study is to map how the role of the user satisfaction affected by perceived risk, decision convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, benefit convenience, and post-benefit convenience. In addition, the extent of the relationship between user satisfaction and trust for online academic users at three universities in Indonesia. We found that of the seven hypotheses developed, four proposals accepted, and the remaining three rejected. Therefore, decision convenience, transaction convenience, and post-benefit convenience have a significant effect on user satisfaction. While still in the first line, perceived risk, access convenience, and benefit convenience actually have an insignificant effect on the user satisfaction. In particular,

on the second track, user satisfaction has had a significant impact on trust. Subsequent research can include the intention variable to use as an intermediary variable before the user feels satisfied with online academic service.

These findings are relevant and have been in line with studies discussing satisfaction that is influenced by the quality of electronic services and desire and attitude influenced the desire to use a website. Web quality explores the quality of electronic services (Carlson, O’Cass, 2010; Loiacono et al., 2002). A scale in Web quality, including thirty-six items classified on four constructs (convenience, complementary relationships, benefits, and entertainment). The result found a systematic relationship between attitudes, desires, and satisfaction with the quality of e-service on the website.

For operational purposes and future managerial considerations, the object can be expanded by submitting external parties as respondents. Thus, it can be seen to what extent aspects of satisfaction and aspects of trust can be built in two directions.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 396-405

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.396
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Media Representation of the Image of the Russian Political Leader in Western Online Media (On the Material *Daily News* and *Der Spiegel*)

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Abstract

This article seeks to contribute to a theory of media's construction of reality – study the ways mass media use to shape a public figure's image, on the example of the Russian political leader's representation in foreign media. The main focus of the research is on the linguistic means by which this image is created and reinforced. The data are drawn from a selection of publications of the American newspaper *Daily news* and the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in the online format from 2000 to 2004 and from 2018 to 2020 .

The authors examined is a striking and by far not unique example of how the world media construct the social reality for a contemporary man. In most cases, creating the media image of the President of Russia V. Putin, the *Daily News* and *Der Spiegel* appeal to readers' negative emotions. Although on the pages of the German edition over the last three years it was possible to identify language means that positively characterize the leader of Russia, their share is insignificant. Since the selection of linguistic means directly affects what image will be formed in the mind of the reader, it can be concluded that the Western media deliberately form a predominantly negative media image of the Russian president, thereby manipulating the opinion of the German-speaking and English-speaking people. It should be admitted that powerful structures of information warfare and anti-Russian propaganda have long been developed in the West, and this propaganda itself, often mixed with Russophobia, has practically turned into a factor of global politics.

Keywords: media, media text, representation, media political discourse, political leader, linguistic means, analysis.

1. Introduction

Today, a person receives most of the information via media texts from various resources, including online newspapers and magazines. However, the mass media have long ceased to be the actual means of *transmitting* information, but mainly have moved into the category of means of *manipulating* the public consciousness. In the modern world, information and psychological impact on the minds and social behavior of people is becoming one of the main threats. With the help of linguistic means, the media impose a system of values and ideas about objects of reality, thereby constructing a certain world picture on the whole, and in particular, they shape the media images of nations, states and their political leaders, which are being fixed in people's minds and acquire special significance in the era of information wars. In this regard, it is important to study the linguistic means used in foreign media to form the media image of the Russian political leader.

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2. Materials and methods

The materials of the study are publications of the American newspaper *Daily news* and the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in the online format from 2000 to 2004 and from 2018 to 2020, in which the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin has been mentioned. Both media are popular and respected by readers. Thus, the *Daily News* is the sixth largest daily newspaper in New York City in the United States, founded in 1919. The newspaper has won eleven Pulitzer Prizes. *Spiegel Online* (SPON) is one of the most read and cited news sites in German. It was founded in 1994 as an online version of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* with a staff of independent journalists. The editor-in-chief is currently journalist M. Müller von Blumenkron. At first, the style of the publication was completely copied from the best American and British publications, especially *Times* magazine.

In the present work, we rely on the concept of social construction of reality by P. Berger and T. Luckmann (Berger, Luckmann, 1995). The methodological basis of this research is a hypothetical-deductive method associated with the analysis and generalization of theoretical and practical material. The development of the main categories and the analysis of theoretical material is carried out on the basis of conceptual analysis, as well as a descriptive-comparative method, which allow comparing various approaches and theories to the study of media-political discourse, identifying their advantages and disadvantages to determine their own research paradigm.

The research was carried out at the intersection of discourse theory, media linguistics and political linguistics, the central concepts of which are media-political discourse, media image, media text. The selection and analysis of lexical means of forming the media image of the Russian president has been carried out by means of continuous sampling of material, contextual analysis, by the method of comparative analysis of texts in different languages.

3. Discussion

Linguists note that the term “discourse” in linguistics is famous for its ambiguity. Thus, discourse can be defined as a coherent text in combination with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors; the text taken in the event aspect; as speech, “immersed life” (Arutyunova, 1998: 136-137), “appropriated by the speaker” (Arutyunova, 1998: 136-137); as a “text immersed in the situation of communication”, which allows for many dimensions and complementary approaches in the study, including pragmalinguistic, psycholinguistic, structural-linguistic, linguocultural, sociolinguistic (Karasik, 2000: 5-6); as a text in its dynamics, correlated with the main subject, with the “Ego” of the entire text with a person who creates the text (Stepanov, 1981: 332); as a set of interactions between the representations of certain social groups (for example, a politician – a citizen) (Protasova, 1999: 144). In all these definitions, the concept of discourse presupposes a set of linguistic means with the conditions of communication.

As the most relevant to this study, let us dwell on the concept of discourse in the light of “a set of correlated texts functioning in the same communicative sphere” (Chernyavskaya, 2014: 112). V.E. Chernyavskaya emphasizes that the texts combined into discourse address one common theme, and the content of the discourse is revealed not in one separate text, but in the complex interaction of many separate texts. According to this interpretation, examples of discourse are political, legal, media ones, etc. This work focuses on the media-political discourse arising in the process of close interaction of political and media discourse.

By political discourse, we mean a set of texts united by political themes, the distinctive features of which are “a quick change in the extralinguistic context of the creation and perception of a text, ideological orientation, internal polemics, a simultaneous combination of dialogism and monologue, the use of political argumentation, totalitarianism, intertextuality, mythology, stereotypicality, opposition of the concepts “our”, “alien” (Matveeva, 2008: 92) and manipulative orientation. We also agree with M.V. Grechikhin, who describes media discourse as “a socially regulatory mechanism that organizes mass consciousness through the formation and replication of socially significant cognitive, axiological and regulatory meanings” (Grechikhin, 2008: 6). That is, the media create, construct another reality, a picture of the world, form ideological meanings, thus influencing the opinion of society and manipulating it. Within the framework of this study, media-political discourse is considered as a product of the interaction of political and media discourses, the main task of which is to form public opinion.

Information media resources form an attitude to the phenomena of reality, including constructing media images of individual personalities. There are many interpretations of the concept of “media image”. So, M.N Cherkasova defines a “media image” as a product of the media industry, in which political, financial, economic, socio-cultural, psycholinguistic means and methods of creating a particular media phenomenon are involved (Cherkasova, 2010: 256). N. Luhmann argues that a “media image” is an image of a second reality, since the media do not state facts, but interpret them, are a kind of “mirror” or a second reality (Luhmann, 1996: 12-13). However, this “second reality” can often have little in common with the “first” one, existing in reality, and the mirror may be crooked.

In our opinion, the concept of social construction of reality by P. Berger and T. Luckmann is very productive in the study of the role of media in the life of society. In their work, scientists operate with the concept of “everyday knowledge” and define it as knowledge that any individual shares with other people in the usual self-evident routine of everyday life. Researchers argue that the reality of everyday life is taken for granted, that is, it does not involve analysis. Its existence is taken for granted (Berger, Luckmann, 1995).

This “everyday knowledge” in the media space constructs myths. The theorist and practitioner of mythology Roland Barthes argues that myths are capable of “deforming reality” (Barthes, 2019: 280). According to Barthes, a myth is a word, a communication system, a message. At the same time, it is a form enclosed in a historical framework, used in certain conditions, filled with a certain social content. Meanwhile, the mythical word (concept) is considered not only and not so much as a unit of natural language, but as a sign of a semiological system (Barthes, 2019: 265-267). The scientist emphasizes that “any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system” (Barthes, 2019: 291).

Thus, a modern person exists inside the media space, which constructs myths, wrapping them in certain media images, thereby creating the social reality, reflecting, shaping and distorting the system of human value orientations (Camarero et al., 2019; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2021; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021).

4. Results

In the course of the analysis of the linguistic means used by the authors of German and English-language media texts to form the media image of the Russian political leader, various means of linguistic expressiveness were identified, among which the bulk are quotations and various tropes. The vast majority of these means create a negative image of the President of Russia and thereby purposefully tarnishing the image of Russia and Russians in general.

The entire spectrum of expressive means is used as linguistic means of media representation of the head of the Russian Federation: epithets, comparisons, metaphors, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, allegory, hyperbole, lithote, paraphrase, oxymoron, irony, phraseological units, etc. We are not going to analyze each of them within the current study's framework. We only note that a special place in the media is occupied by a metaphor, which is a necessary and effective method of representing reality or attitudes towards it, since it permeates our everyday life, and not only language, but also thought and action. Our usual conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, Johnson 1990: 387).

In the American media texts of 2000-2004, they wrote about the Russian president that he is an unfamiliar person without a past, “blank slate” (Nelson, 2000), “former KGB agent” (Sisk, 2000a) or “former KGB spy” (Sisk, 2000b), who “launched a KGB- style campaign of harassment against a free and fair press” (Daily News, 2000).

The German media also often resort to metaphorical means, for example, during the first period of the presidency, they wrote about the rapid rise to power of V.V. Putin was due to his successful counterterrorism activities: “Der gnadenlose Kampf gegen Terroristen”, der auch Hunderten von Zivilisten das Leben kostete, spielte die Schlüsselrolle beim rasanten Aufstieg Putins an die Macht” (Essipov, 2000). The author of the text creates the image of a “merciless” careerist who reached the pinnacle of power only despite the fact that there were some casualties on this path, but also largely due to activities that “cost the lives” of hundreds of people. At the same time, the journalist does not mention the danger of the policy of flirting with terrorists, whose victims have become hundreds of people.

The policy of the Russian president is described as being conducted by a “strong hand”: “Politik der harten Hand” (Gebauer, 2004) or “In seiner Person erkannten die Russen die längst ersehnte starke Hand”, die nach neun Regierungsjahren des schwachen und unberechenbaren Jelzins wieder mal Sicherheits- und Großmachtgefühle vermitteln könnte” (Essipov, 2000). And Russia is called “Putin's empire”, in which a special role is assigned to the secret police: “In Putins Reich wachsen rasch die Aufgaben der Geheimpolizei” (Klussmann, 2000). These linguistic means create the image of a tough sole ruler, a “monarch”, thereby referring to the past of Russia and indirectly indicate the past activities of the current president during his previous service in the security agency.

The perception of Russia as a state with a totalitarian type of government leads to comparison between the leaders of Russia and China, who are openly called “dictators and tyrants”: “Biden got on the bad side of Kim's mouthpiece when he accused Trump of sucking up to “dictators and tyrants” like Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin (Goldiner, 2019). And it is not surprising, because the mass media reflects the rhetoric of the politicians of their countries. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov also noted that, as bearers of authoritarianism, these two states are designated as the main “obstacle” to the implementation of the “democratic” course by the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance (Lavrov, 2021). *Der Spiegel*, reporting on the war in Syria, calls the head of the Russian Federation on a par with the presidents of Turkey and Syria an “autocrat”: “Die Autokraten Erdogan und Putin und der Diktator Assad entscheiden über Leben und Tod” (Titz, 2020). Thus, the Western media are purposefully weaving in the enemy's image of the Russian leader, and therefore “painting” Russian citizens as people whom one needs to fight with, whom one needs to defend oneself from. Hence, the question naturally arises: what about German tolerance? Why is Germany diverse (“Deutschland ist vielfältig”), while the rest of the world is clearly divided into “correct” democracies and autocracies?

The President of Russia is harshly criticized in the Western media in connection with the long term of office, amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, etc. The following namings are found in media texts: “the longtime Russian president” (Gifford, 2020), “Zar für die nächsten Jahre”(German. Tsar for the years to come) (Esch, 2020a) and others. American media compare V.V. Putin with Stalin and accuse of seizing power: “Lawmakers in Russia voted Wednesday to change the country's constitution so that term limit restrictions will not apply to the former KGB agent, who is slated to leave office in four years ... Only Joseph Stalin, who led the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1953, served the nation longer ... Roughly 200 protesters showed up near the Kremlin Tuesday night to voice objection to Putin's apparent power grab” (Niemietz, 2020). The German media create an image of deceived, disoriented Russians who were lured to the ballot boxes and forced to vote for changes to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The President of Russia is called “Hütchenspieler” (German, a swindler) (Esch, 2020a).

At the same time, it is noted that the removal of the term limits for the presidency is only one of the 206 amendments put to the vote: “Um die Verwirrung des Wahlvolks vollständig zu machen, ist Putins Befreiung von der Amtszeitbeschränkung nur eine von 206 Verfassungsänderungen (Esch, 2020b). The phrase of the Russian president “We are not voting for changes in the Constitution, we are voting for the country in which we want to live” was interpreted as a poorly veiled call for his own indefinite domination in the Kremlin: “Was er in seinem schlecht verhüllten Wahlauftritt verschwiegen, war die Tatsache, dass es um ihn selbst geht und die Entfristung seiner Herrschaft im Kreml” (Esch, 2020b). At the same time, the many years of being in power of their own political leaders (Angela Merkel as Federal Chancellor of Germany - for 16 years, Helmut Kohl - 16 years, Konrad Adenauer – 14 years) is taken for granted, and their repeated re-election to the position is seen as an expression of citizens' support of the leaders' political and economic course.

Since V.V. Putin has led Russia for several decades and has not left the pages of the media, it seems worthwhile to trace the transformation of the image of the Russian leader, formed by the foreign press. To do this, in publications of two periods from 2000 to 2004 and 2018 to 2020 the nominations, with the help of which the image of the Russian president was created in the American newspaper *Daily news* and the German *Der Spiegel*, were selected (Table 1).

In German-language media texts of the period 2000-2004 the activities of the Russian head of state were constantly associated with his work in the security agencies, which is confirmed by the nominations “unbekannter Geheimdienstler”, “KGB-Oberst”, “der damalige FSB-Chef” (Essipov, 2000) or “der Ex-KGB-Agent” (Mettke, 2002). Meanwhile, the media used stylistic means that form the media image of an exceptionally incompetent, inexperienced leader who has to prove that

he is able to rule the country, for example, the metaphors “Putins schwerste Prüfung”, “ernste Probe” (Mrozek, 2002), the oxymoron “Die hilflose starke Hand or “der mächtigste Mann im Riesenreich machtlos” (Essipov, 2000), but at the same time, the lack of experience did not prevent him from pursuing an independent tough policy, as a result of which there are nominations “der zu selbstständig gewordene Präsident” (the President who has become too independent) and the metaphor “ersehnte “starke Hand” (the sought after strong hand) (Essipov, 2000).

Table 1. Transformation of the media image of the Russian president in the magazine *Der Spiegel*

<i>2000-2004, German</i>	<i>Translation in English</i>	<i>2018-2020, German</i>	<i>Translation in English</i>
Unbekannter Geheimdienstler, KGB-Oberst, der damalige FSB-Chef, der Ex-KGB-Agent, der Kamerad Putin aus St. Petersburg, der neue russische Staatschef, gottloser Geheimdienstoffizier, Christ, tief gläubiger Mensch, streng Gläubiger, glaubensstarker Zar, ersehnte “starke Hand” der zu selbstständig gewordene Präsident, der Erneuerer im Kreml, Aufklärer Putin, der mächtigste Mann im Riesenreich, der Herr im Kreml, der Kremlherr, der Kremlchef, ausgemachter Konformist, Pragmatiker, Schröders großer Bruder, Schröders Kumpel, der hohe Gast	Unknown secret service, KGB Colonel, the then FSB boss, the ex-KGB agent, comrade Putin from St. Petersburg, the new Russian head of state, godless intelligence officer, Christian, deeply believing person, strict believer, strong faithful tsar Longed-for “strong hand” the president who has become too independent, the innovator in the Kremlin, enlightener Putin the most powerful man in the gigantic empire, the Kremlin lord, the Kremlin chief, outright conformist, pragmatist, Schröder's big brother, Schröder's buddy, the distinguished guest	ein gewalttätiger Autokrat, Gewinner im syrischen Bürgerkrieg, Despot, der starke Mann Russlands, der Kümmerer, der gute Landesvater, der Landesverteidiger, Wohltäter, Milder Präsident, der Modernisierer, der Reformier harter Naturbursche, Träger des schwarzen Gürtels in Judo, Macho, Alpträumler, der Eismann, der Hütchenspieler, Trumps Helfer	a violent autocrat, winner in the Syrian civil war, Despot, the strong man of Russia, the carer, the good father of the country, the defender, benefactor, Mild President, the modernizer, the reformer, tough outdoorsman, wearer of the black belt in judo, Macho, Nightmare, the ice cream man, the shell player, Trump's helper

During the beginning of the Russian political leader's term, the German press was also sarcastically about his religious beliefs, putting forward hypotheses regarding the “transformation of a godless secret police officer into a deeply religious person”: “wann die Wandlung des gottlosen Geheimdienstoffiziers zum streng Gläubigen geschah” (Klussmann, 2001). In the same ironic form, the support of the Russian President's Orthodox Church in strengthening the state was emphasized: “Und die Kirchenführung nimmt dankbar zur Kenntnis, wenn ihr glaubensstarker Zar ihren Beitrag“ zur patriotischen Erziehung und zur Stärkung des Staates rühmt” (Klussmann, 2001) It is not clear in this case why the religious beliefs of the Russian president is presented in the Western media as proof of his insincerity: “Wann die Bekehrung des Kremlherrn stattgefunden hat, verriet der Geistliche nicht” (The clergyman did not reveal when the Kremlin lord's conversion took place) (Klussmann, 2001). In Russia, from time immemorial, church has played a large role in society.

In the Soviet period, belief in God was considered a relic of the past, since the communist ideology assumed the eradication of any religious feelings. However, it is not without reason that Russian wisdom says: Man proposes, but God disposes. The Soviet government did not succeed in

eradicating religious feelings from the population. In the USSR, Russian Orthodox Church survived and has revived in modern Russia. Putin prefers not to dwell openly on religious topics and believes that “it is better for a person to keep questions of faith in one's heart: Glaubensfragen sollte “der Mensch lieber in seinem Herzen bewahren” (Klussmann, 2001). Therefore, the words “Wandlung” (change) and “Bekehrung” (conversion) can be regarded as deliberate speech activity aimed at forming a negative media image of the Russian leader.

Quoting Putin's former colleague, Vladimir Usoltsev, *Der Spiegel* presents the Russian president as a careerist, a convinced conformist who does not believe in the possibility of change in his country, says one thing, but thinks another: “Pragmatiker ..., der das eine denkt und das andere sagt; “ausgemachten Konformisten, der an keinerlei Veränderung in seinem Heimatland glaubt” (Neef, 2003). Here is a quote from Usoltsev's book “Co-worker”, overall sympathizing the current president: “Volodya did not at all strive for a career and did not “fuss” in front of his superiors; “Volodya had no signs of a careerist. He was an ordinary hard worker-conformist, resigned to the system...” (Usoltsev, 2004: 230). The contradiction of images created by the ex-colleague of V.V. Putin and a German journalist is obvious.

One cannot fail to note the criticism and caustic irony of the German press regarding the friendly relations between the German Chancellor G. Schröder and V.V. Putin: “Gerhard Schröder und Russlands Präsident Wladimir Putin pflegen ihren eigenen, fast kindlichen Freundschaftskult ... Stolz wie ein Zehnjähriger auf seinen großen Bruder. Gerhard Schröder nach Hamburg gereist, um vor aller Welt seine außergewöhnliche Freundschaft zu demonstrieren” (Gerhard Schröder and Russia's President Vladimir Putin cultivate their own almost childlike cult of friendship ... as proud as a ten-year-old of his big brother. Look here, the German signaled, this is my buddy and we belong together ... After all, Gerhard Schröder traveled to Hamburg to demonstrate his extraordinary friendship to the whole world) (Schmitz, 2004). Relations between the heads of state are characterized by the epithets “childlike”, “extraordinary”. Basic respect, politeness or tact of the Western media towards the head of another state is non-existent. To cite, German media wrote “bellt Putin ungehalten auf Deutsch” (barked something in response to a question) (Schmitz, 2004). It is not clear what causes more irritation - the Russian president's fluency in German or the content of his answer.

While Western media were ironic about the friendly relations of the Russian president with former German Chancellor G. Schroeder, then only for a hint of those with former American President Donald Trump, the latter was severely criticized for: “Biden ... accused Trump of sucking up to “dictators and tyrants” like Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin” (Goldiner, 2019). “Trump is knowingly giving aid to the enemy, fighting by their side as they advance against our nation” (Mckew, 2018). Here, by the “enemy” is meant Russia and its President V.V. Putin. Thus, the Western press persistently broadcasts to its citizens that one cannot be friends with Russia, one can only fight/resist it, and that politicians building cooperative relations are to be blamed.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Russian president's tenure in power, the German weekly published a collage of 32 photographs with comments illustrating individual milestones of his political leadership and moments in life as a kind of touches to a portrait (20 Jahre .., 2019). Most (56 %) of the material characterizes V.Putin exclusively from the positive side, for example, the nomination “der starke Mann Russlands”, the epithet “bürgernah” is used in relation to the policy pursued taking into account the interests of citizens; 18 % of the information provided gives a negative assessment of the actions of the Russian leader, including quotes by the American President D. Trump with accusations of interference in the US elections. Photographs of the meetings of the President of the Russian Federation with the Chancellors of the Federal Republic of Germany: G. Schröder, who named V.V. Putin as a “pure democrat” – “lupenreiner Demokrat”, and A. Merkel, who is “hingegen brüskierte Putin” – “talked harshly” with him. Foreign media often draw attention to the excellent physical shape of the Russian president, resorting to such nominations as “the horse-riding strongman, the 67-year-old strongman, the Russian strongman Vladimir Putin” or “harter Naturbursche”.

The analyzed publication is a clear confirmation of this: 15 out of 32 facts about the Russian president are photographs on horseback, fishing, hunting, in a capsule sinking to the bottom of the sea, in the sky on a paraglider, etc. Comments on some of the photographs are quite ironic, for example, “Unerschrocken steuerte Putin das Boot dicht an Bären vorbei – und bediente damit wieder einmal das Macho-Image, das er in seiner Karriere schon oft zu nutzen versuchte”

(Undaunted, Putin steered the boat right past the bear – and once again used the macho image that he has tried to exploit many times in his career).

With the words “tried to use the macho image,” the media form the image of an “insincere” person. The last two photographs are selected and captioned as to intimidate the reader and to generate distrust. In the one picture, the President is feeding a moose cub, and the caption goes “Meistens hart, manchmal zart: Nicht immer gibt Putin bei seinen Aktionen den Macho. Manchmal – wenn auch selten – zeigt er sich ganz weich” (Mostly tough, sometimes tender: Putin does not always act macho in his actions. Sometimes - albeit rarely - he is very soft). And in the last photo, a woman is holding a portrait of the President with the inscription “That's all”, and the commentary informs about protest movements in Russia and citizens' discontent (20 Jahre..., 2019). Thus, the portrait of the Russian president is very contradictory and forms the image of a strong politician, a manly person and at the same time an “insidious enemy” not to be trusted.

The fact of humanitarian aid from Russia to the United States during the most acute period of the spread of the Covid pandemic in America was presented by the German media as “überraschend” (unexpected), arguing this assessment with “tense relations” between countries (“... weil die Beziehungen zwischen Moskau und Washington seit Jahren angespannt sind”), and therefore insincere: the publication's headline states that the Russian President “poses as/pretends to be Trump's helper” (“Putin inszeniert sich als Trumps Helfer”) (Corona News-Update, 2020).

The traditional multi-hour press conferences of the President of the Russian Federation with journalists are presented by the Western mass media as a kind of a show in which the head of state positions himself as a reformer, benefactor, defender of the country's interests: “Vier Stunden lang lief die jährliche Pressekonferenz des russischen Präsidenten Wladimir Putin - und sie immer mehr zur Presseshow. Widerspruch oder gar Protest gegen den Kurs der russischen Regierung gab es nur im zugelassenen Rahmen. Stattdessen durfte sich Putin als Modernisierer, Reformier, Kümmerer und Landesverteidiger geben” (Hebel, 2018). And although the nominations “Modernisierer, Reformier, Kümmerer und Landesverteidiger” are used in an ironic manner, we would like to believe that the Western media, according to the Russian proverb, accept the fact that there is some truth behind every joke.

Table 2. Nominations shaping the media image of the Russian President in the *Daily News*

2000-2004	2018-2020
a former career KGB officer	the 67-year-old former KGB agent
a former KGB official	this Kremlin former KGB officer
ex-KGB agent	dictator and tyrant
ex-KGB spy	the Russian autocrat
old Cod Warrior	despot, criminal, murderer and unmoral bum
an “enforcer” and political strategist	Tsar Vladimir
the Gray Cardinal	the longtime Russian president
beleaguered president	the most powerful man in the world
the grandson of one of Joseph Stalin's cooks	the shady Russian leader
brilliant bureaucrat	the outspoken and famously LGBTQ-unfriendly president of the Russia Federation
	enemy
	the resonification of evil
	the horse-riding strongman
	the 67-year-old strongman
	the Russian strongman Vladimir Putin

As Tab. 1 demonstrates, the nominations of the Russian leader in the German press have undergone qualitative transformation over the years. However, no significant change can be identified in the American media space (Tab. 2) apart from the more outspoken animosity of some of the epithets. Ignoring 20 years experience of state leadership, the head of the Russian Federation is persistently presented in American media as a “KGB agent”. For example, commenting on the amendments to the Russian constitution, the American press calls V.V. Putin's “former KGB agent”: “Lawmakers in Russia voted Wednesday to change the country's constitution so that term limit restrictions will not apply to the former KGB agent...” (Niemitz, 2020). Having

attached the label, the American media insist on it, despite the absurdity of the media image being drawn, which again proves the failure even to try to be objective, analyze the concrete situations, and not be guided by a bias. In this regard, it is not possible to trace the change in the media image of the Russian political leader in the American media.

5. Conclusion

In the era of mediatization, the media have an impact on almost all spheres of society. Currently, the dominance of the manipulative function is observed, the media do not so much inform as they influence, shaping the reader's opinion about certain events. As a tool of influence, the media use linguistic means with the help of which certain media images are formed by journalists. Due to the fact that the media are the main vehicles of presenting political reality to society, there is a close interaction of media and political discourses, and this, in turn, leads to the formation of media-political discourse, enshrined in media texts.

The material we have examined is a striking and by far not unique example of how the world media construct the social reality for a contemporary man. In most cases, creating the media image of the President of Russia V.V. Putin, the *Daily News* and *Der Spiegel* appeal to readers' negative emotions. Although on the pages of the German edition over the last three years it was possible to identify language means that positively characterize the leader of Russia, their share is insignificant. Since the selection of linguistic means directly affects what image will be formed in the mind of the reader, it can be concluded that the Western media deliberately form a predominantly negative media image of the Russian president, thereby manipulating the opinion of the German-speaking and English-speaking people. It should be admitted that powerful structures of information warfare and anti-Russian propaganda have long been developed in the West, and this propaganda itself, often mixed with Russophobia, has practically turned into a factor of global politics.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 406-415

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.406
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Health-Related Information Seeking During COVID-19: Testing the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking on University Students of Pakistan

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Abstract

The study revolves around online health related information seeking. Hypothetically, the use of social media and other internet-based platforms is becoming common. This information seeking behavior further leads to self-medication which can be dangerous, so it requires theoretical attention. While many studies have been conducted to cover this behavior, there was a need to explore this area in the context of Pakistan. Internet is the focus of this study which is further sub-categorized into other media forms like Social Media, Google Search, Online Web T.V./Radio and E-Magazines/Papers. Data was gathered using purposive sampling technique from the intended population ($N = 300$) and to examine the data. Findings of this study indicated that the relationship of information-carrier characteristics and online health information seeking was significantly mediated by utility of information channel. On the other hand, utility was significantly predicted by beliefs, interest, and information-carrier characteristics. Furthermore, direct experience and salience are not significant predictors of utility of online health information seeking. The study also helped elaborating the extensions of comprehensive model of information seeking, which are helpful in applying this model in context of the latest digital media.

Keywords: comprehensive model of information seeking, internet, online health information seeking, information seeking, direct experience.

1. Introduction

Health being an important and sensitive issue for all, requires a lot of care and negligence, in such issues, can be fatal. The information available on the internet can be questionable specifically when it comes to validity and authenticity. Issues like health, demand great care and internet users need to be more concerned about the validity of such information on the internet. In this time of severe pandemic situation all around the globe, people prefer seeking information by using online platforms rather than physically visiting a medical institute or meeting a medical consultant. The COVID-19 induced lockdowns in different countries around the globe has encouraged people to avoid physical interactions and the information seeking behavior of people has increased as people have been home-locked and are endangered by the outbreak.

The initial reports about the coronavirus prompted people to seek more information on the internet and news of first COVID-19 cases had a significantly great effect on people's information seeking behavior. The initial news about the outbreak led people to search on the internet about the

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coronavirus, its symptoms, and precautions. As such, it can be concluded that the COVID-19 news made people to attempt to educate themselves about the disease (Bento et al., 2020).

A study examining exposure of misinformation about COVID-19 in the US, South Korea, and Singapore, suggests that the internet users has been demotivated due to exposure to misinformation. But this study also argued that in early stages of COVID-19 pandemic, exposure to general information regarding the lesser-known hazard might have made people feel less-informed, as to prompt them to seek more information (Kim et al., 2020). A similar study based in China advised that people significantly use internet-based sources for seeking information regarding health and specifically about COVID-19. Therefore, internet is seen as an important tool for searching such information in China (Zhao et al., 2020).

The internet being the only global-level platform of multi-type communication has become the need of everyone and its biggest product, the social media, has become the world's most agile form of communication. Therefore, it can be said that inventing the internet is breakthrough, especially in field of communications. Individual-level usage of the internet and the social media is increasing day-by-day, and there can also be seen a factor of dependency in this common behavior, as social media has become a major part of today's everyday life (Dutta-Bergman, 2005). Internet is a platform of communication where people can connect and discuss anything from any part of the world, that too with such ease of access. With all these features, social media has also become a major source of health of health communication (Zhou et al., 2018). Studies suggest that the internet and social media are a potential cause of the increase in support groups, and support groups are responsible for connection between a wide range of people from far distances and diverse cultures (Houston et al., 2002).

Contemporary studies also acknowledge the involvement of patient or medicine consumer in the search of health-related information that goes beyond doctor's consultancy (Dutta-Bergman, 2005). Studies that revolve around the OHISB (Online Health Information Seeking Behavior), considered demographic factors like age, gender, and education (Hartoonian et al., 2014; Johnson, Meischke, 1993; Robinson et al., 2006; Ruppel, 2016). Some studies concluded that the demographical factors do not share a significant relationship with utility of health-related information (Brodie et al., 2000; Tustin, 2010). In this digital where people are connected, they are supposed to make smart and wise decisions specifically when it comes to medical or health related problems. The sensitivity of such problems requires carefully acquired and reliable information (Dutta-Bergman, 2005).

The latest interactive form of communication, social media is a user-centered, user-friendly medium of communication. This unique aspect of social media proved to be the most essential one. The popularity of this interaction providing platform has led "social media" become a part of the dictionaries around the globe. Socialization has also changed its form to a much vibrant and dynamic one, all this due to social media (Murray, 2014). Along with the many opportunities it offers, social media has its own limitations. For instance, one of the essential features that it is a platform for everyone to share and receive information, which can be questionable, as everyone is free to share thus, authenticity of the information cannot be guaranteed. The validity of the content available on the social media requires attention, specifically when it comes to health. Past studies also show that validity of information sources can affect the behavior of seeking information online (Houston, Cooper, 2002). Such studies have addressed major topics of health communication, decision making in the context of medication and general information seeking regarding health (DeLorme et al., 2011).

A study conducted on female individuals suggest that the information seeking pattern of medical help seeking individuals depend on their characteristics (Han et al., 2010). This study also revealed that female individuals who have low-income rates and are less tech-friendly or do not have much exposure to technology and internet, are more likely to use internet-based platforms in order to seek information if provided with internet-connected system.

Literature suggests that large-scale consumption of internet-based information by individuals suffering from depression are more likely to go towards self-medication when offered such information (Houston et al., 2002). A review of a previous study showed that studies examining the information seeking behaviors reflect some unexplained variation. Furthermore, such studies also helped establishing that the activity level of individuals regarding their participation in the use of internet for information seeking purposes had insignificant variance in the results. Along with the lack of variance in these results, the urge for seeking information online

caused by efficacy was also indicated as insignificant. The study also revealed that people who lack the interest in seeking information online, are not necessarily uninformed. As such, it can be established that individuals who do not seek health-related information online, are possibly the ones who are already aware of the medical problem they are encountering. This further creates the possibility of relationship between non-seekers of information and aware or informed individuals (Grasso, Bell, 2015).

The comprehensive model of information seeking (CMIS) is a model that covers many factors that are likely to predict the online information seeking behavior in context of health. The model provides a framework which helps understand the trends of online information seeking behavior (OHISB) (Johnson, Meischke, 1993). Among these possible factors lies, demographical factors, direct experience, salience, and beliefs, and along with these factors there are attributes of information source/channel and its utility. Direct experience, salience and beliefs are considered as health-related factors while information carrier characteristics (ICC), interest in exchanging health information online and utility of information channel (UIC) are the information-carrier factors (ICF).

The model was first conceptualized by J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993), with a perspective of the usage in context of conventional media forms. However, in a previous study, it has also been applied in context of online/digital media and this study showed that the OHISB is more of a complex model as compared to the original CMIS (DeLorme et al., 2011). As suggested by an existing study (Hartoonian et al., 2014), in its original form, CMIS is not an effective model. As such, there was a need for an additional variable in order to enhance the fitness of this model in context of OHISB. On the other hand, in specific type of studies where explanation of information seeking behavior is required, CMIS proved to be an effective model (Han et al., 2010). In a study by J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993), it was explored that the CMIS is a fit model when health-related information seeking behavior is to be tested.

Past studies suggest that the CMIS has helped in indication of factors that would possibly influence the information seeking behavior in individuals belonging to various backgrounds (DeLorme et al., 2011). In another study, it was argued that the CMIS is a utile framework for studies discussing or examining the health-related information seeking behaviors (Han et al., 2010). These studies also suggested that the CMIS has been applied in numerous research-based studies. For hypothetical model (Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking) see Figure 1.

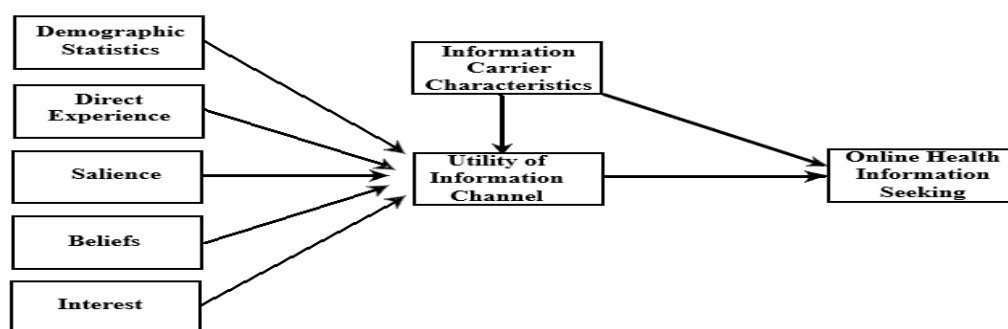


Fig 1. Illustration of the hypothesized Comprehensive Model of Online Health-Related Information Seeking

Note. Interest = Interest in exchanging health information online. Demographical factors such as age, gender and qualification are control variables, which is not reflected in this figure.

Demographics. Many past OHISB-centered studies have considered the demographical factors of individuals, for instance gender, education, economic status are most common factors considered (Hartoonian et al., 2014; Johnson, Meischke, 1993; Robinson et al., 2006; Ruppel, 2016). Although some studies did not suggest any direct influence of demographics on the utility of information channel (Johnson, Meischke, 1993).

Direct experience. J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993) defined direct experience as the suffering of a disease or an encounter with a medical or health problem by an individual directly or by someone from their social circle i.e., family, friends etc. In some studies, health has been considered as a measure for direct experience (Hartoonian et al., 2014; Oh, 2015).

J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993) suggested that like the influence of demographical factors, direct experience also reflected trivial effects in CMIS, specifically when testing its effect on the utility of information channel.

Saliency. J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke defined this health-related factor as “the significance of health-related information to an individual, which is associated to the degree of perceived medical threats that an individual may feel” (Johnson, Meischke, 1993: 347). As such, the subjective probability and fear regarding any medical threat can be regarded as salience. Hence, salience is one possible factor of motivation that might encourage an individual to seek medical and health-related information online.

Beliefs. Any individual’s health-related beliefs are referred as beliefs in studies like J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993). This behavior is directly related to HISB (Health Information Seeking Behavior), individuals who believe that they can help their medical condition by seeking such information online are more likely to use such platforms for information seeking purposes as compared to those who do not believe so. Some studies have suggested differently, arguing that the CMIS is neither predicted nor influenced by an individual’s personal beliefs (Hartoonian et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2006).

Information-carrier characteristics. A past study argued that the information-carrier characteristics influence the HISB in two ways, directly and indirectly through the utility of information channel (Johnson, Meischke, 1993). Various tests focusing the CMIS model showed that the strongest effect was found between the information-carrier characteristics and utility (Johnson, Meischke, 1993). Information-carrier characteristics in the CMIS was taken in the context of online information seeking behavior. In a study focusing OCIS (Online Cancer Information Seeking), an indirect influence of information-carrier characteristics via utility was found, although there was no insignificance or direct relationship (Hartoonian et al., 2014).

Utility of information channel. Some studies also oppose the findings of previous studies and argue that the utility of information channel has influence on the use of such sources (Hartoonian et al., 2014). It is advocated that the utility plays a significant role in the context of CMIS because it induces the effects of health-related factors and information-carrier characteristics on the HISB (Johnson, Meischke, 1993). Utility, as conceptualized by J.D. Johnson and H. Meischke (Johnson, Meischke, 1993), is the degree to which information in a channel or source satisfies the need of information seeking individual. On the other hand, in a previous study, it has been operationalized as belief in an information channel and the perceived capacity to approach or access the information (Hartoonian et al., 2014).

Interest in health information exchange online. With the use of CMIS framework, some past studies have focused the prediction of OHISB. Along with the process of information seeking, studies added another additional variable of satisfaction, and this framework has also been used in the context of online health-related information scanning (Robinson et al., 2006; Ruppel, 2016). Following hypotheses are constructed with the help of above literature.

H1: (a) Demographics, (b) direct experience, (c) salience, (d) beliefs, and (e) interest are significant predictor of utility of online health information.

H2: Characteristics of Information-carrier are significant predictor of utility of online health information.

H3: (a) Characteristics of Information-carrier and (b) utility are significant predictor online health information seeking (OHIS).

H4: Utility is a mediator between the relationship of all independent variable (demographics, direct experience, salience, beliefs, and interest) and one dependent variable.

H5: Utility is a mediator between the relationship characteristics of information-carrier and online health information seeking (OHIS).

2. Material and methods

Study Design and Participants. Correlational research design was used to measure the health information seeking behavior among university students of Lahore. Correlational research design is a useful technique to measure the opinion of the respondents on a topic. Moreover, this technique provides the data which can be empirically analyzed by a software in a quantitative manner. In the questionnaire, it was inquired whether the respondents use internet and social media or not. The purpose of this question is to ensure that the respondents are internet users and

do access social media every now and then. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. This helped the study to be conducted involving the intended population.

Different Lahore based universities, including University of the Punjab, University of Central Punjab, and Lahore Leads University, and University of management and technology students were approached through online google survey. A total number of three hundred survey questionnaires were distributed among the respondents with the help of their respective teachers. After final distribution of the questionnaires, the data was downloaded and was then entered into the software of use i.e., SPSS and then relevant tests were run in order to analyze the collected data statistically. The demographical factors like gender, age and education were included to this research, as these factors have been considered as a part of studies in previous research (Hartoonian et al., 2014). Adapting the instrument from previous study (Hartoonian et al., 2014) age, gender and education were inquired using general and categorized questions. The first demographic factor here, age, was inquired with simple and open-ended question and the respondents were to mention their age in years.

Descriptive analysis was applied for analyzing the demographics of the respondents with other variables and that ages of respondents were found to be $M = 21.87$ and $SD = 2.951$. The gender of respondents was, Males = 57.7 % and Females = 42.3 %. More than half of the respondents were undergraduate, 182 (60.7 %), while the remaining respondents 75 (25.0 %) were graduates and postgraduates were 43 (14.3 %).

Online health information seeking (OHIS) during COVID-19. To collect data related to online health information seeking behavior during COVID-19, a measure was adapted from a previous study (Stee, Yang, 2017). The question was asked for 5 different information sources, and for each of them they had to select one of the 5 points of the Likert-type scale. The sources for health information were internet/google search, social media, online web TV, E-Magazine/E-Paper and online radio.

Direct experience. The measure of direct experience was adapted from a previous study (Hartoonian et al., 2014) and included (1) "In general, would you say your health is...?" where a 5-point Likert-type scale was used which had responses from 1 (*poor*) to 5 (*excellent*). The direct experience was also inquired by asking "Have you ever been diagnosed as having major or minor flu/cough?" and "Have any of your family members ever had major or minor flu/cough?", here option ranged from 1 (*yes*) to 2 (*no*).

Salience. The scale of salience was adapted from a previous study (van Stee, Yang, 2018). For inquiring about the salience questions related to worry about health and chances of getting a disease were included, with a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Beliefs. Belief's scale was also adopted from a previous study (van Stee, Yang, 2018). For this part of the research, to inquire agreement or disagreement, on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Interest, Utility, and Information-carrier characteristics Scale. Respondents' interest was inquired in different types of health-related information providing platforms. Three constructed questions were used for inquiring the utility. Three questions with a 5-point Likert-type scale was used to inquire the information-carrier characteristics. All these scales were adopted from the previous two studies (van Stee, Yang, 2018; Basnyat et al., 2018).

Data Analysis. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the correlation between the variables. Smart PLS 3.2.9 was used to analyze the direct and indirect effects.

3. Discussion

This study investigated the hypotheses and proposed relationships between the variables in which few were rejected. The utility of information seeking was the first dependent variable, and it was measured with salience and direct experience which showed an insignificant and negative relationship. May be, salience is not directly associated with the utility of information seeking because generally people who are highly concerned with their health are over-cautious and do not prefer the use of internet and other such sources for seeking information and advisably tend to consult a general physician. In COVID-19 exposure to misinformation led people towards avoiding the available information. These findings are similar to a recent study (Hameleers et al., 2020; Hossain et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020; Soroya et al., 2021). However, this indicates that the significance of health information in individuals was not found to be a potential reason for utility of information seeking. The utility of information seeking was also

analyzed it with all other variables i.e. beliefs, interest and it showed a positive and significant relationship while it showed negative relationship with demographic variables and information-carrier characteristics.

These results imply that seeking information from online sources can occur due to a personal experience or a medical problem experienced by anyone from an individual's peer group or family member involving a disease or a medical problem. These findings are supported by a recent study conducted in Wuhan, China (Zhao et al., 2020) and with some other studies (Ali et al., 2020; Capone et al., 2020; Avery, Park, 2021). The study found that most people turned to internet to know about virus, medication, online support and managing self-quarantine. Beliefs about the information seeking from internet sources and health can be another possible factor which might develop tendency of such information seeking behavior. Similarly, interest for sharing or exchanging information from/on such sources can serve as such another factor. Analyzing direct experience with the other variables showed certain results, for example, with salience, it has shown a positive but insignificant relationship. This suggests that the direct experience of an individual may not serve as a potential or significant role-player in having an importance of health and medical issues. Possibly, this is because an individual who had an experience with a certain disease would be careful about practices that cause that specific medical problem and do not tend to learn or realize the importance of health in general.

Running the tests helped measuring variables and their relationships were analyzed which have been mentioned in the above discussion. However, results also suggested statuses of the proposed hypotheses of the study, most of them were qualified to be referred as accepted, after the analysis. While, against a few, evidence showed that some of the hypotheses did not qualify for the acceptance and were thereby rejected or nullified. As per the H1, the demographics would serve as a significant predictor of utility of information channel. However, this did not get justified as the results suggested the otherwise i.e., demographics did not predict the utility of information channel. These findings are supported by previous studies which argued that people consider television, health ministry, United nation organization (UNO) and newspaper as authentic source during pandemic (Islam et al., 2020; Mohamad et al., 2020; Reintjes et al., 2020; Tangcharoensathien et al., 2020). The hypothesis—suggesting that salience would be a significant predictor of utility of information channel (H3)—was also nullified, as salience did not predict the utility of information channel.

Beliefs were also proposed to be a predictor of the utility of information channel, and the tests concluded that it did serve as a predictor of the utility of information channel. In a recent study, health beliefs are found to be a significant predictor of willingness to receive vaccines (Wong et al., 2020) adherence to guidelines (Clark et al., 2020; Nowak et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2020). Similarly, interest was, hypothetically, said to be a predictor of utility of information channel. After the results were drawn from the analyses, it showed interest also acted as a significant predictor of the utility of information channel (Ali et al., 2020, Chan et al., 2020).

Hypothetically, information-carrier characteristics would predict the utility of information channel and viewing the results from the tests, it showed that information-carrier characteristics functioned as a significant predictor of the utility of information channel. This predicting role of information-carrier characteristics with the utility of information channel have also been supported by a previous study (van Stee, Yang, 2017). It was also proposed that the direct experience would be a significant predictor of the online health information seeking. It was proposed that the direct experience did not serve as a significant predictor of the online health information seeking in the condition.

Utility of information channel, on the other hand, was also confirmed by the tests to be a significant predictor of the online health information seeking i.e., this hypothesis was accepted. Moving on to information-carrier characteristics, which according to tests and as stated in the hypotheses significantly predicted online health information seeking. The prediction of information-carrier characteristics to the information seeking has been found in a previous study (i.e., van Stee, Yang, 2017) as well. Lastly, it was also proposed that the utility of information channel would serve as a mediator of the relationship between information-carrier characteristics and online health information seeking. The tests suggested that utility mediated the relationship between information-carrier characteristics and online health information seeking.

Limitations. This study considered population of general internet-using individuals. However, a research on this area can also be conducted using different methods and for obvious

reasons, with different theoretical directions. For example, this area can be studied by using stratified sampling, which will be required if the population has criteria to qualify for being respondents of the study i.e., ascribing certain attributes/characteristics to the supposed respondents. Such type of a research can be conducted if a researcher intends to test the CMIS on a different type of population i.e., other than just internet users or students.

Future Research. In the future, studies should explore this area further by examining the validity of the health-related information that can be found on the internet. With this being studied, researchers shall be able to understand whether the health-related content on the internet is valid or not. Also, studies to be conducted in the future, should investigate the online health information seeking behavior with a different population older aged people. And their behavior and tendency towards self-medication should be examined. With such theoretical direction, a study can help develop further understanding of the behavior and factors that predict such behavior in the older-aged people will also be testified.

Since the information seeking behavior can lead to self-medications, future studies should revolve around the self-medication behavior which can be considered as an extension of the CMIS, as it precedes online health-related information seeking. Researchers should analyze the extensions of CMIS while adding up more variables to the study, which can help investigate the usefulness of this model. Also, studying the self-medication behavior would help understand the complications of this issue at a greater level and would play a vital role in practices of health organizations that provide remedies for certain health issues and spread awareness about health in general.

4. Results

Preliminary tests were run to avoid any possible violation in the assumptions of analysis. Smart PLS 3.2.9 was applied to test the hypotheses. The results of direct effect show that the demographic variables ($\beta = -.30, p < .05$) and information carrier characteristics ($\beta = -.54, p < .01$) have negative and significant effect on utility. On the other hand, the direct effect of beliefs ($\beta = .22, p < .05$) and interest ($\beta = .18, p < .05$) on utility was positive and statistically significant. The remaining two independent variables (direct experience and salience) was not statistically significantly related to utility. In addition to this, information carrier characteristics ($\beta = .46, p < .05$) and utility of information seeking ($\beta = .23, p < .05$) was positively and significantly related to online health information seeking. These results are supporting the hypotheses H1a, H1d, H1e, H2, H3a, and H3b while H1b and H1c are not supported by data.

Mediation Analysis. Bootstrap approach was used to find the significance of indirect effect and 95 % bias-corrected confidence interval was used. This approach is most useful and superior from other approaches (MacKinnon et al., 2004). The indirect effect result indicates that utility only played mediating role between interest and online health information seeking ($\beta = .18, 95\% \text{ CI} = .026 \text{ to } .18$). Thus, hypothesis H4a, H4b, H4c, H4d were not supported by data and only H4(e) was accepted. In addition to this, the relationship between information carrier characteristics and online health information seeking was mediated by online health information utility ($\beta = .45, 95\% \text{ CI} = 1.93 \text{ to } .124$). So, H5 is accepted.

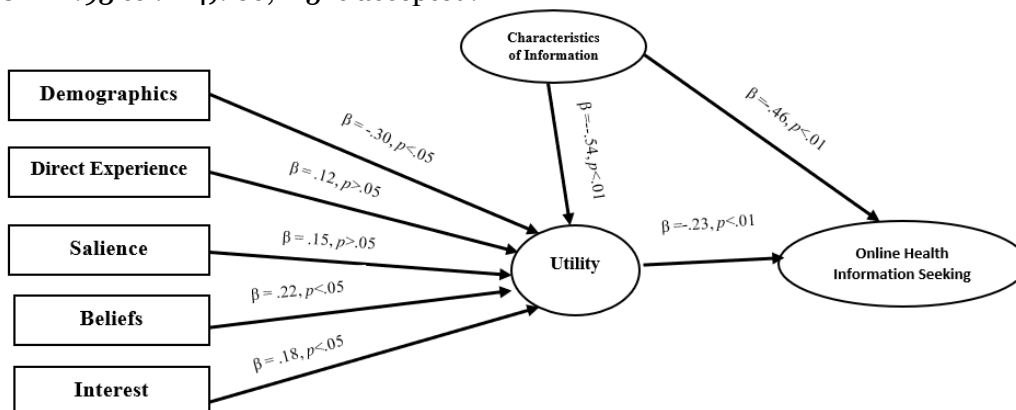


Fig. 2. Structural Model

5. Conclusion

This study has helped to develop a better understanding of the online health information seeking behaviour during COVID-19 pandemic. People with access to the internet and those who are tech-friendly can be bearers of this behaviour which leads to self-medication. However, when a layman is on the receiving end of the health-related information, self-medication can prove to be dangerous. With this level of understanding about this matter, healthcare providers and health organizations can work in a much better way to let people avoid this behaviour. It is because now, it is known what type of sources are used for health-related information seeking and why is this behaviour becoming a common thing in the technological era.

With all the factors that has been explored in this study, it is now known which of the factors play a significant role in exciting the aforementioned behavior, government-level measures can also be taken to run awareness campaigns. Such campaigns would spread awareness among people and would influence them to consult a doctor instead of seeking information over the internet or mobile applications regarding corona virus or other diseases. This study and its results related to the information-carrier characteristics offers implications for medical and health-care practices. The patients and affected individuals of any medical problem can be encouraged to receive health-related information provided by government or health organizations approved systems or health-related information-carrying platforms or portals. These platforms should be with the ease of access to general public and should carry authentic and relevant information only. This could help patients to find and understand the relevant information only. Health literacy should also be considered here, and the awareness campaigns should attempt to make people aware about the health and medical issues.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 416-425

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.416
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Peculiarities of Teenagers' Perception of the Characters of a Film Narrative in a Situation of Moral Choice

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Abstract

The study of the system of moral values of young people using film narrative, which has an effect on the impressions, meanings, significations, attitudes of people and values, human beliefs, treatment of people and values would determine mental health of an individual and psychological well-being of a society as a whole. Teenagers are those most susceptible to the exposure. The novelty of the study was that the evaluation of the impersonations of the characters in a situation of moral choice, transmission of moral values presented in the film narrative, was studied in adolescents without parental oversight, living in residential care facilities for more than 10 years.

The methodological foundation of the study was the psychosemiotic approach to content analysis. A toolbox of techniques was used in the study: theoretical analysis, immanent analysis of the film; factorial analysis; a dedicated semantic differential was used to discover the factors revealing the semantics of the impersonations of the characters of the film narrative in a situation of moral collision, and to compare their perception by different groups of teenagers; analysis of letters to the character was carried out using the procedure of content analysis. We proceeded from the assumption that teenagers' perception and semantic evaluation of the characters of the film narrative in the situation of moral choice was determined by their experience of living in the situation of moral choice and conditions of their upbringing; the system of values presented in the film narrative, the situation of moral collision experienced by the characters, determined the perception and semantic evaluation of their impersonations by modern teenagers. The study was carried out on the basis of schools in Irkutsk, facilities for children without parental care (Republic of Buryatia, Irkutsk) (n = 78). 'The Boy in the Striped Pajamas' motion picture was used as stimulus material.

It was demonstrated that teenagers left without parental care would perceive the characters of the motion picture in positive categories of morality more often than those raised in families. The attitude towards the characters of a movie who were in a situation of moral choice, was determined by the categories of nobility, peacefulness, humanity, tolerance, and piety. The identified differences could be explained by their experience of living in a situation of moral choice, the attitude toward children in situations of living hardships, the individual psychological differences of adolescents. Differences in attitudes could also be seen as the reason for differences in the effectiveness of the impression of the movie. It was substantiated that the situation of moral choice in cinematography served as a tool for shaping moral values.

The study sustained the idea of the potential of motion pictures, their effect on shaping moral values of adolescents, complemented the data on the effect of the film narrative on personal development and individual differences in the evaluation of media products. The obtained findings set

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the task of identifying the mechanisms of positive influence of movies on different groups of adolescents.

Keywords: impersonation, immanent analysis, psychosemiotic approach, narrative, moral values, semantic differential, content analysis.

1. Introduction

Moral inconsistency is incidental to the modern stage of the development of society: a collision of conflicting aspirations and interests in the domain of human relations would cause moral controversies, which constitute the essence of any moral problem that would arise in society. The study of the system of moral values of young people using film narrative, which has an effect on the impressions, meanings, significations, attitudes of people and values, human beliefs, treatment of people and values would determine mental health of an individual and psychological well-being of society as a whole. Adolescents are the most susceptible to that effect because they are deeper incorporated into the domain of the media narrative, which transmits and promotes certain moral and aesthetic values, implicitly influencing their consciousness and behavior. Motion picture content is becoming a part of adolescents' lives, as they receive a significant share of information about the rules of behavior and communication, as well as the picture of the world as a whole, in the media space.

Media content is one of the main sources for shaping attitudes of modern young people towards reality and their behavior, the formation and development of their moral values. In its content and focus, the film narrative contains great potential and a resource that requires deep and comprehensive study. The issue of the effectiveness of the effect of motion pictures has been studied by many researchers (Balabantaray, 2020; Baveye et.al., 2018; De Leeuw, Van der Laan, 2018; Kubrak, 2020; Kyshtymova, 2019; Tan, 2018). Academic literature noted insufficient attention to the perception of the content of visual codes by consumers, which contributed to the fact that the impersonation of a character would assume metaphorical nature (Poznina, 2017); students' uncritical perception of information transmitted via media texts (Kyshtymova, Trofimova, 2018); the role of heroes and victims in the formation of sociocultural identity (Tulchinsky, 2014). G.L. Tulchinsky noted that the impersonations transmitted in motion pictures would shape not the historical memory only, but would convey emotions through experiences, contributing to the formation of both positive and negative impersonations of the characters (Tulchinsky, 2014). Interdisciplinarity in the study of film narrative was substantiated (Zagrebin, 2019). Besides, it was noted that cinematography today is becoming a form of entertainment to provide for the emotional needs of people (Baveye et al., 2018).

The core of the film content would reveal a wide range of values, patterns of behavior and roles, producing a significant effect on the formation of value preferences of an individual. Therefore, study of psychological effects of a film narrative (Kyshtymova, 2018), its effect on the formation of moral values, appeared timely. In the resolution of moral conflicts, contemporary Russian researchers look for guidelines in the domain of the two phenomena: society and personality (Mironenko, 2010).

In academic literature, an enormous role was dedicated to media environment: the effects of media environment on the formation of personal moral values, behavior, self-awareness, and culture has been proven (Gerasimova, 2007), its leading role in modern social transformation processes was noted (Belonozhko, 2017). It was emphasized that the media environment, with its vast array of media content options, was one of the social institutions that shape moral values and behavioral patterns (Belonozhko, 2017). Different approaches in the study of the problem of moral choice based on the analysis of the film narrative were substantiated: literary, historical, religious, philosophical, and cultural studies, which afforded to see new meanings in the judgments and behavior of the characters in a narrative (Zagrebin, 2019).

The presented research was targeted at obtaining new data on the effect of the situation of moral choice on the evaluation of the characters of a motion picture and the study of the semantic evaluation of the characters in the situation of moral choice and their attitude towards moral problems.

2. Materials and methods

The methodological basis of the study was psychosemiotic approach to the analysis of a film narrative, the idea of the role of imaginative writing in the generating an aesthetic response and

form of behavior, the algorithm of the psychological analysis of a media text. A toolbox of techniques was used in the study: theoretical analysis, semantic differential, content analysis method, intrinsic analysis, factorial analysis.

We proceeded from the assumption that teenagers' perception and semantic evaluation of the characters of a film narrative in the situation of moral choice were determined by their experience of living in the situation of moral choice and conditions of upbringing; the system of values presented in the film narrative, the situation of moral collision experienced by the characters, would determine the perception and semantic evaluation of their impersonations by modern teenagers.

At the first stage of the study, an immanent analysis of the content of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* motion picture (2008, directed by Mark Herman, *Miramax Films, BBC Films, Heyday Films*) was carried out, involving a step-by-step analysis of its imagery system and the identification of psychologically significant meanings transmitted by the movie characters (Bruno and Shmuel). The motion picture presented a story that was unfolding during World War II. All the events taking place were rendered through the eyes of an eight-year-old boy, Bruno, the son of the commandant of a concentration camp. At the core of the story was Bruno's acquaintance with a Jewish boy, Shmuel, which turned into a friendship, and the consequences of that acquaintance. All the substantive and formal features of the text as a tracer of its deeper meanings were examined (Kyshtymova, 2017; 2018). Intrinsic analysis was also used to identify the educational resources of the film narrative. As the level of the research algorithm, the figurative system of the narrative was used (Kyshtymova, 2017), experience of narratological analysis of motion pictures (Efimenko, 2013). We considered the selected excerpts from the movie as a film narrative, because it did not assert the situation of choice only, but amounted to a 'multi-way narrative' (Bugueva, 2012).

At the second stage of the study, a dedicated semantic differential was used to discover the factors that revealed the semantics of the impersonations of the characters of the film narrative in a situation of moral collision, and to compare their perception in different groups of adolescents. Differential scales were formed by 30 pairs of adjectives describing moral values: 'polite – rude', 'noble – villainous', 'sympathetic – gloating', 'generous – grudging', 'sincere – fabricated', 'humane – cruel', 'principled – unprincipled', etc. Teenagers were offered to rate each character on those scales after watching excerpts from the motion pictures (narrative). The resulting data were subjected to mathematical processing using the SPSS-22 statistical package. Estimated markers were identified based on factorial analysis (maximum likelihood method with Varimax rotation). The reliability of the correlation matrix calculation and the possibility of factorial analysis were ensured by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) and Bartlett sphericity index. The dependability of the differences in the semantic assessment of the impersonations of the characters of the film narrative in a situation of moral conflict between the groups of adolescents was determined using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test.

At the third stage of the study, teenagers were offered to rate the motion picture itself using 6 scales: 'good – bad', 'interesting – uninteresting', 'helpful – harmful', 'teaches good – teaches bad', 'scary – not scary', 'comprehensible – non-comprehensible'. The resulting data were subjected to factorial analysis by the method of principal components. Besides, teenagers were offered to write a letter to a character of the movie, for whom they had the strongest fellow feeling. A content analysis procedure was used for the analysis. The categories of content analysis were determined on the basis of preliminary analysis of the concepts that made up the content of moral values: fellow feeling for the character, an attitude toward the character and his actions.

The study was carried out on the basis of schools in Irkutsk, the Kabansky Facility for children without parental care (Republic of Buryatia) and the Facility for children without parental care (Irkutsk) with the participation of teenagers aged 15-16 years (n=78). The entire sample was divided into two groups: the first group consisted of adolescents raised in a family, the second one – by adolescents without parental oversight who had been in care facilities for more than 10 years.

3. Discussion

The effect of media content on the oncoming generation, the influence of a film narrative on their mental and physical health was relevant and actively studied by representatives of various domains of academic knowledge. Both positive and negative effects of film content on a viewer were noted (Cingel, Krmar, 2017; De Leeuw, Van der Laan, 2018), absence of clear-cut criteria for determining its potential (positive or negative) (Kyshtymova, 2019).

We used *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008, directed by Mark Herman, *Miramax Films*, *BBC Films*, *Heyday Films*) as stimulus material. The motion picture had already been used as the subject of analysis in academic studies. Thus, D. Pinford asserted that the movie presented criminals as victims; viewing a child as a means of exploring the subject of the Holocaust (Pinford, 2015). Rey performed a comparison of the protagonists of *Balada triste de trompeta* (de la Iglesia, 2010) and *The Boy in the striped Pajamas* (Herman, 2008) and substantiated the conclusions about the manipulation of the characters' minds (Rey, 2016). The effectiveness of that content for educational purposes on the issues of Holocaust was explored (Gray, 2014). Distorted moral ideas and historical inaccuracies in the content were emphasized (Gray, 2014). Critics and researchers were unison in their opinions that the motion picture would produce great effect on the perception of historical events and consciousness. S. Rauch, quite reasonably, pointed out that it was not textual analysis only necessary in the study of the movie, but also the study of the real audience. The author argued that the film was relevant to the individual perception of the movie (Rauch, 2018).

C.S. Arunprabu, K. Kaviarasu, S. Poornima, K.P. Sharma described the content of the existential crisis experienced by the characters, their despondency, and the suffering of the characters who were close to them (Arunprabu et al., 2020). A substantive analysis of advances in psychological research of the motion picture since early in the twentieth century was presented by Ed.S. Tan. The author presented an account of the emotional experience of film viewers (Tan, 2018).

In academic publications containing an analysis of the effect of motion pictures on perception, more attention was paid to the emotional component. For example, an analysis of the emotional content of movies was provided by Y. Baveye, C. Chamaret, E. Dellandrea, L. Chen (Baveye et al., 2018). In their scrutiny of video content, the authors emphasized its effectiveness and proposed the use of computational models that would assess emotions in conjunction with psychological theories. The emotions evoked by the video set were closely related to the content of the narrative and the sequence of events in the movies (Markovic, 2012). Novelty, suddenness, unpredictability, pleasantness were recognized as important in the emotional evaluation of content (Scherer, 2009). The experience of emotion evoked by the narrative of the plot was stipulated by aesthetic experience, taste, and interest (Leder et al., 2004). Baveye, C. Chamaret, E. Dellandrea, L. Chen noted the importance of examining the influence of personality and culture on perceived quality and effect of video content (Baveye et al., 2018). Interesting was the research by S.R. Balabantaray. The author made an attempt to substantiate the effect of motion pictures on changes in the way of thinking and lifestyles (Balabantaray, 2020).

Various methods were used to study the effect of motion pictures on the consciousness and behavior of an individual: polling (Cocer et al., 2015, Zafar, Chaudhary, 2018), interview (Cernikova et al., 2017), experiment (Dillon, Bushman, 2017), content analysis (Habib, Soliman, 2015; Luisi, 2018; Turkmen, 2016), as well as analysis of the substantive and formal features of a media text (Kyshtymova, 2017).

Content analysis of techniques targeted at the study of morality was presented by A.E. Vorobyova (Vorobyova, 2012). The author argued for the diagnosis of the cognitive component of morality using questionnaires, moral dilemmas, expert evaluations, simulations of a situation and proposed to use ratings of psychological indicators of the effectiveness of newspaper headlines and advertising to assess moral self-determination. In the view of A.E. Vorobieva, the methodology afforded to study moral self-determination in relation to the phenomena of the world around, relation of self as a subject of morality, relation to others (Vorobyova, 2012).

This study attempted to substantiate the diagnostic possibilities of a film narrative in the study of morality. We implemented the analysis of the content and formal features of the film narrative using the method of semantic differential. The role of semantics in content analysis was discussed by A. Dridi and D. Reforgiato Recupero. The authors argued that verbal semantics for tone analysis was superior to non-semantic approaches (Dridi, Reforgiato Recupero, 2019). We believe that the capabilities of that method for the purposes have not been fully explored.

J.A. Bonus, N.L. Matthews, T. Wulf, using response surface analysis in their research, showed that participants' relationships with the main villain of the movie strengthened when he was perceived as more moral than expected, while their relationships with the main character of the film weakened when he was perceived as more or less moral than expected (Bonus et al., 2019). Those results emphasized the need for a deeper study of the processes and mechanisms of the impact of the film narrative on the consciousness, behavior and attitudes of an individual.

In recent years, there have been studies targeted at identifying the therapeutic and corrective-developmental effects of motion pictures (Eğeci, Gençöz, 2017; Kyshtymova, 2019). Thus, it was substantiated that the existential themes of a movie, presented by artistic means acceptable for the age of adolescence, would contribute to the development of the personality of cinematographic audience (Kyshtymova, 2019). A. Gibbs appealed for an objective study of the motion picture, involving appropriate interpretation of the meaning of the movie (Gibbs, 2017). V. Poznin believed that the metaphors of film narratives were targeted at the analysis of audiovisual creativity, contributed to the formation of aesthetic taste, the development of associative and imaginative thinking, as well as comprehensive perception of the multimedia text (Poznin, 2017). The publications suggested models of therapeutic change in cinematography: to use the strengths and virtues of the characters in a movie to discover their capabilities (Niemiec, 2020). Appropriate selection of motion pictures that match the goals of the therapeutic process appeared an important thing there.

The research by J. Steffens appeared worthwhile. The author examined the effect of music on moral judgments in the context of a motion picture perception. J. Steffens substantiated a judgment on how music may control perception. Research findings demonstrated that music produced significant impression on emotions, while affecting moral judgments in an indirect manner only. At the same time, the author noted the need to study the effect of music from a motion picture not on emotions alone, but also on the cognitive domain and thinking processes in general (Steffens, 2020).

In the paper, we investigated the perception of the movie characters by adolescents under different living and upbringing conditions. It was important to study not the evaluation of the characters in a situation of moral choice only, but also the attitude toward those. The content of the movie, its musical accompaniment would determine the emotional empathy of the characters and, in a certain manner, characterize their moral preferences.

The approach presented in the article complemented the existing models of media content analysis in research and afforded to consider film narrative as a resource for the development of moral values.

4. Results

Based on the immanent analysis, three narrative lines (excerpts), at the basis whereof were the meetings and dialogues of the 2 boys (total duration of 8 minutes and 30 seconds), were selected to provide semantic assessment of the teenagers' perception of the characters in a situation of moral choice. Analysis showed that those excerpts carried over the moral conflict expressed in specific events and actions of the characters. The characters in the movie rendered specific beliefs and moral values. Throughout the movie, the confrontation of good and evil, the power of choice to make decision and take on the consequences thereof, were transmitted. The characters of the film appeared as kind and sincere boys, urging the audience to get real. Through their actions and deeds, they transmitted honesty and openness, the power of goodness and great friendship, while teaching morality and humanity. The meanings conveyed evoked a sense of sympathy, and understanding of the inevitability of choice. The film narrative was full of heartbreaking suffering, which aroused emotions and might contribute to the formation of moral values in the viewer.

The data obtained in the process of semantic evaluation of the characters' impersonations made it possible to compile a correlation matrix. To determine the reliability of calculations, we used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling reasonableness test. The adequacy of the factorial model to the set of variables in use amounted to the result of 0.898. According to G. Kaiser, the KMO values of about 0.9 were rated as 'marvelous', 0.8 as 'praiseworthy'. Accordingly, the data obtained could be characterized as the result of high efficiency. After using the factorial rotation procedure, we obtained five factors (factor rotation converged in 10 iterations). The significance level of the Bartlett test of sphericity was .000, indicating that the factorial analysis was applicable. We identified five factors.

The first factor we designated as the 'nobility factor,' which included the scales of 'courageous (brave) – cowardly' (0.835), 'reliable – unreliable' (0.755), 'fair – unfair' (0.586) with high factor loadings. The second factor, the 'peacefulness factor,' was represented on the scales of 'friendly – hostile' (0.766), 'kind – evil' (0.689), 'humane – cruel' (0.672), 'polite – rude' (0.670), and 'friendly – envious' (0.612). The third 'humanity factor' was 'sympathetic – gloating' (0.701), 'generous – greedy' (0.624). The fourth factor, the 'tc factor,' was represented on the scales of 'cheerful –

moody' (0.715) and 'principled – unprincipled' (0.615). We designated the fifth factor as the 'piety factor,' which included the scales of: 'humble/submissive – proud' (0.738) and 'trustworthy – not trustworthy' (0.573). Thus, attitudes toward the motion picture characters, who were in a situation of moral choice, were determined by the assessments of 'nobility,' 'peacefulness,' 'humanity,' 'tolerance,' and 'piety'.

The highlighted factors reflected the structure of categorization peculiar to adolescents, through the prism whereof their perception of moral values would take place, by evaluating the impersonations of the characters in the motion picture. The study found that adolescents laid emphasis on the positive qualities of the characters, endowing the impersonations with the semantics of morality and humanity. The analysis of the results of the evaluation of the impersonations of the characters of the movie, differentiated on grounds of spiritual and moral values, showed that such moral values as nobility, peacefulness, humanity, tolerance and piety were preferable and determined with the highest rating of an impersonation. The representations of the characters would distinctly convey certain moral values by means of their conduct, actions, and beliefs. Teenagers, for the most part, would perceive those positively.

Comparative analysis of the semantic assessments of adolescents in the two groups using the Mann-Whitney test for independent samples showed statistically significant differences in the three factors: 'nobility' ($U = 3949.0$, $p = 0.001$), 'peacefulness' ($U = 2003.0$, $p = 0.000$), and 'tolerance' ($U = 4175.0$, $p = 0.000$). Mean values of the two groups of adolescents' semantic assessments (1 – raised in a family, 2 – left without parental care) according to the identified factors, were presented in the diagram (Figure 1).

The diagram showed that the greatest divergence in the semantic assessments of the impersonations of characters in a situation of moral choice was observed by the factors of nobility, peacefulness and tolerance. At the same time, adolescents in the second group named more positive qualities (courageous, reliable, fair, responsible, honest, noble, cheerful, tolerant, etc.) in the impersonations of the characters in the factors of nobility and tolerance, while adolescents in the first group named more positive qualities in the factor of peacefulness (friendly, benevolent). It should be noted that, for the teenagers in the first group, negative qualities in the evaluation of characters, dominated: cowardly, mean, hateful, etc.

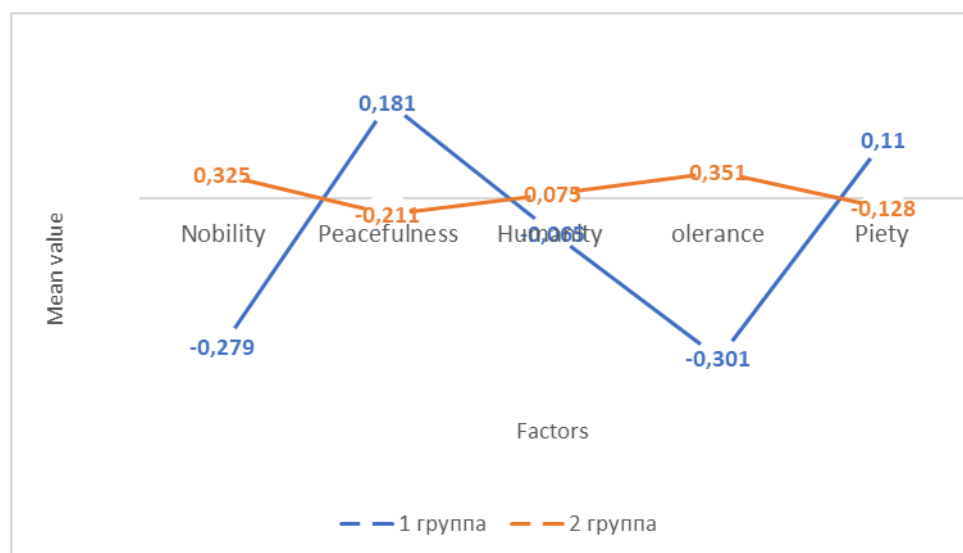


Fig. 1. Distribution of mean values of semantic assessments of the impersonations of the characters of the film narrative by teenagers

At the same time, differences in the evaluation of the two characters, were found in the factors of 'nobility' ($U = 5022.0$, $p = .000$) and 'piety' ($U = 4269.0$, $p = .000$). Bruno was perceived as cowardly, unreliable, unjust, mean, deceitful, and untrustworthy by teenagers. At the same time, Shmuel was endowed with antipodal qualities. For every other factor, no significant differences were found in the assessments of characters in the two groups of adolescents.

It may be stated that adolescents in the second group were more receptive to the moral content than those in the first group. We noted the fact when teenagers differentiated between good and evil in the presented film narrative. It is possible to assume that such particularity depended on the life circumstances whereunder teenagers found themselves. It was noted in psychological and pedagogical literature that adolescents left without parents and raised in orphanages and care facilities would experience permanent anxiety related to their past, present, and future, and the formation of their values, as a rule, would take place outside the institution of their biological family (Umanskaya, 2013), their axiological preferences would differ from those of children raised under different conditions (Fominova, 2019). Adolescents without parental care would learn standard values and attitudes through social relationships and the values transmitted via media space. It might be assumed that it was the reason why they, unlike children raised in a family, would define the spiritual and moral content of the narrative so 'closely' and accurately, emphasizing the positive moral qualities of the characters.

The data obtained by evaluating the motion picture itself on 6 scales were subjected to factorial analysis (method of principal components). Two factors were singled out, the rotation whereof converged in 3 iterations. The Kaiser-Meier-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy was -0.760 , which afforded to purport reliability of the calculations of the correlation matrix variables. The first factor included four scales: 'useful – harmful' (0.875), 'interesting – uninteresting' (0.826), 'good – bad' (0.75), 'teaches good – teaches bad' (0.689). The content of the second factor was determined by two scales: 'scary – not scary' (0.890), 'comprehensible – non-comprehensible' (-0.557). Thus, one may say that teenagers characterized the content of the motion picture, in general, positively, determining the factor of its reliability, that is, they evaluated the movie as useful, interesting, good, teaching goodness. At the same time, they found the movie scary and incomprehensible. That was probably conditioned not by the genre of the content (drama) only, but also by an incomplete understanding of the history of the period in the chronicle of World War II in question.

For every designated category of analysis of letters to the characters of the motion picture, the prevalence of generally positive judgments and ratings of the impersonations of the characters carried over by the narrative, was revealed. Thus, in the category of 'sympathy for the character', the majority of adolescents, empathizing with Shmuel, noted: 'I understand the suffering you went through and still do', 'don't feel bad about being in that situation', 'be strong, be brave'; Bruno was advised to be 'more courageous and reliable'. In the category 'attitude toward the character, his actions', positive judgments were addressed to Shmuel. The teenagers called him 'the good man' and addressed him as 'my own one', 'dear'. 'keep going, dear', 'find the strength to hold on despite all the obstacles and problems', 'be positive under any circumstances'. Negative judgments were recorded in relation to Bruno: evaluating his action, they called Bruno 'very mean and cowardly' and urged him 'not to betray' and 'not to quarrel' with his 'only friend' anymore. However, Bruno was evaluated as a generally 'benevolent', 'generous' and 'kind' person. It should be noted that the letters were short in content, but were filled with morality and humanity in no small way.

The results presented may also testify to the importance of the film narrative in the transmission of moral values.

5. Conclusion

Immanent analysis revealed the values (honesty, openness, kindness, friendship, humanity, etc.) and meanings carried over by the characters in the motion picture, the situation of inevitable choice. The emotional background was supported by a minor, at times disturbing, musical accompaniment. All that afforded to conclude about the complexity of perception of the content. As rated by the teenagers themselves, the motion picture happened to be difficult, scary and incomprehensible to them.

A study of the semantic evaluation of the impersonations of characters in a situation of moral choice demonstrated that teenagers left without parental care would perceive the characters of the motion picture in positive categories of morality more often than those raised in families. The attitude towards the characters of a movie who were in a situation of moral choice, was determined by the categories of nobility, peacefulness, humanity, tolerance, and piety.

The identified differences could be explained by their experience of living in a situation of moral choice, the attitude toward children in situations of living hardships, the individual

psychological differences of adolescents. Differences in attitudes could also be seen as a reason for differences in the effectiveness of the influence of the movie.

In general, the study confirmed the idea of the potential of motion pictures, their effect on the formation of moral values of adolescents and afforded to acknowledge the remarkable importance of the movie for the younger generation, fairly indicating that movie as one of the film narratives to encourage teenagers towards reflection and self-discovery and contributing to the formation of moral values in teenagers. The study added to the data on the effect of film narrative on personal development and individual differences in the evaluation of media products. The obtained findings set the task of identifying the mechanisms of positive influence of movies on different groups of adolescents.

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 426-435

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.426
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Video Component of Media Education in Direct and Reverse Acculturation at North Carolina State University and Texas Christian University

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Abstract

The article studies the practical application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation activities. It highlights that audiovisual aids may be used in the formation of educational and cultural competence, which includes skills such as critical thinking, building interpersonal relationships with representatives of other social and cultural groups and spontaneous communication. Two types of video content used by higher educational institutions and potentially designated as a means of developing acculturation skills — namely, feature films/documentaries (as part of the Global Film Series at North Carolina State University) and amateur videos (One Student One Voice Program at Texas Christian University) — were considered in the research. It was emphasised that in most cases the feature films/documentaries under study were produced in a language other than English, which required the use of subtitles that might be considered as the text component of media education. Thus, the application of the video component is directly related to video, audio and text components. The full-length films in question were shown in order to help understand the principles of interpersonal interactions between representatives of different countries (in geographical, cultural and linguistic terms) as well as to show the importance of mental resilience. The additional elements of acculturation — namely, discussions of issues outlined in the viewed film and cultural elements such as organising the tasting of national dishes of the country of origin—should also be mentioned along with the use of the video component. It was noted that amateur video content provides an opportunity for remote interaction between campus representatives.

Keywords: media education, video component, direct and reverse acculturation, foreign student, host country representative, critical thinking.

1. Introduction

The internationalisation of the educational system has a direct impact on the practical application of adaptation activities, which may also be characterised as acculturation activities, as a student undergoes adaptation academically as well as socially and culturally. At the same time, acculturation may proceed in two directions. By learning how to build interpersonal interaction with representatives of the host country, a foreign student experiences direct acculturation, where representatives of other social and cultural groups receive educational, cultural, psychological and linguistic support. However, this process is accompanied by reverse acculturation: representatives of the host country should also develop necessary social and cultural skills and overcome existing prejudices regarding certain nations or foreigners in general. Hence, their personal preparation has

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the “reverse” status, because this situation requires representatives of the host country to build interpersonal contacts with foreign students.

The two-way acculturation may be implemented using various techniques, one of which is media education. It should be noted that the use of media education may be relevant both in education (during the academic process) and for acculturation activities. Among the media education components that may be put into practice (such as video, audio, text and Internet components), we would like to highlight the video component, which is applied in the form of showing feature films and amateur video content.

Taking into account, according to UNESCO (Global..., 2020), the largest number of foreign students study in the United States, we have chosen this country to study the application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation.

Given the importance of this issue, *the goal of our research is to study the aspects of the practical application of video content of media education in direct and reverse acculturation.*

2. Materials and methods

The research used a set of methods that allowed for the comprehensive study of the indicated issues. First of all, the *comparison method* was used to consider the films that, despite having been shown under the same program, stood for somewhat different ideas and influenced different aspects of direct and reverse acculturation. For instance, the ideological component of one type of films contributes to the formation of skills needed to build interpersonal interaction with the immediate circle of people; while the other type contributes to the formation of skills needed to build interpersonal interactions with representatives of a different social and cultural and linguistic group. Thus, the comparison method facilitates understanding of these differences, regardless of the fact that the aim of all films is acculturation activities.

Since the films under study are of different genres, the *abstraction method* was applied. Its main objective was to focus on the acculturation value of films and the need to show them to foreign and local students in order to help them develop skills of interpersonal contact with representatives of other social and cultural groups. Therefore, in this case, the genre component of the video content of media education was not critical. Thus, the abstraction method allowed us to highlight the characteristics under study in these films.

Since direct and reverse acculturation is a multicomponent process, the *analysis and synthesis methods* were required. The analysis method was applied to understand the need for foreign and local students to develop certain skills that are important for building interpersonal interactions. To this end, the scope of research—acculturation—was divided into the linguistic, psychological, educational and cultural components. On the other hand, to study the role of these skills for academic and social processes, all the elements in question had to be combined into a holistic acculturation process, which required the synthesis method.

The research also used the *induction and deduction methods*. It should be noted that direct and reverse acculturation is a prerequisite for effective academic and social interaction between representatives of the higher educational institution. In turn, the programs considered represent special cases of individual universities applied in specific institutions. Their general concept, however, is applicable to all universities and colleges where foreign students study. Thus, the study of this transition—from the studied programs (specific) to the general problem of developing acculturation skills (general)—was possible only using the induction method. On the contrary, it was the deduction method that allowed us to designate those programs that used the video content of media education as elements of the general process of direct and reverse acculturation.

3. Discussion

The system of direct (foreign students) and reverse (students of the host country) acculturation should constantly undergo a transformation, which increases the number of methods used for adaptation, thereby contributing to the positive dynamics of the effectiveness of acculturation measures. The use of media in education, which may also be used in adaptation for the development of critical thinking in particular (Bazalgette et al., 1992) (which may be implemented through participation in discussion events), is currently becoming more and more relevant. For instance, the well-known American researcher of media education K. Tyner reasoned that audiovisual aids may be used to conduct analytical actions and study the information component (Tyner, 1999: 186-187). This activity enables the critical evaluation of a particular

media product, regardless of its definition as a literary work or a film. Critical skills may be developed in group classroom sessions where a media piece is discussed and social and cultural aspects of the society of the host country are considered; as well as by conducting a personal analysis of media content, where a foreign/local student can independently analyse certain cultural aspects highlighted in the consumed media product.

First and foremost, it should be noted that there are many studies of media education and its impact on society and education. Scientists such as D. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2013), A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2008), V. Biletsky (Biletsky, Onkovych, 2019), W. Christ (Christ, 1996), J. Gómez-Galán (Gómez-Galán, 2015, 2020), T. Alruwaili (Alruwaili, 2019), S. Kim (Kim, 2019), S. Kubitschko (Kubitschko, 2018), S. Mihelj and J. Stanyer (Mihelj, Stanyer, 2018) and others comprehensively studied different aspects of media education.

The effectiveness of media education for the adaptation of foreign students was analysed by B. Hendrickson and D. Rosen who focused on the video component that might be presented online. The researchers came to the conclusion that “online interaction with host nationals represents an avenue for international students to better understand their communication behavior and subsequently communicate more effectively during intercultural interactions” (Hendrickson, Rosen, 2017: 100). Thus, for example, amateur video content distributed on the Internet on platforms such as YouTube (Vlassis, 2021) may also be designated as online interaction of foreign and local students if there are no other options for building direct interpersonal connections due to the quarantine restrictions.

In this regard, it is important to read the findings of E. Nikolaeva and P. Kotliar who studied the aspects of “new electronic media.” It may be noted that the use of amateur video content in media education may be designated as “new media.” Thus, the researchers note that this type of media “made a user an active participant of information exchange, who, unlike their predecessor – the recipient of such communication channels as print media, radio and television, can not only absorb and retransmit the received information, but also to independently produce a full-fledged information product” (Nikolaeva, Kotliar, 2017: 133). Since amateur video content may be developed by both foreign and local students, a case can be made that its potential consumers are able to produce this product, which means that amateur videos may be considered as “new media.”

The issues of learning a foreign language (linguistic element) using media education have been studied by many scientists, with a special focus on the use of listening exercises (Nunan, 1997; Rost, 2013). Some researchers have developed methods of teaching a foreign language based on the use of video and audio aids, thereby characterising language learning as a set of media education tools that might be applied by educational institutions. For example, Nunan & Rost considered the effect of using video content during foreign language classes. Thus, film screenings may also have the linguistic component, which is also part of direct and reverse acculturation.

This aspect is relevant to our research in case of showing films produced in a language other than English and requiring subtitles. As a result, a feature film may be both an acculturation and educational element, because it contributes to the increase in communication competence (Simamora, Oktaviani, 2020). This is also confirmed by the conclusions of S. Sari and D. Aminatun that “watching movies can enhance English skills” (Sari, Aminatun, 2021: 17).

The use of subtitles, in turn, leads to the text information component of media education. The use of reading as a method of obtaining text information, which may contain data on the cultural aspects of a particular country, has been studied by M. Simons and T. Smits (Simons, Smits, 2020), K. Koda (Koda, 2005) and was defined as an interlinguistic method.

It should be noted that acculturation measures are aimed primarily at adjusting social and cultural perceptions of foreign students and representatives of the host country. The former, finding themselves in the country of study, feel the effects of culture shock, while the latter should take into account cultural differences in interpersonal interaction. Therefore, the issues of adjustment and culture shock are also important in the study of direct and reverse acculturation.

Let us consider the meaning of the concept “adjustments” in terms of the adaptation process. According to the academic explanatory dictionary, to adjust means “to make adjustments or amendments to something” (Slovník..., 1973: 287). Encountering a new culture, a foreign student consciously or subconsciously compares the principles of their own and foreign culture while showing existing disagreements, which leads to culture shock. The adjustment provides for the gradual overcoming of prejudices and reconciliation of cultural and behavioural norms of the native culture of a person and the culture of the host country, as well as helps reduce the impact of culture shock and facilitates the adaptation.

On the other hand, representatives of the host country should also adjust certain cultural biases for effective interpersonal contact with representatives of another country. Thus, the adjustment includes the psychological, social and cultural as well as academic measures that contribute to certain changes in the social and cultural views of a person.

As for culture shock, it is worth determining this effect using the social identity theory, which focuses on the cognitive aspect of adaptation. Based on the conclusions of Berry (Berry, 1994, 1997), H. Tajfel and J. Turner (Tajfel, Turner, 1986), a person experiencing culture shock tends to perceive themselves in more unusual conditions. This changes self-perception, which leads to the identity transformation. Thus, taking into account the above definition, a foreign student, when interacting with a new cultural environment, undergoes a phase of change in self-perception, under which new ideas may transform their cultural foundations and prejudices. As a result, the identity of a person is being changed, which leads to the realisation that their own culture is not unique as it is, and representatives of other cultures have their individual aspects. Hence, the cultural identity is being changed at the level of awareness of equality between their own and other cultures as well as understanding that they are a representative of one of the world cultures. This means that interactions should be conducted on the principles of respect for the aspects and foundations of the host country culture, which is a prerequisite for effective interpersonal interactions.

Based on the analysed aspects, the definitions of culture shock by researchers and ways to overcome it using the video component of media education (Tab. 1) are as follows:

Table 1. Definition of culture shock and ways to overcome it using the video component of media education

No	Researcher(s)	Definition of culture shock by the researcher(s)	Ways to overcome culture shock using the video component of media education
1	A. Furnham, S. Bochner (Furnham, Bochner, 1986)	A driving force for the acquisition of culture-specific skills needed to interact in a new cultural environment	The video component allows acquiring both linguistic and interpersonal skills, which are a prerequisite for communication in a new society, by obtaining information about such experiences in viewed media materials and during follow-up discussion events.
2	T. Holmes, R. Rahe, R. Lazarus, S. Folkman (Holmes, Rahe, 1967; Lazarus, Folkman, 1984)	A basis of stressful changes in people involved in interacting with new cultural environments for the development of overcoming techniques	Video content such as feature films/documentaries, amateur videos, etc. allows students to change their personal strategy of the interaction with representatives of the host country (direct acculturation) or foreign students (reverse acculturation) by overcoming interpersonal and linguistic barriers.
3	D. Meintel (Meintel, 1973)	Mostly shock of self-cognition rather than the shock of perception of another culture	Watching video content with the follow-up discussion of the social problems and issues identified therein has a direct impact on potential personal transformational changes in both foreign students and representatives of the host country, which contributes to the awareness of problems; and being aware of problems leads, in turn, to the possibility of overcoming them.
4	J. Berry, H. Tajfel and J. Turner (Berry, 1994, 1997; Tajfel, Turner, 1986)	A change in self-perception, which leads to the identity transformation	Correcting personality problems related to their perception and acceptance contributes to a person's self-awareness as a representative of the multicultural society, where existing differences are advantages rather than a dividing factor.

4. Results

When considering acculturation of foreign students and reverse acculturation of local students using the video component of media education, it should be noted that video content may be bi-directional depending on the initial characteristics of a video product. The first direction is represented by cinematography, i.e. films screened in theatres or available on streaming services (regardless of their type: feature films, animated films or documentaries). This type of video content is artistic and explores in more detail social aspects of the lives of individuals (characters), their interactions both with each other and with their social environment, which may be traced in the study of C. Bucciferro (Bucciferro, 2021). These aspects, which require the development of film characters and their diverse interactions, increase the total duration of a video product.

As for the second direction of the video component of media education, it may be represented with amateur videos created, among others, by students of an educational institution, including foreign students. In most cases (excluding students of departments of film studies at colleges and universities), these videos do not have an obvious artistic value, but they are valuable in terms of the social and cultural aspect and, moreover, in the aspect of interpersonal interaction remotely. In order to understand the specified directions of the video component of media education more clearly, we will consider activities of this kind at American universities, specifically North Carolina State University and Texas Christian University.

Practical application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation is well established at North Carolina State University, namely at the Office of Global Engagement, which holds the Global Film Series, an initiative aimed at screening international films for the teachers, staff and students of the campus. The films selected for the Global Film Series have a strong social awareness component and raise issues of life and interpersonal interactions in modern societies. As the films presented under this initiative are feature films, they fall under the first direction of video content for direct and reverse acculturation. Acculturation skills are developed in the course of discussing the viewed films, where, in addition to raising awareness of social issues, communication and interpersonal skills are developed, which is crucial for the adjustment of social and cultural perceptions by foreign students. As a result, we can identify the conditions for having direct acculturation (foreign students are able to communicate with representatives of the host country, which allows them to form linguistic and cultural patterns, which is a prerequisite for interpersonal interaction) and reverse acculturation (local students are able to discuss social aspects as indicated in the viewed film) within the Global Film Series. Let us consider its nature in more detail.

The films presented in the program are often produced in a foreign language (therefore, they are shown with English subtitles, which constitutes the text component of media education; this, in turn, has a direct impact on the linguistic training of foreign students), which is part of reverse acculturation in a greater degree. For example, the presence of students from Japan at the university and the screening of a film produced in Japan or about Japan is an element of reverse acculturation, as local students may both be introduced to the cinematic vision of certain social and interpersonal issues and discuss them with representatives of the country after the screening and learn which of the things shown are exaggerated and which are really relevant for a specific society. This type of discussion is particularly important for feature films, which often distort shown social relationships for the sake of creating scenarios appealing for distribution.

Thus, on 17 September 2019, the Global Film Series screened the Argentinean film *Un Cuento Chino* (Global..., 2019), which showed all the dramatic and comedic elements of translation difficulties where an Argentinian and a Chinese try to build a semblance of a relationship despite the language barrier. It should be noted that this film is very important for reverse acculturation, as local university students may also face interpersonal situations where communication goes awry and requires corrective measures. The comedic elements of the film show that in case of unsuccessful communication, it is necessary to reduce the psychological component and develop a more casual behavioural attitude towards this kind of problem. Thus, this film may be recommended to local students so that they can develop their ability to establish interpersonal connections with foreign students even in case of low-quality communication interaction.

The social and cultural aspect of acculturation activities may be traced in the Turkish-made film *Ayla: the Daughter of War* (Dinner..., 2019) screened on 22 October 2019. The film, which is based on real events, showed the aspects of the relationships between representatives of different cultures, the serviceman and the Korean girl he saved, as a period piece. However, the real

challenge did not appear to be cultural or linguistic barriers, but the social aspect, unwillingness of the society (represented, among others, by bureaucratic institutions) to make decisions that are right in viewers' opinion. Yet, are they really right when it comes to granting this serviceman the right to adopt a girl while he is unable to provide her with a proper family? By screening this film, the Global Film Series raises the question whether the society's actions in relation to representatives of other countries are right in certain situations. In addition, the message on reducing the importance of the language barrier for building intercultural interactions underlines the narrative once again. Rather than the refusal to conduct comprehensive linguistic training for foreign students, it indicates the importance of building interpersonal connections with representatives of other cultural groups (foreign students) even in case of an insufficient level of understanding at the communication level and the possibility of using non-verbal means.

In addition to the possibility of discussing the above issues after watching a film, the event also included a food element of the social and cultural training, as the participants were able to taste Turkish dishes. It should be noted that many American universities and colleges that ensure adequate direct and reverse acculturation organise events that allow foreign students to share cultural characteristics of their countries. Representatives of other countries often opt for the food element. That is why this initiative is a quality addition to the video component of media education.

Adaptation to a new social and cultural and linguistic environment requires foreign students to be mentally resilient and able to overcome difficulties, as well as not let them influence their academic and social activities. In this regard, on 19 November 2019, the Global Film Series screened the Finnish documentary *Entrepreneur* (Global..., 2019). The discussion and understanding of its messages may help foreign students realise the possibility of overcoming the problems that at first glance seem insurmountable. Films of this kind have a clearly pronounced motivational and psychological effect and are important for those who face difficulties in psychological and social acculturation.

One of the most significant psychological problems (relevant to foreign students) is a long stay abroad, which includes both the impossibility of direct communication with family and the desire to return to the familiar social and cultural environment. Ignoring such feelings negatively affects the general mental state of a foreign student and, as a result, acculturation as a whole.

This problem was indicated in the Indian film *Hotel Salvation*, screened on 14 January 2020 as part of the Global Film Series (Global..., 2020). Just like the protagonist of the film, foreign students were deciding whether it was reasonable to stay in a specific place or return home. Although in the film, the choice was being made by the son in relation to his father — to stay with him or return to his family — certain parallels may be drawn with foreign students. Solving this personal psychological problem will contribute to the successful adaptation of a student to the new academic and social environments and ensure their behavioural stability.

Since foreign students have different cultural ideas and views, there is a matter of the tolerant attitude of both local students to foreigners and foreign students to representatives of the host country, as their beliefs may not be appropriate in the country of study. Thus, the issue of tolerance is directly related to direct and reverse acculturation. The video component of media education is also used as a means of developing a tolerant attitude towards other people. One example is the Kenyan film *Rafiki* screened on 11 October 2020, which drew a wide response, including after the screening at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival. It was the first Kenyan film to be shown at this festival (Global... 2020). The story of the protagonists intertwines political, personal and LGBT agendas, but the cornerstone is the importance of a tolerant attitude towards others even in case of personal disagreement with their choices or ideas of life. This film is important for overcoming culture shock and developing an understanding of the importance of a tolerant attitude towards the opponent, regardless of whether it is a foreign or local student. *Rafiki* has a significant direct and reverse acculturation value.

Being in a new social and cultural environment requires foreign students to be able to communicate with representatives of the host country, which increases the importance of both linguistic training (vocabulary, grammar, listening skills, etc.) and the ability to build interactions. This requires the introduction of both foreign and local students to the aspects of interpersonal interactions. One example is the screening of the film *After the Storm* (9 to 13 November 2020) by the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda (Global..., 2020), who focuses on interpersonal relationships, including within the family. Since the performance of a team (including an academic group) is directly related to the quality of interpersonal relationships, considering the concepts

brought up in this film is important for both direct and reverse acculturation. *After the Storm* shows the relationship of family members who, due to weather conditions, find themselves in a confined space, which obviously leads to the manifestation of both positive and negative factors. The film screening was supported by the North Carolina Japan Center, which indicated the collaboration of national centers and the university on the issues of the adaptation of students (including Japanese ones) and improvement of interpersonal interaction quality both in the academic environment and “confined spaces” of the dormitory in order to minimise the likelihood of conflict situations associated with linguistic and interpersonal barriers.

The 2020-2021 quarantine restrictions negatively affected the Global Film Series. The screening of the films socially significant for both foreign and local students who study at North Carolina State University will resume at the end of August 2021 with *Sun Children* (Global..., 2021) and continue on 9 November 2021 with *Shoplifters* by the aforementioned director Hirokazu Kore-eda (Global..., 2021). Both films raise the issue of personal transformation in certain circumstances, form the ability to understand the opponent and, if not understand the reason for their behaviour, then at least attempt to establish a certain contact by adjusting your behaviour. These films are important for acculturation activities since foreign students meet in the format of direct acculturation and are able to discuss certain situations that may arise during academic or social interaction with representatives of the host country. This will help them understand the need for personal transformation (behavioural, social, cultural), which is a necessary element of the adaptation. As for local students, they should also change their views and overcome prejudices about representatives of other nationalities.

Thus, the first direction of video content of media education is represented by feature films and documentaries produced professionally. Their screening under the Global Film Series aims at raising the issue of interpersonal interaction both within the team and in the social environment and drawing attention to the importance of personal transformational changes when communicating with foreign students (reverse acculturation) or representatives of the host country (direct acculturation).

However, as mentioned earlier, the video component of media education also has a different direction characterised by amateur content. One example is the Texas Christian University’s One Student One Voice initiative. The program is aimed at international campus students as well as local students who work at the Office of International Services. The purpose of the videos (a few minutes each) is to show the life of a student during quarantine measures in order to unite the community of foreign and local students when having proper interpersonal contacts is impossible (Amber, 2021; Hailey, 2021; Jesse, 2021; Kira, 2021; Shriya, 2021). This initiative contributes to the interpersonal understanding between students, seeks to show that global challenges affect both foreign and local students and facilitates mutual understanding between them.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the video component of media education has a bidirectional structure characterised by feature films/documentaries and amateur videos that may be used in practical acculturation. Taking into account that acculturation may be directed towards both foreign and local students, who should also be adapted to potential interactions with representatives of other social and cultural groups, we have identified the directions of direct and reverse acculturation. Higher educational institutions may use the video component of media education to develop these directions.

The above experience of North Carolina State University allows us to assert that the media component at this educational institution is used when showing feature films/documentaries to both foreign and local students. In summary, this type of acculturation allows for the following:

1. Holding discussions after watching films where all participants of the media initiative can consider socially and culturally significant issues. This allows overcoming (adjusting) stereotypes on both sides (foreign and local students) through interpersonal communication, which may be more effective than obtaining cultural information during standard adaptation training.
2. Films shown under the Global Film Series have a different genre component. However, they are united by a single basis, i.e. the aspects of interpersonal communication and ways of overcoming social problems. These issues are relevant in the interaction of foreign and local students since such interaction (between representatives of different social and cultural and often linguistic groups) is associated with problematic situations of culture shock. Therefore, screening this kind of films and follow-up discussions of potential problems has a pronounced psychological

and behavioural effect, which allows students to prevent negative interactions in real-life situations;

3. Taking into account that the Global Film Series films are often produced in languages other than English, they are subtitled. Considering that Japanese films may be viewed by students from Japan and Turkish films by students from Turkey, we can identify the linguistic aspect of the video component of media education, where a film in one's native language may be dubbed in English. This simultaneously leads to two components of media education, video and text, which contribute to the formation of interpersonal interaction skills incorporating the social and cultural and linguistic elements. In addition, the discussion of certain issues after watching a film also has a linguistic value, since participation in the impromptu discussions helps overcome the language barrier.

As for the amateur video component of media education, the One Student One Voice program at Texas Christian University was chosen as an example of its application. Its importance for direct and reverse acculturation activities is based on the following:

1. Possibility to present a foreign/local student as a single element of the academic university community through the creation of videos showing how a student is dealing with quarantine measures, which contributes to the unification of the campus in overcoming certain situations;

2. Building interpersonal contacts between students in the context of compulsory distance learning, in order to minimise the loss of communication in an academic or social community.

Thus, the video component of media education may be used in the acculturation of foreign students and students of the host country, development of the ability to overcome language and intercultural barriers, situations where direct contact with the other parties is impossible (remote means of transmitting video content), development of linguistic skills and overcoming social and cultural prejudices.

The follow-up research on direct and reverse acculturation using the video component of media education may be aimed at studying the practices of using films at other higher educational institutions in the United States as well as in other countries; conducting relevant comparative studies; considering the possibility and feasibility of screening films of various genres (including animated films), etc.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 436-446

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.436
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Virtual Communities as Sites of Market Genesis: A Netnographic Study of Netflix India and Amazon Prime Video India's Facebook Groups

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Abstract

The study is aimed at examining the online brand image building and user engagement strategies adopted by the two *Video on Demand Service* providers, *Amazon Prime Video India* and *Netflix India*. It also analyses the communication patterns between the subscribers and the brand. The paper utilizes a method called Netnography or virtual Ethnography and studies two communities – the official *Facebook* groups – *Netflix India* and *Amazon Prime Video India*. Data was collated by acquiring two approaches, Observation and Extraction of archival data. The method not only shed light on strategies used by the service providers to engage the audience, but also witnessed the efforts by the brands of converting consumers into fan bases. It helped in discerning the communication process within the community, within the members and with the brand, contributing towards a brand building exercise on the *Facebook* group. Lastly, the data gathered also helped in evaluating quantitatively and qualitatively if the methods are working in favor of the brands or not. The results are not only indicative of how social media presence affects a brand image, but also how fan cultures have replaced the relationship of a service provider and buyer. These groups are emerging not only as sites of creating market space, but also for fan congregations. Participants interact not only with the brand, but also with each other and further inviting new subscribers to the group as well, laying a case for virtual word of mouth publicity. These groups are also instrumental in providing a quick feedback to the administrators of the page about the strategies adopted for marketing their content through *Facebook* groups.

Keywords: Facebook, Netflix, Amazon, virtual communities, netnography.

1. Introduction

Video on Demand services in India have created more than a foothold for themselves in past few years. Providing on demand entertainment, on the move, as per consumer's taste, these services are also hosting content from TV and Films apart from producing originals for the web platforms. Following the subscription-based or ad-based models, these services use streaming to reach its viewers, thus also called SVoD services. By the end of 2018, an estimated 30 million subscribers were hooked on to various SVoD platforms. The industry revenue estimation is around 17 billion by the beginning of 2019. Attracting a subscriber base mainly in the age group 25- 34 years, most of its viewers lie in middle – high income group (Statista, 2019).

Netflix India was launched in January 2017, and its global annual revenue was estimated to be 85 billion in 2017. Still using TV as a medium of play, 70 percent of the *Netflix* users watch it on TV (Kafka, 2019). *Netflix* also spends more than any other SVoD platform to produce own content.

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Users also prefer watching *Netflix's* original content more than the acquired content, citing its algorithm of suggestion as its USP. Releasing its first Indian original web-series in July 2018, *Sacred Games*, *Netflix* is targeting a global market with the content, by releasing it in Brazilian, Spanish and Italian dubbing as well, along with Hindi and English (Kafka, 2019). While India is not the largest revenue generating market for *Netflix* yet, it is growing at a rapid rate (Chauhan, 2019; Toms, 2019).

Amazon Prime Video is a second most popular SVoD service provider in the world (Wallach, 2021). Belonging to one of the largest e-commerce companies in the world, *Amazon Prime Video* is backed by a huge conglomerate. Since its launch in India in late 2016, it has been gaining rapid market share. Also using TV as a primary medium of display, *Amazon's* USP according to its users is a large variety of content. In India, while *Amazon* started with *Breathe* in 2018 as its first title, it has been acquiring regional content as well, thus tapping into a regional audience base as well (David, 2019).

In times of today, Internet marketing has emerged as a tool which utilizes the networked digital technologies to market a brand. Social media is appearing as an extension and often a replacement of real-world interaction. Using social media as a platform to market themselves, these SVoD service providers connect with an audience base present online 24*7 (Horbel et al, 2016). Social media helps in creating avenues for not only existing customers but also for people who might get interested enough to be converted into a selling point. These may identify themselves as users, subscribers or fans of the service providers (Mann, 2016).

While the demographic profile of their target base is metropolitan, net savvy and English speaking, the SVoD service providers need to create further different market segments for themselves to thrive. Amongst the lot of existing seven-eight SVoD service providers in India, *Amazon Prime Video India* and *Netflix India* have emerged as platforms with the largest subscriber base. But both of these brands have different marketing strategies and adopt different methods to reach out to their audience bases. The current research in question ventures into the online image building strategies adopted and practiced by these two brands in India, specifically on *Facebook*. The study also looks at various audience engagement methods and patterns emerging in the *Facebook* groups of these two SVoD service providers.

2. Materials and methods

Aim: This paper is aimed at studying the online brand image building strategies and audience engagement patterns adopted by two SVoD Service providers in India.

Objectives: The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To ascertain the audience engagement strategies adopted by *Netflix India* and *Amazon Prime Video India* through their *Facebook* Groups.
2. To evaluate how their Brand Image is created, established and propagated through these groups.
3. To assess how does audience interact with the brand, the content and with each other in these communities.

Research Questions: Following are the research questions to be answered by the end of the study:

1. What are the engagement activities taken up by *Netflix India* and *Amazon Prime Video India* for their subscriber base on their official *Facebook* groups?
2. How do their engagement approaches reflect on their marketing strategies and generating a brand image?
3. How does the audience respond towards these engagement approaches?
4. What are the patterns of communication within the *Facebook* communities of *Netflix India* and *Amazon Prime Video India*?

Method: Drawing parallels from field based ethnographic studies where the researcher studies the behavior of communities in the real world, this paper utilizes a method called Netnography or virtual ethnography to study the communication patterns in virtual groups (Kozinets, 2015).

The concept of user engagement is still a novel one in the Indian Markets, and utilization of Social Media tools provided by any platform, in this case *Facebook*, has not been studied extensively. Apart from this, the communities that emerge online, following, discussing and promoting a sort of content also need to be studied for emerging patterns of behavior and motivations.

Facebook provides a platform to create groups which can add billions of people at one go. Moderated by one person, these groups have content posted by the administrator, while other participants or subscribers of the group react and interact with it. Reactions are generally in form of emoticons and comments. Interaction is when subscribers of the groups tag each other, strike up a conversation with the administrator or each other through comment threads on the posts.

Sample: Two *Facebook* groups, *Netflix India* and *Amazon Prime Video India*, run officially. *Netflix* had 4,78,92,712 members and *Amazon Prime Video India* had 16,98,328 members (extracted on 1 July 2018). During the period of study *Netflix India* posted 122 posts and *Amazon Prime Video India* posted 283 posts on their respective *Facebook* groups. These posts by the administrator and the reactions and comments generated on each by the subscribers were studied.

Time period: 1 July 2018 – 7 October 2018 (14 weeks)

Tool: Participatory Observation method was used to collect data. The researchers joined these two *Facebook* groups and studied the posts, the reactions on them and the meta reaction by the administrators of the page.

The data was collected by two approaches:

a) *Observation of activities*

The researcher became a participant in the virtual community and spent an hour on. Daily basis on each of these platforms. She read the posts, analyzed their purpose (to launch new content, to recall old content etc.), assessed their content (tries to involve humor, tries to be informative, entertaining etc.), studied the comments (if the group subscribers are striking up a conversation, or they are only reacting) and estimated the overall reaction towards the post. She also scrutinized the conversation/s taking place between the page administrators and subscribers and subscribers with each other. All these observations made for the field notes, albeit taken down in an excel sheet for the ease of use. This approach helped in collecting qualitative data from the sample.

b) *Extraction of archival data*

The data pertaining to number of posts, various kinds of reaction on them and their numbers, counter comments, general purpose and type of text of the posts and the content, which is being posted about, was collected by the method of manual extraction. The posts were extracted after 3 weeks of their posting so that the reactions they had to generate would have been accumulated (Kozinets, 2015). While various data scraping tools are available in the market, this process helped in gathering data more organically and giving time to observe the post for longer. This data was saved in excel sheets in order to make comparison and comprehension simpler and easier. This approach also helped in collecting quantitative data from the sample.

Scope of the Study: The study is limited to Indian markets and thus focusses only on the *Facebook* groups created specifically to reach out to the Indian audience base.

3. Discussion

An extensive review of literature was done before embarking on the study. Following research were found to be touching upon the topic directly and tangentially.

Focusing on streaming as an emerging video entertainment industry, Burroughs claimed that it was rapidly replacing television by introducing a phenomenon called ‘*cord-cutting*’, which referred to the act of removing the device connected by a cord, i.e., the TV and going cordless, like in case of laptops and mobile phones. He called the initial *Netflix* audience base as the ‘*Cord Cutters*’. He also compared *Netflix*’s policies with Blockbuster’s, which was once its prime competitor. Blockbuster did not adapt the streaming model and stuck with DVD rentals, thus bringing a premature demise to the competing company. Then moving to targeting TV’s audience base, *Netflix* adapted to subscription-based *Video-on-Demand* (VOD) model. Then it shifted to cutting into HBO’s model by producing original content and releasing it. Thus, it branched out vertically and horizontally by approaching segments after segments to expand itself (Burroughs, 2015; 2018).

DeCarvalho et al. in their case study of *Netflix* list conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the company in 2014, in American context, based on the public literature about the company. Few strengths according to their analysis of the company were: it had become a well-established name with an expanding user base, could boast of a well-versed management team and had a sharp suggestion algorithm. It was foraying into newer

markets and formulating the strategies based on the specific culture. For e.g., Use of Food trucks in Mexico for running their advertising campaign (DeCarvalho et al, 2018).

Amongst many of the platforms facilitating personal, group and mass interaction is Facebook. With the help of one of its features, Facebook groups, a number of online communities have cropped up in past decade (Ahuja et al., 2018). While discussing Facebook's features that enable marketers to gather, save and use Big Data analytics to market their products, Gosling et al deliberate on the psychological motivations on the part of users, or group subscribers that incentivizes the use of the platform for them. As psychologists, they also provide a set of guidelines to utilize the features of the medium to its best potential for the marketers (Gosling et al, 2015).

These groups create a virtual alcove for hosting conversation and engagement based on a theme or purpose. Ranging from facilitating e-commerce to organizing fan forums to sharing jokes and memes, these groups have an administrator who moderates the conversations and content (Lahav et al., 2018). These groups may have members ranging from five to few millions. Armed with features like tagging, sharing, hash-tagging and memes, the marketing strategies have evolved many a fold over the social network (Demirhan et al., 2017).

The official Facebook pages run by these service providers, are one of the podiums utilized for the same purpose. They are also utilized to create a fan base and to promote and extend engagement with their content. Numbered in millions, these groups can be joined by anyone, subscriber of the service or not (Dahl, 2018).

Aiello et al in their work traced the users of few luxury brands who had subscribed to their respective Facebook groups as well. According to their study, the consumers felt more connected with the brands and thus showed greater brand preference and loyalty. The researchers also shortlisted five factors which lead to Social Media Marketing plan designing: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word of mouth. The study concluded that Social Media marketing created a considerable impact on brand equity of these luxury brands (Aiello et al, 2016).

Emrich et al discuss the benefits of liking and following a group on a networked platform like Facebook. They evaluate that the friends of the subscribers also view a brand more positively when they see people in their friend list joining these groups and interacting with the content. They concluded that the word of mouth still has to supplement the 'word of web' in order to create another consumer (Emrich et al, 2017).

Kozinets et al. elaborate upon the virtual liking of a Facebook page and brand evaluation by consumers. With the help of an online experiment with pre and post measurements of group activity, the researchers found a significant positive increase in brand evaluation by the followers of a group, compared to that of non-followers. The study highlighted the importance of engagement through interactivity on social media platforms (Kozinets et al., 2018).

Dwivedi et al. debate on three types of groups existing on Facebook, Associative, Aspirational and Advertising. The research threw light on the fact that users of Facebook join these groups with different motivations while marketers try to mould those motivations into creating selling points. While advertising oriented groups had the least engagement, it was the associative type of groups that led to most credible exchange between brand and consumers (Dwivedi, 2019). Kapoulas et al. agree with Facebook communities emerging as sites for marketing the brands. The researchers also used netnography as a tool to study the Fashion industry in Southeast Europe. (Kapoulas et al., 2020)

Buschow et al., worked on differentiating between the brand perception of Netflix and Amazon Prime video in the Video on Demand Market in Germany and found their strategies to be very different from each other. While Netflix was targeting the younger population, Amazon was targeting the mass. (Buschow et al, 2020)

While the works employed online experiments, surveys and meta-analysis, neither of them utilized Netnography as a method of study (Bridges, 2016). Also, Netflix and Amazon in India are relatively new in the market and are Internet based service providers. Thus, it can safely be assumed that these companies would be able to utilize the features of a social networking platform to market themselves better. Thus, to absolve these gaps, the study in question was designed.

4. Results

After collecting the data for a period of 14 weeks, through two approaches, observation and extraction, few findings emerged. Data extracted from the page, in form of user statistics, number

of posts, comments and reactions is presented in tabular format in [Table 1](#). Data from observation, which is qualitative in nature, is further discussed along with examples.

Netflix India's official *Facebook* group had 5,23,63,660 people subscribed to the page as of November 2018. The page sees about 1-2 posts every day engaging with its subscribers through text, videos, memes, pictures and games. During the period of the study, 7 new titles were added by Netflix out of which 4 were Indian. The fan base increased at the rate of about 2 lakhs new subscribers every week.

Amazon Prime Video India's official *Facebook* page had 44,13,384 subscribers and followers as of in November 2018. During the period of study, the page hosted about 3 posts on an average every day. The subscribers grew in numbers at a steady rate, that is about 15,000 new subscribers every week, but saw an immense growth in two weeks, i.e., 16 September to 30 September again succumbing to the initial rate of growth.

Table 1. Comparative reactions of both groups

<i>Elements of study</i>	<i>Netflix</i>	<i>Amazon</i>
Posts by the group administrator	122 posts	283 posts
Average posts per day	1.33 posts	3.07 posts
<i>Reactions by the subscribers</i>		
Like	452171	2178382
Average Likes per post	3706.32	7697.46
Love	41205	46941
Love (per post)	337.75	165.9
Laugh	38732	22368
Laugh (per post)	317.48	79.04
Wow	7975	7159
Wow (per post)	65.37	25.30
Angry	0	156
Angry (per post)	0	0.55
Sad	19	184
Sad (per post)	0.16	0.7
Shares	50880	44664
Shares (per post)	417.05	157.82
Comments	46745	27721
Comments (per post)	383.16	97.95
<i>Interaction by administrator</i>		
Replies to comments by administrator	492	1045
Replies to comments by administrator (per post)	4.03	3.69
<i>Page statistics</i>		
No of subscribers on July 1, 2018	4,78,92,712	16,98,328
No. of subscribers on October 7, 2018	5,08,69,395	42,78,213
Growth	29,76,683	25,79,885
Rate of growth during the period of study	6.22 %	151.90 %

Netflix

Netflix posted 122 posts in the period of 14 weeks of study. On an average, each post was liked by its subscribers 3706.32 times, loved 337.75 times, laughed at 317.48 times, wowed 65.36, angered 0 times and saddened 0.16 times. Each post was shared by its subscribers 417.05 times on an average and generated 383.16 comments. The administrator responded back to the comments 4.03 times per post.

Posts: *Netflix's* posts are humorous in nature, at times joking about their own content/actors through jokes, GIFs or videos as posts. For example, a popular GIF from the series *Sacred Games* (2018) with one of the lead actors aimed at the subscriber base who wanted the week to end on

Friday so that they can go home and catch *Netflix*. Through posts like this, *Netflix*: a) Advertises its content; b) Typecasts its audience base as the ones working in Multinational corporate setups who typically work till 7 and have weekends off, while accepting to be a part of it; c) Brands itself as a leisure activity to be done on weekends.

The comments or retorts by the group members on such posts are also similar in nature. This light-hearted banter gets people attached with the group and posts informally. When people do not get the inside jokes, *Netflix* urges them to watch certain content to ‘join in the group’.

In a post on September 18, *Netflix India* commented on its own post related to *Sacred Games* (2018), “*25 din mein kya hoga? Trivedi kyo bachega? What is a tabut? So many unanswered questions!* (roughly translated as – What will happen in 25 days, stay with us to know)”.

It was also found that the audiences wanted to belong to the group and did not want to miss out on the interaction. For example, the audience interaction in the comments showed one subscriber asking the other one to watch certain series so that she can also understand the memes. People were found asking each other to watch a particular show to catch up or make plans to watch stuff together, thus making the interaction transcend into the real world uninterrupted. While this makes for a word-of-mouth publicity in the virtual world, the group also witnesses people hinging their personal relationships to particular shows/content.

It was also observed that hyperlinking and tagging of profiles on posts created an easy flow of traffic leading to better publicity of brands through *Facebook* pages. People asked each other to buy the subscription, doing the hard selling for the brand by themselves. Groups like this, made every individual a promoter, and *Netflix* understands that apart from creating entertaining content, if they manage to create entertaining and engaging posts, they would ensure a class of audience engaged with them. This phenomenon helps *Netflix* by:

- a) Creating a word-of-mouth publicity in the virtual world;
- b) Banks on FOMO (fear of missing out);
- c) Creates an important piece in the fabric of pop culture;
- d) Gets more subscribers.

Subscribers were found to complain about having to wait too long, while *Netflix* responded back with a joke. It seemed to be common consensus within the group members that binge watching was addictive, yet they were hooked to it. The content itself was very dark, but *Netflix* managed to sell it with lighthearted jibes. Adapting the meme and GIF culture on the Internet, *Netflix* was found to indulge in self-deprecating humor popular with the youth on platforms like this.

Netflix also used memes and GIFs from its own shows to answer back to comments. For e.g., on an appreciative comment on a post about *Orange is the New Black* (2016) will receive a reply in form of a GIF from the *Stranger Things* (2016). There were also instances where *Netflix* was found to be reminding the audience of its older products through its posts. For example, there was a post about the series *Little Things* (2018) and the GIF as the reply was from *Stranger Things* (2016). By doing this, *Netflix*:

- 1) Advertises its old content;
- 2) Creates a visual text for better engagement;
- 3) Is able to connect with its subscribers.

When not discussing its own content, the jokes would draw upon other popular culture references. For example, the researchers studied the responses by *Netflix* referring to *Shaktiman* (Hindi TV Show 1997-2005), while another referred to *Harry Potter* (Books (1997-2007), films (2001-11)). By doing this:

- a) *Netflix* created relatable content for its millennial subscribers;
- b) It carved a niche for its audience base.

Apart from producing memes and GIFs from earlier shows, *Netflix* was also found to be producing special video ads and posters to advertise its content. For example, an ad for a perfume named Ghoul, to advertise *Ghoul* (2018), talk shows and a post containing popular actress Kareena Kapoor running behind the train from *Jab We Met* (2007) compared with another clip of actor Saif Ali Khan running behind a train in *Sacred Games* (2018) in split windows.

The posts were also found to be celebrating friendship day, romance day, relationships and Indian Supreme court’s judgement on Section 377, a section which discusses homosexuality. These posts contained a supporting montage from all its shows, original and acquired. Having a grip on the nerve of the socio-political scenario of the country, the posts also had news footage to advertise

their own content. For example, there were clips from religious leader Maa Anand Sheela's controversial speeches, used to advertise content based on similar ideas.

Few posts were also found to focus on people who created or contributed to creation of content. *Netflix* created heroes out of actors Radhika Apte, Siddiqui and writer George RR Martin, referring to them in various posts. For example, the researchers found a few posts that referred to watching pirated content and *Netflix* responded with a gif of Nawazuddin Siddiqui loading a gun. The text said, '*Kya bola bay*' (translation: what did you say?). *Netflix* also created an extended persona for the characters from its content while creating these posts. For e.g., the posts referred to characters by their reel and real names, for e.g., Nawazuddin would be Gaitonde (a character from *Sacred Games* (2018)) or vice versa, blurring the lines between the real and the virtual personalities.

It was observed that content in Hindi was found to have greater engagement than the content in English, *Netflix* had a mix of both the languages and pop culture references while creating the posts. Group members very specifically celebrated 'anti Ekta Kapoor content' (a specific category of TV soap operas in India that are highlighted by melodrama and overly display of emotions) and publicly bashed other group members who dissented. Many social media pages run by media houses like VH1, ScoopWhoop, MAD by Rob etc were also found to be engaging with posts. This further helped by:

- a) Getting the fans from both the pages to increase the traffic;
- b) Collaborating with lesser-known celebrities on the internet to promote their work and in return tap into a niche audience base;
- c) Promoting alternative icons through the posts and content.

Meta Reaction: *Netflix* page was found to be run by an administrator, who responded back to first few comments made on every post, albeit with a funny turn. It responded to threats of unsubscribing, pirating, but shied away from addressing posts about competitors or any other sort of content. It was also found to respond to the subscriber's requests to add new content. Responses were also found for messages sent through Facebook messenger almost instantly, as per the feedback by the subscribers of the group. Group members, who were also present on other platforms, redirected traffic to the *Netflix* app and *Facebook* groups as well. While on one hand this pointed at a loyal fan base and social media promoting cross brand promotion, it also hinted at a consumer base who wanted to watch certain content, wherever it may be hosted.

Amazon Prime Video India

In the period of 14 weeks, the page saw a total of 283 posts, amounting to a little more than 3 posts every day. Each post was liked on average about 7697 times, loved 166 times, laughed at by 79 subscribers, wowed 25 times, angered 0.55 times and saddened 0.7 subscribers. Each post was shared 158 times and commented upon 98 times with administrator responding back 3.7 times per post.

Posts: *Amazon* is an established gigantic ecommerce brand with *Amazon Prime* being a premium membership to get benefits of many kinds on ecommerce website. *Prime Video* is an extension of the same, providing content through online platforms. Thus, the platform has its own web commerce page to start advertising from. The posts also provided links to webpages of *Amazon*, *Amazon Prime Video* and IMDB as well, creating a mesh of networked websites. It was also found to utilize the page to sell its other content/platforms, such as Prime Reading.

Prime has emerged as the lead and most frequent acquirer of content from Hollywood and Indian Cinemas in recent times. Thus, the posts also advertise recently acquired titles. The page changes its cover photo frequently based on recent acquisitions. Appealing to regional fan bases, Prime acquires popular content in Tamil and Telugu as well and not just in Hindi. It also releases international titles dubbed in 12 local languages ranging from Bengali to Kannada. Apart from acquiring new released titles, Prime also acquires old titles such as *Malgudi Days* (1987) as well, thus providing a wider content base to its subscribers.

Balancing the act between original and acquired content, while the administrator posts greater number of posts on original content (168/283 posts), it is the posts relating to acquired content that see greater audience engagement.

The posts range from celeb endorsements of few shows, Birthday wishes for various Hollywood or Indian film celebrities, snippets from its original Stand-Up Comedy Show *Comicstaan* (2018), collaborations with Internet Celebs and small production houses to incorporate a wider content base. The posts also had tags for celebrities to:

- a) Widen the audience base and invite more traffic from the fan bases;
- b) Give a chance to the subscribers to interact with the celebrities on one to one basis;
- c) Create a virtual presence of these celebrities on their page.

The posts tagged the film celebrities such as Chris Pratt and Shilpa Shetty to known faces on Internet such as stand-up comedians Sorabh Pant, Tanmay Bhatt and Biswa Kalyan Rath. There were few collaborative and outsourced videos from other media houses such as *Arre*, Filter Copy and *Kavithalaya*, banking on the internet friendly content these sites create.

Few posts created were also jokes and memes created on popular social media trends such as Kiki challenge and PUBG, the trending game. This was done in order to: 1) Attract the young audience base who is familiar with these phenomenon; 2) Use hashtags with these videos to make their content and thus their page indexed and easily locatable.

Reactions: While emerging as the second most populous group in the sample, it saw lesser tagging by subscribers. This could be due to two reasons: 1) Prime advertises its content on few TV channels as well, thus making up for less word-of-mouth advertising; 2) It has established itself as a family brand, to be seen on TV set with the help of *Amazon Fire Stick*, thus including an audience base with a wider age bracket.

Most of the comments were not related to content already posted but requesting for more titles to be added. Thus, subscribers did not treat the posts as points of interaction and feedback, but particularly as request boxes. Most reactions were garnered by the posts wishing birthday to various celebrities. Subscribers who were fans wrote comments on the post wishing birthday to their favorite celebrities. Apart from these posts, regional content saw more interaction as compared to Hindi or English Content.

Meta Reaction: As per the observations and feedback, the administrator responds to personal messages sent through messenger almost immediately. The page administrator/s react to the posts in a manner more suited to Customer Service personnel. They responded to compliments, complaints and requests and forwarded their queries to relevant departments.

The staff recruited for responding on behalf of *Amazon* display their names at the end of the posts, so that: 1) In case the subscriber wants to reach out further, they know who has been their point of contact; 2) *Amazon* does not have to bear the responsibility of these responses as the brunt lies on the shoulders of the person who is named; 3) To invoke a feeling of a customer care cell or a corporate set up.

5. Conclusion

With the help of the data collected – quantitative through archives and qualitative through observations, few factors emerged organically. The content posted on the platforms, audience's reaction to this content, further engagement by tagging other subscribers or eliciting responses by the administrators of the page highlighted the nature of the communication strategies, while the numbers, in form of subscriber base, number of posts, comments and reactions underlined the success, or failure of these strategies. Further section deals with discussing them one by one for each brand.

Netflix brands itself as a young, cosmopolitan, trending brand which provides content for entertainment. While focusing on creating class content, it also focusses on creating material for posting on the *Facebook* group, whether it be talk shows, or a montage put together from its shows. The posts were analyzed to chalk out *Netflix's* existing communication strategies. These include:

1) Humor – *Netflix* indulges in self-deprecating humor, while creating jokes on self and subscribers as posts and comments. People mostly react to the posts in a positive manner, laugh and love emoticons used much more than angered or sad.

2) Memes – Utilizing humor and GIFs from its own earlier content. This strategy helps twofold; in advertising old content and hooking old audience to new content. This also makes the communication visual, diverging a bit from the usual textual format, harnessing on the collective memory and understanding of the entire subscriber base.

3) FOMO (Fear of missing out) – *Netflix* drives on the culture propagated by social media, which induces fear of missing out in people. It keeps on reminding subscribers to watch their content, and they in return involve their friends and followers through tagging or hyperlinking.

4) Using pop culture references – This draws upon from the common psyche of the subscribers. Popular characters such as *Shaktimaan* and *Harry Potter* are referenced to start up conversation from posts and comments. The posts also refer to celebrities, big or small. This helps

in tapping into varied fan bases and makes the content reach out to various niches.

5) Responding – while compliments and criticisms are responded back to, the administrator does not revert to threats to give up subscription. It also addresses piracy with jokes and memes.

While these factors ran common through majority of the posts, they also created a window into the marketing strategies as followed by the brand. Few pointers from which are listed below:

1. *Netflix* banks on its content to do most of the selling. After the series is a month or few weeks old, the administrator assumes that most of the subscribers would have seen it and starts creating jokes and memes. The need to belong and understand the jokes makes others watch the shows.

2. Humor appeal – however dark the content, the posts are lighthearted in nature, in order to entertain, intrigue and log in at the end of the day.

3. Targets the metropolitan youth, who is part of corporate culture, stays away from home, does not have a TV set, has money to spend, understands English and is a part of social media.

4. Banks on word-of-mouth publicity. Page followers tag their friends in great numbers and thus the number of subscribers increases every week. Administrator also pitches in the conversation two people are having on a thread to make them feel involved and connected.

5. Collaborations. *Netflix* collaborates with celebrities big or small, other entertainers, small or big time. These collaborations could be acquiring content, producing something together, or merely using a few visuals to sell content. This again helps in tapping into various segments or audience.

6. Personal contact. Calling people by their first names, indulging in back slapping humor, trying to involve subscribers through quizzes and games, *Netflix* tries to connect to advertisers on a very individual level, and social media aides them in doing this.

Thus, these were few pointers regarding *Netflix's* Social Media Communication policies group and Marketing Strategies that emerged out of 14 weeks of observation of the official Facebook. The strategies seemed to be working as the subscriber base increased with a steady rate with multiple engagement strategies in place.

Amazon Prime Video India has branded itself as a family entertainer, replacement for TV and films, while borrowing its content from both of them. It works on a subscription model, thus advertising the USP of advertisement less entertainment. Because of such a large market, Prime is not targeting any particular segment as target market but is trying to serve something for everyone. The posts analyzed threw some light on its communication strategies with its diverse consumer base:

1) The *Facebook* page runs like a Customer Service forum, with the posts being points of interaction.

2) There were attempts at humor, creating suspense, creating a camaraderie with celebrities throw the posts, thus attempting many things as once akin to TV

3) Images and posters comprised of most of the content, thus making the process of post generation faster and mess free.

4) Original content as talked about more, acquired a little less, ratio being 60:40.

These communication strategies meted out as an important part of its marketing strategy as well along with these:

1) *Amazon* utilizes its brand name and other webpages to sell its content and converge the traffic

2) *Amazon* ties up with other content giants such as IMDB or Internet Movie Database to advertise the content is has already acquired.

3) *Amazon* advertises itself through TV ads as well. Thus, not merely depending on the advertising through Internet.

4) *Amazon* also acquires channels as well as shows in order to tap into fan bases. It has the largest repertoire of content compared to all other platforms.

While its strategies mark it as another mass entertainer venturing in the field of virtual entertainer and video on demand services, its marketing and communication strategies are less personal, more business-like and remind you of corporate giants who surround us through multiple platforms and channels.

In conclusion, with a clear demarcation in strategies and communication patterns, while *Netflix* manages to use the *Facebook's* networked platform in a marked enhanced manner, comparatively, the Indian market is responding better to the corporate approach adopted by

Amazon. Both approaches are helping them exploit their respective target markets. As SVoD is replacing TV as the medium of entertainment, the fulcrum still resides in the TV set as the medium of play and content for the family still being the need of the hour. Thus, it can be stated that while *Netflix* creates its mark in the more urbane audience groups, *Amazon* is steadily matching up with its broad mass appeal.

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Published in the the USA
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2021. 6(2): 447-452

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.447
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Foreign Leaders of Soviet Film Distribution: What Were They Like?

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Abstract

In his new monograph "100 Foreign Leaders of Soviet Film Distribution: A Selected Collection", professor Alexander Fedorov gives a panorama of one hundred popular foreign films in the USSR in the mirror of the opinions of film critics and viewers. Professor Marina Tselykh talks to the author of the book, designed for university teachers, students, graduate students, researchers, film critics, film historians, journalists, as well as for a wide range of readers who are interested in the problems of movies. Based on the analysis made in the book, it can be reasonably stated that the first hundred of the most popular foreign films in Soviet cinemas included only films that exceeded the threshold of thirty million spectators. Based on attendance figures, it is clear (and we expect) that movies of entertaining genres (adventure, action, melodramas, comedies, detectives, westerns, science fiction) turned out to be the most popular among Soviet viewers.

Keywords: popular foreign films, Soviet film distribution, success, Alexander Fedorov, film studies, USSR.

Marina Tselykh: You have just published a new monograph under the title "100 Foreign Leaders of Soviet Film Distribution: A Selected Collection" (Fedorov, 2022). In it you give a panorama of a hundred popular foreign films in the USSR in the mirror of the opinions of film critics, film reviewers and ordinary people. As always after reading your books I have many impressions, thoughts and questions that I want to discuss with you. Would you be so kind to tell me, how the idea of a new book comes to you? What is the concept of this book? What motivates you when you start working on it?

Alexander Fedorov: In recent years, I have turned to various aspects of the history of cinema of the Soviet period (in particular, I have published several books on the box office of Soviet films from 1930s to 1980s) and some books and article about cinema history (Fedorov, 2012; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021), and in the framework of this topic, I decided write the book about foreign movies, which were lined up in the cinemas of the USSR, and also – in the mirror of the opinions of film critics and viewers.

Marina Tselykh: What goals did you prioritize while writing this book? What are the main targets of this book? What was the most challenging thing for you during the writing of this book?

Alexander Fedorov: In this book, I wanted to answer approximately the following questions: "What foreign films were popular in the Soviet cinemas? How did the Soviet and Russian film press and the audience evaluated these films?" My new monograph is intended for high school teachers,

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students, graduate students, researchers, film critics, film historians, journalists, as well as for a wide range of readers who are interested in the problems of cinema, film criticism and film history.

The peculiarity of this monograph is that for the first time in film studies an attempt is made to give a panorama of one hundred popular foreign films in the USSR in the mirror of the opinions of film critics and viewers. Quotes from audience reviews are taken from the comments published on the portals "Kino-teatr.ru" and "Kinopoisk", and the basic information about the cinema attendance of foreign films in the Soviet cinema – from the information materials of S. Kudryavtsev and others sources.

Taking this opportunity, I thank film critics Igor Arkadyev, Andrei Vyatkin, Nikolai Mayorov, Igor Fishkin for their corrections and additions in the process of preparing lists of foreign films in Soviet cinemas. I also express my gratitude for clarifying the titles of some foreign films and their translation into Russian to my benevolent readers on the Yandex portal – journalist Vladimir Ergakov and historian Concombre masqué.

The greatest difficulty in writing the book arose due to the fact that the statistics of Soviet film distribution are not available for all foreign movies, so the monograph did not include, for example, such memorable for Soviet moviegoers films. For example, French *Les Aventuriers*, *Deux hommes dans la Ville*, *Le Jouet* and many others. Unfortunately, even in such a voluminous work as *Sociology of Cinema* (Zhabsky, 2020), alas, there are no tables or digital data (in millions of viewers) attendance of foreign films-leaders of Soviet film distribution (however, there are no analogues of digital data for Soviet films)...

Thus, in the end I got a kind of selected collection, consisting of one hundred foreign leaders of Soviet film distribution.

Marina Tselykh: You were educated at Russian State University of Cinematography, the faculty of film studies. When you found yourself inside the profession, did you perceive films differently?

Alexander Fedorov: Undoubtedly, this university gave me a lot. I entered there simply as a fan of cinema, and graduated as a person who received systematized knowledge about the theory and history of Soviet and foreign cinema. For example, I recall with great pleasure the lectures and seminars of my wonderful university professors: Klara Isaeva, Lidia Zaitseva (1931-2021), Paola Volkova (1930-2013), Vladimir Bakhmutsky (1919-2004). While studying at this university, I met and had the pleasure of communicating with such outstanding personalities in Russian film studies as Victor Demin (1937-1993), Lev Anninsky (1934-2019), Kirill Razlogov (1946-2021), Neya Zorkaya (1924-2006), Ilya Weisfeld (1909-2003), Alexander Braginsky (1920-2016), Mark Zak (1929-2011), Stal Penzin (1932-2011) and others. A lot was given to me by my acquaintance during the university years with the leader of Soviet film education, Professor Yuri Usov (1936-2000), under whose guidance I later successfully defended my doctoral dissertation.

Marina Tselykh: What unites movies with millions of views? Why did viewers vote for some films with their tickets, while for others – they did not? Are they always masterpiece films?

Alexander Fedorov: Based on the analysis made in the book, it can be reasonably asserted that only films that crossed the threshold of thirty million viewers in the first year of showing in cinemas could enter the first hundred of the most popular foreign films in Soviet film distribution.

Based on the attendance figures, it is expectedly clear that the most popular among Soviet viewers were foreign films of entertainment genres (adventure films, melodramas, comedies, detective stories, westerns, action films, science fiction). The first hundred of the highest-grossing foreign films in the Soviet box office included several dozen Indian, Mexican, Pakistani and Egyptian films (mainly melodramas), which, due to their specificity, were highlighted by me in a separate list. Foreign films in the genre of Westerns (mainly produced in Yugoslavia and the German Democratic Republic, plus the American *The Magnificent Seven* and *Mackenna's Gold*), which were leading in the Soviet box office in the 1960s and 1970s, were also included in a separate list.

But the use of entertainment genres by filmmakers certainly does not guarantee the necessary super-success with the public. The participation / non-participation of movie stars, directorial skills, the relevance of the subject of the plot, etc., also play a role here.

On the other hand, the film distribution leaders often include films that are far from the level of masterpieces. The most striking example is the Mexican *Yesenia*, which gathered in the Soviet box office an audience of over ninety million viewers in the first year of the demonstration. And here I completely agree with the opinion of N.M. Zorkaya: “The model, the archetype of such perception (reading, watching) is listening to an entertaining story or, earlier, fairy tales. Listening is naive, selfless, simple-minded, the perception is holistic, undivided, not separating “what” from “how”, not controlling or correcting what is being watched, listened to, read by one's own life experience. On the contrary, a reminder of his own, the viewer's, life in such cases is undesirable. A complete switch to the world of heroes ("another" life) is appreciated. This world should not look like the real one, the surrounding, on the contrary, should differ from that in juiciness, richness of colors, should be fascinating and very beautiful, but at the same time not too exotic, which is very important for the reader, listener, viewer – some then there are bridges, albeit heavily decorated, between reality and the screen, the stage, the book. The film *Yesenia* meets all these requirements in the best way and corresponds to them completely” (Zorkaya, 1981: 111-112).

Marina Tselykh: Is true film art compatible with "box office success"? Have Western/Hollywood producers always focused on making high-grossing films? What does box office mean for a filmmaker? Is it an indicator of artistic quality, commercial success, or universal recognition?

Alexander Fedorov: In my opinion, art and box office success are quite compatible. The most vivid example here is the most famous comedies of Chaplin. As for Western producers, throughout all the years of the existence of cinema as a whole, of course, they want to make a profit, but in many cases (especially for low-budget films) they can (focusing, for example, at prestigious film festivals) finance some avant-garde, aesthetic movies that do not claim to be a massive success.

I believe that any director is happy with the massive success of his film (and this success, as noted above, is often not associated with high artistic quality), but for many directors the festival success of their films, the recognition of their importance among professionals, is of no less importance.

Marina Tselykh: Are there paradoxical/inexplicable cases of the film's popularity: nothing foreshadowed success, but against all odds, the film was loved by the audience? Is it possible to predict the success of the film in the future with viewers and at the box office?

Alexander Fedorov: Of course, there are such cases. For example, hardly any of the Western film distributors could have imagined that the melodrama *The Sandpit Generals* (USA, 1971), almost unnoticed by the American public, directed by an unknown person without the participation of Hollywood stars, would become one of the leaders of the Soviet film distribution and will gather in the USSR an audience of 43 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Marina Tselykh: Is it possible to predict the success of the audience and the box office of a future film?

Alexander Fedorov: Theoretically, the massive success of a film can be planned by following, the many times described recipes (reliance on the entertainment genre, the participation of movie stars, a sharp plot, etc.) not only the professionalism of the authors is needed, but also something difficult to describe, when the filmmakers guess even the latent desires of the audience and respond to them in exactly the way the public needs at the moment.

Marina Tselykh: Today, foreign films are not prohibited, the Russian viewers watch new films not decades later, as it was often the case in the USSR, but at the time of their release. Do you think that the availability of cinema influenced the tastes of a wider audience? Has the public's taste gone bad? Or the taste "magnitude" is constant on average?

Alexander Fedorov: Yes, today Russian viewers can (albeit with some delay) watch any foreign film, even if an official distribution certificate has not been issued for it. It was during

Soviet times that viewing many Western films was the privilege of elected bosses and film critics. Now, with the help of the Internet, Russian viewers can access not only new foreign films, but also old ones that are banned from showing in the USSR.

At the same time, I do not think that the availability of foreign cinema has significantly influenced the tastes of the multi-million Russian public for the better or for the worse. The mass audience still prefers entertainment films.

Marina Tselykh: Both Soviet and Russian viewers have always had a special interest in foreign cinema (albeit for various reasons). However, times have changed, is it possible to judge films by the box office today?

Alexander Fedorov: Of course, the box office receipts of any film distribution leader in modern Russia are several times inferior to those of the most popular films of the Soviet era. However, all the same, the mass popularity of films, as before, can be judged by the results of their distribution.

Marina Tselykh: The style of presentation in your present book is very restrained and correct. You do not enter into polemics either with critics or with viewers who sometimes express diametrically opposite opinions. You are trying to give a broad objective picture of the films that were popular in the Soviet film distribution. This is undoubtedly a plus for the thoughtful reader and researcher. At the same time, your deep knowledge of the history of cinema, your erudition, concentration and the author's vision of the problem are obvious. With particular interest for myself, I highlight those moments in the monograph in which you give your own assessment of a particular film, share your impressions and feelings about the films of past years. Tell me please, do you have any favorite foreign films of the Soviet film distribution that you can watch with pleasure even now? What 10 foreign leaders of the Soviet film distribution would you recommend for mandatory viewing to a young audience and why?

Alexander Fedorov: I sometimes like to watch foreign films that I liked in the distant Soviet times. My "recommendation" for the 10 foreign films that were leading in the Soviet box office looks like this (I give this list in alphabetical order):

Bluff. Italy, 1975. Directed by Sergio Corbucci. In the USSR: 1979. 44.3 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Divorzio all'italiana. Italy, 1961. Directed by Pietro Germi. In the USSR: 1964. 27.8 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire. France, 1972. Directed by Yves Robert. In the USSR - 1974. 27 (?) million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Le Vieux fusil. France-West Germany, 1975. Directed by Robert Enrico. In the USSR: 1977. 27.6 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Once Upon a Time in America. Italy-USA, 1983. Directed by Sergio Leone. In the USSR: 1989. 27.6 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Romeo and Juliet / Romeo e Giulietta. Italy-Great Britain, 1968. Directed by Franco Zeffirelli. In the USSR: 1972. 35.8 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Some Like It Hot. USA, 1959. Directed by Billy Wilder. In the USSR: 1966. 43.9 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration. Re-release in the USSR: 1985 (+ 28.9 million viewers).

Tootsie. USA, 1982. Directed by Sidney Pollack. In the USSR: 1984. 34.8 million viewers in the first year of the show.

Un homme et une femme. France, 1966. Directed by Claude Lelouch. In the USSR: 1968. 27.9 million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

Vabank. Poland, 1981. Director and screenwriter Juliusz Machulski. In the USSR: 1985. 34 (?) million viewers in the first year of the demonstration.

It seems to me that in addition to the genre merits, the stellar composition of these films is united by the main thing – the high professional skill of their creators.

Marina Tselykh: Do people who are far from cinema always need the knowledge of "professional kitchen" to perceive artistic production? Do all viewers need to see and discern the

professional aspects of filmmaking? Doesn't such "knowledge" interfere with the holistic perception of films? In short, does the general public need media literacy education? Will box office income fall in this case? Is it not for nothing that they say that knowledge increases problems?

Alexander Fedorov: Undoubtedly, people far from the cinema sphere do not need to know "professional cuisine" in order to perceive films. Another thing is that knowledge of the professional aspects of cinema makes a person more film-educated. I believe that media literacy education is the key to a more meaningful existence in our overflowing with information (including audiovisual). And in my opinion, there is no need to worry about the drop in box office. Compared to Soviet times, they have long ago decreased several times, and an increase in the media competent audience for the current film distribution, in my opinion, will not hurt at all...

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Published in the the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Has been issued since 2016.
 E-ISSN: 2500-106X
 2021. 6(2): 453-463

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.453
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



Towards an Integrated Model of Electronic Word of Mouth Communication

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Abstract

The term electronic word of mouth has witnessed a constant evolution due to the technological advancements and increased internet mediated consumer conversations. The topic has become a subject of interest for both business professionals and academic scholars with its growing importance in business research. Past studies mostly discussed the dynamic nature of eWOM under the strong influence of emerging concepts and technological innovations. However, very few research studies have viewed its extensive evolution in the context of a basic model of communication. In this research paper, a theoretical review was conducted to systematically organize the literature findings to develop an eWOM communication model. From participants' classification and motivation to generate eWOM to its influence on receivers, the model elaborates all the basic elements of communication process which also include content type and transmitting platform. This paper significantly contributes to elaborate the basic eWOM communication process by the extensive analyzation of the existing body of knowledge which will help in building a strong foundation of the topic for future studies.

Keywords: eWOM, communication model, communication process, literature analysis.

1. Introduction

The oral interpersonal uncommercialized form of communication is traditionally referred to as a word of mouth (WOM) (Arndt, 1967). Since its emergence, the term has witnessed a constant evolution and has been widely discussed in social sciences, business studies and digital disciplines, however, the scope of this research paper is limited to the systematic review of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) studies in business research. The frequently quoted definition of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in the literature states that "*it is a positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, and former customers about a product or a company via the Internet*" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Technological advancements have shown a rapid increase in eWOM communication since the growing consumer base now has more opportunities to interact with Web 2.0 tools (Lee et al., 2008).

The researches available on eWOM confirmed that it influences the customer's decision-making process on digital platforms such as forums (Stephen, Galak, 2012), review sites (Archak et al., 2011), blogs (Onishi, Manchanda, 2012), social networks (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015) and collective sources available online (King et al., 2014), which shows that eWOM certainly has a prevailing marketing power and provides consumers with the opportunity to interact is a

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computer-mediated environment where they can exchange their product-centered views to make informed purchase decision (Blazevic et al., 2013).

Due to its increasing relevance, a recent shift towards an explosive growth of literature encompassing the efficacy of eWOM have been witnessed (Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006). Over the years, the emergence of extensive research discussing the variety of platforms and several types of eWOM communication, accompanied with various methods have left the diverse literature available on the topic scattered and inconclusive (King et al., 2014). Market level analysis and individual level analysis are the two main approaches has widely been used to analyze the eWOM phenomenon and its impact on consumers (Lee et al., 2008). Products and sales are the two important parameters on which market-level analysis have been conducted, mostly on objective panel data extracted from online review sites to determine how eWOM influences sales (Chen, Xie, 2005; Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006; Zhu, Zhang, 2010). On the other hand, individual-level analysis caters to the communication process between sender and receiver about influencing purchase decisions (Cheung et al., 2009; Park, Kim, 2008; Zhang, Watts, 2008).

In this research paper, a theoretical review has been conducted to systematically organize the literature findings to develop an eWOM communication model. From participants' classification and motivation to generate eWOM to its influence on receivers, the model elaborates all the basic elements of the communication process which also include content type and transmitting platform. This paper significantly contributes to elaborate the basic eWOM communication process by the extensive analyzation of the existing body of knowledge which will help in building a strong foundation of the topic for future studies.

2. Materials and methods

There is a vast literature available on eWOM, but the scope of this study is limited to three journals – Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing and Journal of Marketing Research. the significant articles were searched and identified first, later their analysis was done. It was crucial to set a search strategy for identifying the relevant papers. The keywords used for searching the articles from digital databases include “eWOM”, “online reviews”, “online discussions”, “customer reviews” and “virality”. The papers with the keywords mentioned earlier were extracted from high impact factor journals i.e. Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing and Journal of Marketing Research to ensure that no important eWOM research articles were skipped.

As per the guiding principles of conventional systematic review methodology, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were set for the initial sorting of the articles. This was done to make sure that the chosen articles are relevant and appropriate for the analysis of the current research. The included articles were academic and peer-reviewed in nature and eWOM was the core subject of discussion in business to consumer settings. However, the papers entirely based on the theoretical and conceptual background without any research design were excluded from the current research.

The digital advancements and emergence of Web 2.0 have enabled customers to influence each other at individual and market-level through user-generated content tools i.e., social networking platforms, microblogging sites, personal blogs and closed or open groups. Therefore, the research studies addressing the impact of eWOM communication can be categorized into market-level analysis and individual- level analysis (Lee, 2009). During the literature review, it was found that the majority of the eWOM research studies were focused around an individual's decision-making process and analysis of consumer reviews on rating platforms, e-commerce websites and discussion forums. The papers selected for this study were focused on both market level and individual level analysis approaches to bring a broader perspective of eWOM research into context.

The 17 articles selected for this study were published between 1967 and 2018. The majority of articles were from the last decade. The timeline review is summarized in Figure 1. To observe the evolution of electronic word of mouth, it was important to include the first paper published on the topic in 1967.

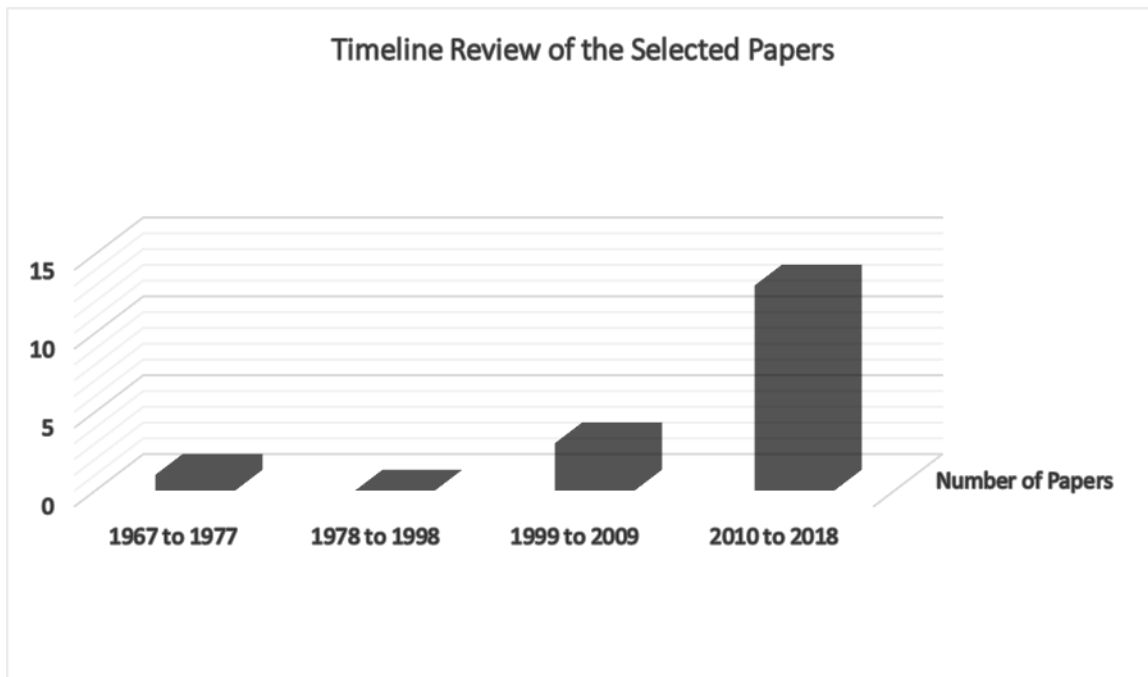


Fig. 1. Timeline Review of the Selected Papers

Among the selected 17 articles, 7 articles followed the market level approach, which constitutes 38.8 % of the total papers, 7 articles adopted the individual level approach, which constitutes the remaining 38.8 % of the selected papers and 3 articles followed both the market-level analysis and individual level analysis approach constitute 22.4 % of the total selected articles, summarized in [Figure 2](#).

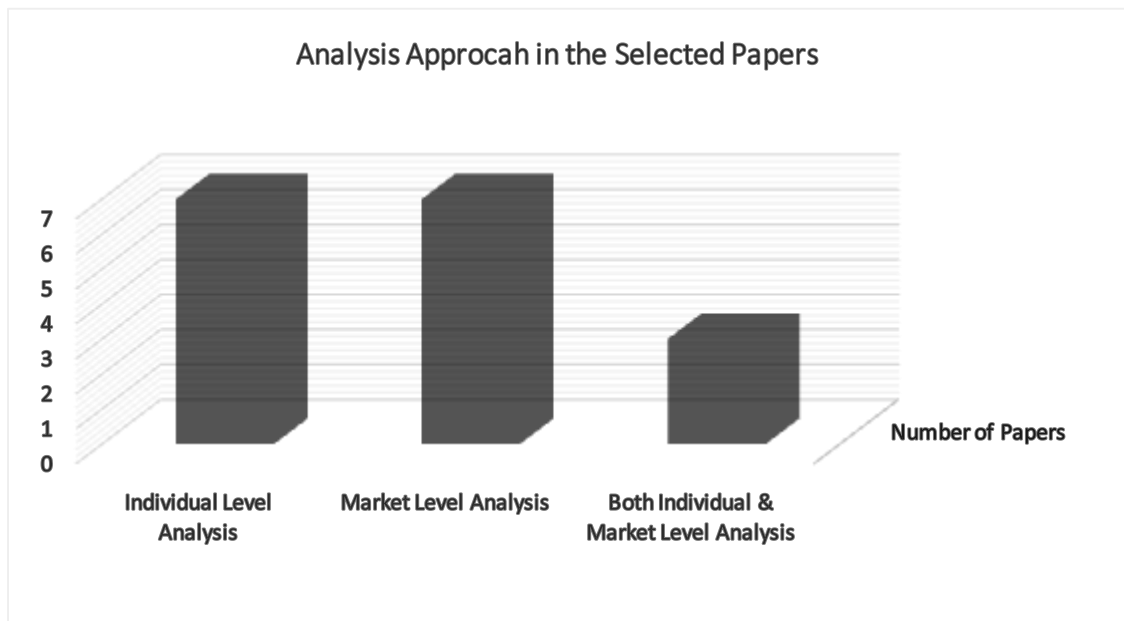


Fig. 2. Analysis Approach in the Selected Papers

During the literature review, it was observed that the term eWOM is constantly evolving with the unprecedented expansion of digital platforms. A slight variation in the context of the study and the difference of its source platform or change in stimuli results in altogether a different eWOM type. As per the findings of the review, the different types of eWOM are summarized in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Summarized findings of Figure 1 and Figure 2

<i>Types of eWOM</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Analysis Type</i>	<i>Study</i>
Product Related Conversations	1967	Individual Level Analysis	Arndt, 1967
Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM)	2006	Individual Level Analysis	Voorhees, 2006
Consumer Reviews, Community Content,	2006	Market Level Analysis	Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006
Word of Mouth Communication	2009	Individual Level Analysis	Lam et al., 2009
Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM), Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM)	2010	Individual Level Analysis	Cheema, Kaikati, 2010
	2011	Market Level Analysis	Chen et al., 2011
Rumor	2011	Individual Level Analysis	Dubois et al., 2011
Negative Content, Positive Content	2012	Both Market Level & Individual Level Analysis	Berger, Milkman, 2012
Braggarts, Gossips, Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM), Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM)	2012	Individual Level Analysis	De Angelis et al., 2012
Online Customer Reviews (OCRs),	2013	Market Level Analysis	Ho-Dac et al., 2013
Negative Online Reviews, Positive Online Reviews	2013	Both Market Level & Individual Level Analysis	Chen, Lurie, 2013
Word of Mouth Communication	2013	Market Level Analysis	Lovett et al., 2013
Microblogging Word of Mouth (MWOM)	2014	Market Level Analysis	Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015
Broadcasting, Narrowcasting	2014	Individual Level Analysis	Barasch, Berger, 2014
Consumer Reviews	2017	Both Market Level & Individual Level Analysis	Yin et al., 2017
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	2018	Market Level Analysis	Liu et al., 2018
Word of Mouth Spikes	2018	Market Level Analysis	Gelper et al., 2018

The theories identified in the eWOM literature are presented in [Tab. 2](#). It was observed that most of the theories applied in selected studies were adopted from sociology, psychology and economics. Although the scope of this systematic review study is limited to the business research only, a single study has adopted the Organic Interconsumer Influence Model, Linear Marketer Influence Model, and Network Coproduction Model.

Table 2. Theories identified in eWOM literature

<i>Theory</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Study</i>
Riesman's Theoretical Formulations	1967	Arndt, 1967
Equity theory, Expectancy Disconfirmation, Signaling Theory, Adaptation Theory, Recency Effect,	2006	Voorhees, 2006

Regret, Negative Bias		
Positive Bias, Negative Bias	2006	Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006
Hofstede's Four Cultural Dimension Theory (1980)	2009	Lam et al., 2009
Social Exchange Theory	2010	Cheema, Kaikati, 2010
Information Cascade Theory, Accessibility–Diagnosticity Model	2011	Chen et al., 2011
Information Transmission, Belief Certainty	2011	Dubois et al., 2011
Psychological and Sociological Approaches	2012	Berger, Milkman, 2012
Self-Enhancement Theory	2012	De Angelis et al., 2012
Signaling Theory, Prospect Theory	2013	Ho-Dac et al., 2013
Negativity Bias, Temporal Contiguity and Causal Attributions	2013	Chen, Lurie, 2013
Social, Emotional and Functional Drivers	2013	Lovett et al., 2013
Negativity Bias, Diagnosticity of Information, Prospect Theory	2014	Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015
Social Impact Theory	2014	Barasch, Berger, 2014
Expressed Emotional Arousal	2017	Yin et al., 2017
Agglomeration Theory	2018	Liu et al., 2018
Social Network Theory	2018	Gelper et al., 2018

The following components of an eWOM communication model have emerged while reviewing eWOM literature which includes Participants' Motivation, Participants' Classification, Influence on Consumer Behavior, Transmitting Platform and Content Types. [Table 3](#) elaborates the major findings.

Table 3. Components of eWOM Model

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>Publication</i>
Participants' Motivation	Trustworthiness	Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015
	Personal Factor	Gelper et al., 2018 Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015 Liu et al., 2018 Voorhees, 2006
	Environmental Factors	Voorhees, 2006
	Social Factors	Arndt, 1967 Liu et al., 2018 Lovett et al., 2013 Voorhees, 2006
	Emotional State	Berger, Milkman, 2012 Lovett et al., 2013 Yin et al., 2017
	Functional Drivers	Lovett et al., 2013
	Perceived Regret	Voorhees, 2006
	Self-Presentation	Barasch, Berger, 2014 Liu et al., 2018
	Sharer Focus	Barasch, Berger, 2014
	Information	Arndt, 1967

		Chen et al., 2011 Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006 De Angelis et al., 2012 Gelper et al., 2018 Ho-Dac et al., 2013
	Certainty	Dubois et al., 2011
	Helpfulness	Yin et al., 2017
	Experience	Chen, Lurie, 2013 De Angelis et al., 2012
	Cultural Values	Lam et al., 2009
	Uniqueness of Possessions	Cheema, Kaikati, 2010
Participants' Classification	Age	Barasch, Berger, 2014 Cheema, Kaikati, 2010 De Angelis et al., 2012 Lam et al., 2009 Voorhees, 2006
	Gender	Arndt, 1967 Barasch, Berger, 2014 Cheema, Kaikati, 2010 De Angelis et al., 2012 Lam et al., 2009 Voorhees, 2006
	Education	Arndt, 1967 Cheema, Kaikati, 2010 Dubois et al., 2011 Lam et al., 2009 Liu et al., 2018 Voorhees, 2006 Yin et al., 2017
	Ethnicity	Lam et al., 2009 Liu et al., 2018 Lovett et al., 2013 Voorhees, 2006
	Culture	Lam et al., 2009
	Non-Complainers	Voorhees, 2006
	Audience Size	Barasch, Berger, 2014
	Proximity	Barasch, Berger, 2014
	Opinion Holders	Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015
Influence on Receivers	Correct Choice	Cheema, Kaikati, 2010 Chen, Lurie, 2013 Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015 Yin et al., 2017
	Re-purchase Intention	Voorhees, 2006
	Intention to Pass On	Barasch, Berger, 2014 De Angelis et al., 2012 Dubois et al., 2011 Lovett et al., 2013 Voorhees, 2006
	Virality	Berger, Milkman, 2012
	Sales	Arndt, 1967 Chen et al., 2011 Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006 Gelper et al., 2018 Ho-Dac et al., 2013
	Product Adoption and Diffusion	Lam et al., 2009
	Increased Consumer Consideration Set	Liu et al., 2018

Transmitting Platform	Company Website/Social Media	Berger, Milkman, 2012
	Twitter	Gelper et al., 2018 Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015
	Blogs	Gelper et al., 2018
	Online/Offline (Surveys/Interviews/Experiment Settings)	Arndt, 1967 Barasch, Berger, 2014 Cheema, Kaikati, 2010 De Angelis et al., 2012 Dubois et al., 2011 Lam et al., 2009 Voorhees, 2006
	Barnesandnoble.com	Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006
	Amazon.com	Chen et al., 2011 Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006 Ho-Dac et al., 2013
	Yelp.com	Chen, Lurie, 2013 Liu et al., 2018
	Apple's App Store,	Yin et al., 2017
	Content Type	Tweets
Online Complains		Voorhees, 2006
New York Times Articles		Berger, Milkman, 2012
Online/Offline (Verbal/Written/Oral)		WOM Arndt, 1967 Barasch, Berger, 2014 De Angelis et al., 2012 Gelper et al., 2018 Lam et al., 2009 Lovett et al., 2013
Customer/Consumer Reviews		Chen, Lurie, 2013 Chen et al., 2011 Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006 Ho-Dac et al., 2013 Liu et al., 2018 Yin et al., 2017
Recommendation		Cheema, Kaikati, 2010
Star Rating		Chen et al., 2011 Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006 Yin et al., 2017
Rumors		Dubois et al., 2011

3. Discussion and results

Consumers articulate their views on opinion-based platforms. Various studies have been conducted to analyze the motivation behind sharing their thoughts and experiences (Fine et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2003). However, in the context of our study, this category is based on a holistic theme identified in all the papers about participants' motivation to create and share eWOM content. Only the active participants have been put into the category due to their higher motivation to disseminate eWOM. The information has been observed as the most motivating factor (Arndt, 1967; Chen et al., 2011; Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006; De Angelis et al., 2012; Gelper et al., 2018; Ho-Dac et al., 2013) followed by personal, social and emotional factors respectively. Self-presentation and sharer focus has also been reported as an important factor of participants' motivation (Barasch, Berger, 2014; Liu et al., 2018). In addition to this, trustworthiness, environmental factors, functional drivers, certainty, helpfulness, experience and cultural values were exhibited as equally important contributors of the theme as reported in the eWOM literature. Contrary to the findings of motivating factors, perceived regret was holding participants back from engaging in eWOM activities (Buttle, Groeger, 2017; Voorhees, 2006). On the other hand, the uniqueness of possessions motivates participants to discuss the product detail, but make them less willing to recommend the product to the public (Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; Chen et al., 2018).

The participants' classification is defined as a set of characteristics on the basis of the participants of eWOM communication have been classified into various groups. This theme is based on certain factors identified in the papers selected for this study. Education was the most common factor used by various researchers to classify their participants. It was observed that for most of the researches the participants were students (Arndt, 1967; Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; Dubois et al., 2011; Lam et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2018; Voorhees, 2006; Yin et al., 2017), which was largely followed by other demographic factors such as gender (Arndt, 1967; Barasch, Berger, 2014; Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; De Angelis et al., 2012; Lam et al., 2009), age (Barasch, Berger, 2014; Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; De Angelis et al., 2012; Lam et al., 2009; Voorhees, 2006), and ethnicity (Lam et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2018; Lovett et al., 2013; Voorhees, 2006) respectively. It has been observed that the scope of the study influences the participants' classification. These specific study-based classifications to refine methodology include culture (Lam et al., 2009), opinion holders (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015), audience size, proximity (Barasch, Berger, 2014) and non-complainers (Voorhees, 2006).

In the context of this review, the receivers are those who receive word of mouth messages generated by the participants. Several studies have proved that receivers' prior knowledge and experiences shape and moderate the impact of word of mouth communication (Li et al., 2016; Moore, Lafreniere, 2020; Rosario et al., 2020), hence it is important to analyze how eWOM communication influences the receivers. Under this category, the impact of eWOM on receivers' behaviour has been identified. eWOM communication empowers consumers to make suggestions, sharing opinions and experiences when it comes to adopting new product, ideas and innovations (Li et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021) therefore, the correct choice, intention to pass on and sales are found as the most common factors contributing to the theme (Barasch, Berger, 2014; Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; Dubois et al., 2011; Gelper et al., 2018; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Ho-Dac et al., 2013). In addition, the research endorses that eWOM influences purchase intention (Voorhees, 2006), triggers virality (Berger, Milkman, 2012) and helps receivers to expand their brand consideration set (Liu et al., 2018) through adoption and diffusion (Lam et al., 2009) especially in case of new products.

An eWOM message needs a platform to travel that results in the emergence of the transmitting platform category. In the reviewed papers, it was observed that the message transmitting platforms for the papers followed market-level analysis approach were based on company websites (Berger, Milkman, 2012; Yin et al., 2017), microblogging and blogging sites (Gelper et al., 2018; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015), review sites (Chen, Lurie, 2013; Liu et al., 2018), e-commerce website (Chen et al., 2011; Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006; Ho-Dac et al., 2013). However, in the papers where individual-level analysis approach has been used, the unit of analysis were mostly students, and the transmitting platforms were included survey forms, interviews, and messages initiated in the experimental settings (Arndt, 1967; Barasch, Berger, 2014; Berger, Milkman, 2012; Cheema, Kaikati, 2010; Chen, Lurie, 2013; Dubois et al., 2011; Lam et al., 2009; Voorhees, 2006; Yin et al., 2017).

For this research, the content type is referred to the eWOM content taken from different online sources and collected during experimental settings. This is another theme found common in all the papers selected for the systemic review. Customer or consumer reviews (Chen, Lurie, 2013; Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006; Liu et al., 2018) and online or offline word of mouth (Arndt, 1967; Gelper et al., 2018; Lam et al., 2009) were found to be the most prevailing content type used to examine eWOM in the available literature (Liu et al., 2019; Xu, Lee, 2020; Zhao et al., 2019). The star rating factor was also used either own its own or in combination with other content types to give meaning to an eWOM communication (Chen et al., 2011; Chevalier, Mayzlin, 2006; Yin et al., 2017). Other than that tweets (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015), online complaints (Voorhees, 2006), newspaper articles (Berger, Milkman, 2012), recommendations (Cheema, Kaikati, 2010) and rumours (Dubois et al., 2011) have also significantly contributed to the theme. It has also been observed that papers in which both market and individual level analysis were conducted mostly used mixed methodology technique (Berger, Milkman, 2012; Chen, Lurie, 2013; Yin et al., 2017), and experiments were conducted to endorse the findings of market analysis mostly, however, no particular pattern was found among a particular content type and analysis technique.

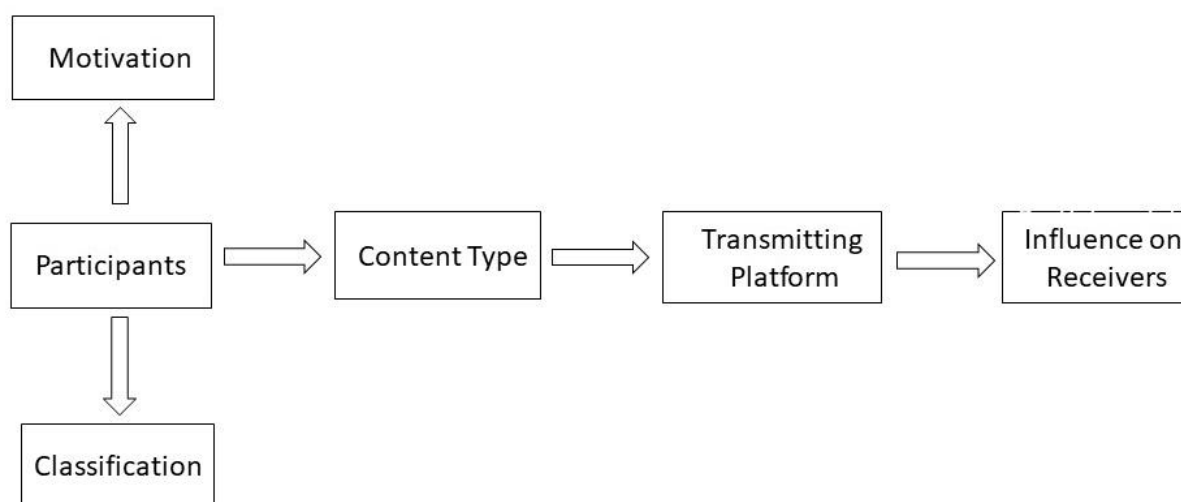


Fig. 3. Graphical Presentation of eWOM Communication Model

4. Conclusion

The prime objective of this systematic review paper is to analyze the eWOM communication process and to present the literature findings as an eWOM communication process. As discussed earlier, both individual level and market analysis papers have been reviewed in this study. After analyzing the literature, a basic eWOM communication model has been developed. The model elaborates participants' motivation and classification, content type, transmitting platform and its influence on receivers. This model provides a basic foundation for future studies.

There were a few limitations, which should be noted. The analyses and categorization are limited to the few impact factor journals fulfilling our selection criteria. Moreover, we have included both the market level and individual level studies in our literature analysis, and more extensive findings can be comprehended by selecting studies addressing either on market level or individual level approach. Our systematic review is based on only 17 papers; therefore, we are unable to perform empirical verification of our findings.

Future research on the topic should include more research papers so that it can be verified empirically. The eWOM model that has been developed in this study is very basic and future research can explore it further in a detail.

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