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PHENOMENOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION AND SELF-PRESENTATION IN VIRTUAL SPACE

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Abstract

New trends and new ways of communication and self-presentation in a transitive virtual space are considered. The significance of the new technological space in the formation of the world-image is revealed. New tendencies in the influence of the Internet on the communication of modern youth, as well as the specifics of self-presentation in real and virtual space, are analyzed. The results of the empiric research of self-presentation in the Instagram network and new technologies of communication in streaming video are presented. It is proved that the personal page in the network is a reflection of the world-image of the user. Thus, social networks stimulate the formation of subjective space that begins to dominate in the overall picture of the world. The specifics of visual self-presentation in social networks can serve as an indicator of the objective social status of the user. The main specifics of the self-presentations of high-status users are not in the degree of publication activity, but in the greater personalization of self-presentations and personal pages. Data showing the relationship between identity styles and behavior in the virtual space is presented. It is shown that users with an information identity style acquire in virtual space additional options to strengthen their identity. For the users with a normative style of identity, the lack of clear social norms leads to the negative effect of lowing self-esteem. It is proved that there is a pronounced connection between the virtual and transitive spaces.

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Keywords: Virtual space, self-presentation, streaming video, information identity.

1. Introduction

1.1. Virtual space of transitive society

When we discuss psychology of digital society, it is necessary to analyze challenges facing modern science. It is assumed that transitivity has become the main challenge. Basic transitivity characteristics are: multiplicity of socio-cultural contexts, variability and uncertainty of surrounding world. We note that different aspects of transitivity are related to various problems of a human. Thus variability and uncertainty violate identity's integrity, its separate components and time perspective. Multiplicity makes difficult to choose an identification group and socialization space. In this case we have to reconsider concepts of identity and socialization keeping in mind that these processes take place in real life and in virtual space as well.

Today we can observe civilization changes in addition to social ones, which are caused by appearance of new digital devices and technologies. New technologies became essential part of human life and its influence upon modern people becomes bigger and more profound (Martsinkovskaya, 2015). We enter a new epoch of digital society where digital devices are not something external for a human. We consider them not as mechanisms or as tool only, but as a part of our environment and continuation of our mental abilities. We may state that digital devices interiorize human beings defining their perception of the world, interaction with objects and communication with each other. Modern means of communication and transportation transformed space-time continuum and our perception of it. Indeed we are not able to predict consequences of one's speech which can affect something on another continent and in another language.

At the same time discovery of new self-development possibilities, revelations of new options for real and virtual communications, individualization and socialization, get more prominent in transitivity context. Technologies and means of digital information mediate self-presentation and communications in a new social situation. They create new forms of behavior and communication, dictate new value system determining context of teenagers' socialization (Golubeva & Martsinkovskaya, 2011; Biesanz, 2010; Astrid, Bernd & Machilek, 2006). Communication experience is altering (new forms of communication appear). New means of getting new information develop (different ways of information presentation), new opportunities of self-presentation appear (blogs, online diaries, social networks), as well as new ways of professionalization (internet communities).

1.2. Self-presentation in real and virtual communication

Self-presentation aim is to create and demonstrate a desired image of oneself (Back et al., 2010). Another significant task of self-presentation is to maintain positive self-esteem. Numerous studies show that self-presentation can be determined by motivational and cognitive factors (Turkle, 1997; Tenney & Spellman, 2011; Swann, 2005). Scientists refer below factors to motivational ones: desire for power and high achievements, level of self-monitoring, need for social recognition. Cognitive factors, which are partially connected with self-consciousnesses degree, are determined by intentional and behavioral efforts. These efforts are focused to eliminate the dissonance between self-esteem and social assessment.

If we compare self-presentation characteristics in real and virtual life, we shall notice that self-presentation in social networks is more conscious and diverse. Its content depends on social norms of a

specific social network. The most interesting fact is that virtual communication helps to increase self - esteem more effectively than non-virtual does. It also helps to activate communications between the users.

2. Problem Statement

New information technologies modify way of life of a modern man, it also affects communication between people and their identity. Information helps to adequately position oneself in constantly changing and uncertain system which represents modern transitive reality. At the same time mass media increases its role and transforms into an institution of «liquid» socialization. This process depersonalizes and generalizes incoming information which leads to tension and emotional discomfort. Therefore information socialization converges in virtual and transitive spaces.

At the same time development process becomes more individual, it involves high intentionality and variability in the choice of self-realization. Here again, development trends of transitive and digital spaces coincide. In these two cases self-realization implies tougher responsibility and individualization for the choice of behavior and communication strategy.

3. Research Questions

The study of socialization and self-realization in the modern transitive world raises a question of how real and virtual communication and self-presentation relate to each other. No less important one more question - how new virtual communication technologies are connected with the style of information identity and the ideas of young people about the world and their place in it.

4. Purpose of the Study

1. Investigation of the reasons which explain popularity of new communication technologies in the web.

2. Study of factors that raise self-presentation's efficiency of Instagram users.

3. Study of factors influencing the dominance of a certain style of information identity.

We propose that popularity of streaming video is related to the peculiarities of the world image of modern teenagers and young people. We also propose that photos are the most important and effective instrument in demonstrating the desired self-image.

These assumptions were checked in the course of empirical research of active Instagram users, as well as young people dynamically using streaming video.

4.1. Participants.

The survey involved 76 respondents, whom we divided into two age groups: 46 respondents - 1st year students (16-18 years), 30 respondents are 28-37 years old as well as 50 respondents are active Instagram users. There are 16 women and 14 men aged 18 to 40 years among selected profiles.

The study was conducted in 2017-2018. All the participants gave their consent to participate in the study.

5. Research Methods

- The questionnaire "Preferences in streaming video" (Martsinkovskaya, 2017);
- The questionnaire "Type of photos in Instagram" (Martsinkovskaya, 2017);
- The questionnaire "Berzonsky's identity style" (Martsinkovskaya, 2017).

6. Findings

Streaming video is used by 86% of students from the first group. These respondents note that they try to use this kind of application in social Networks on a daily basis: they browse events and also share events which happened to them with others. In the second group only 33% of the respondents watch streaming video in their daily lives. 14% note that they use the video streaming format for professional purposes (live broadcast on social Networks). The rest of respondents have never used this type of video application, or there is no need to use this format in their daily lives (see Fig. 01).
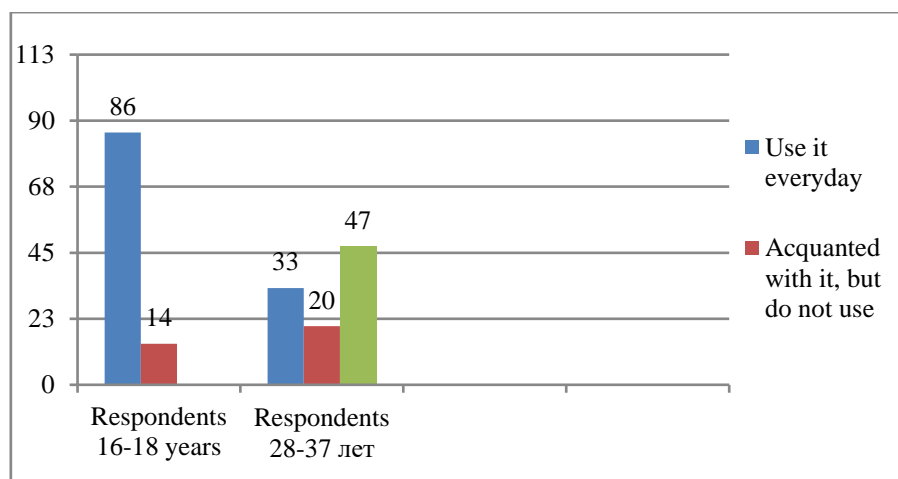

Figure 01. The popularity of video streaming usage

The most popular video streaming applications:

Instagram, Periscope ("live" function) - 69% of respondents, Snapchat - 54% of the young respondents, the older generation do not use it.

The analysis of responses made possible to identify the main trends in the use of streaming video among young people and older generation. Snapchat / Live application is aimed at young people who actively use gadgets and prefer to exchange not just text messages, but also funny pictures, photos, selfies and short videos. More than 60% of users prefer to use Snapchat because the application is not used by their parents.

An important snapchat advantage is the ability to adjust the period during which information is accessible. When you share photos, messages or videos with your friends in a snapchat, you don't have to worry that this information will be stored on your phone, in your Account or somewhere in the network. This application is designed in such a way that the recipient can view a photo or a video for no more than 10 seconds, after which the data disappears. 45% of young users appreciate this feature of Snapchat / live broadcast. Snapchat also allows users to create their own snap story (a compilation of snaps), which can be

viewed an unlimited number of times within 24 hours after which it is no longer available. The target audience of streaming video is characterized by high activity in social networks and desire to turn their daily routine into an online show. Modern youth is attracted by the ability of social networks to broadcast live their life events.

The obtained data let us conclude that modern social networks not only meets the need of young people in information and communication, but also saturates this information and contacts with emotions.

Our analysis has shown that high-status and low-status users differ in such parameters of network social status as the number of subscribers and the number of «likes», but it doesn't differ in the number of published photos per week. High-status and low-status users differ in the variety of visual content: high-status users use more photos of different categories (Table 01). At the same time, it turned out that high-status users significantly more often publish photos of the category «I, myself», while low-status users are more likely to use photos of the category "Landscape" and «Still-life». We also revealed a relationship between the number of subscribers and the number of publications and rating of the posted photos. The more Instagram subscribers a user has, the more "likes" he or she gets for each post in the application and the more publications one makes during a week. Age differences relate to categories «Other(s)» and «Animals» - older people activate it more often, regardless of their status.

Table 01. Categories and subcategories of photos in the Instagram, frequency of photos appearance.

№	Category	Frequency
1	*I, myself*	3,85
1.1.	I-face (mostly selfie)	4,43
1.2.	Full height photo (context is enabled)	3,58
1.3.	Body parts (conext is disabled)	3,00
1.4.	Professional photos (untypical context)	3,80
2	*Other(s)*	3,10
2.1.	Non-relative(s)	2,74
2.2.	Relative(s)	3,46
3	*Myself+others*	3,19
3.1	Myself+friends	4,08
3.2.	Myself+family	2,00
3.3.	Couple	3,50
4	*Landscapes*	3,53
4.1.	Nature	3,57
4.2.	City	3,48
5	*Still-life*	2,94
6	*Food*	3,32
7	*Animals*	3,14
8	*Etc*	1,45

We compared this data with the study of information identity style of Instagram and video streaming users. In order to determine characteristics of real and virtual identity of users, we used Berzonsky questionnaire (Berzonsky, 2008; Belinskaya & Bronin, 2014), which was presented to respondents twice - initially for "I am real", then for "I Am in a social network».

Analysis of identity styles has shown that the largest group in both social spaces («I am in real life» and «I am in virtual reality») turned out to be a sub-selection of people with normative identity style while the smallest group was a sub-selection with information identity style. At the same time, the style of identity in reality and virtuality did not always coincide: groups with diffuse identity style were larger in numbers in virtual space than in reality (differences are significant at 0.05). Groups with a normative identity style managed to maintain this style in real life and in virtual space.

In other words, the respondents with normative identity style became less normative in «transition» to virtual space, but diffuse ones "strengthened" their identity style. Analysis of data in subgroups with different identity styles showed that the greatest differences between the images of "I-real «and "I-virtual " were found among respondents with a normative identity style, meanwhile they evaluate «I-virtual» negatively. This is most likely due to the specifics of network communication, which is based on usual social norms of interaction in lesser degree. Respondents with information style of identity have almost the same content of the images of «I-real» and «I-virtual». Compared to respondents with normative style of identity, their content of images has a lot more positive self-characteristics in real life and in virtual space. Users with diffuse style of identity are also characterized by the divergence of the images of «I- real» and «I-virtual». In its turn their «I-virtual» image has many positive self-characters.

Analysis results show that virtual environment and network communication have different effect upon respondents with different identity styles. Users with information identity style strengthen their identity in virtual space. For them, virtual space and reality is, in fact, a single space of communication. Virtual space affects users with normative style of identity more than others. In real life they tend to focus on social norms. In virtual space they often do not find the usual support therefore they negatively evaluate themselves. For users with a diffuse identity style, the virtual environment is not a source of extra self-design, it is likely to increase their desire for situational decision-making.

The results also show a statistically significant relationship between the information style of identity and the level of active use of modern virtual communication gadgets and self-presentation - r = 0,532; p<0,001. We investigated that majority of young active users of Snapchat / live broadcast and Instagram (16-20 years) represent information identity style - 86,9%. These respondents seek to get most information about a new situation and different options of behaviour. They also more accurately assess the possibilities and forms of self-presentation in different groups. Information identity style reflects a person's attitude to the information flow, his ability and will to navigate in a variety of information, which in turn is expressed in a high level of information awareness. This allows one to create a multi-dimensional model of the perceived image, highlighting in it many interrelated sides.

The second group of respondents is less active in using virtual networks and new virtual technologies. This group is mostly characterized by normative identity style - 53%. These respondents prefer to follow ready-made and desirable communication models, it explains why they use a limited number of social networks which leads to poor variability of self-presentations in the group.

7. Conclusion

Any social network is perceived by the majority of Russian users as a personal page with its unique and carefully stored content: statuses, photos, videos, texts. It is a reflection of the picture of the world for modern youth. Therefore any social network with «live broadcast» option allows one to capture a modern pace of life, which is characterized by the transience. It also creates an illusion of different variants of life, it gives a chance to live a «plurality of worlds», to visit different places through the eyes of others.

Social networks are currently forming an individual, subjective space of modern youth, which starts to dominate the overall picture of the world.

Visual self-presentation features in social networks can serve as an indicator of the objective social status of a user.

The main distinctive feature of visual self-presentations of high-status users is their greater personalization.

The degree of personification of visual self-presentations leads to an increase in the virtual social status.

Publication activity (number of photos) is not related to the level of objective social status of a user.

There is a relationship between virtual and transitive spaces in terms of their multiplicity and uncertainty. It allows us to predict identity styles when transitivity is strengthened. We can assume that information identity style will be the most successful for communication in transitive space, while the lack of clear normativity in many contexts and uncertainties will reduce both the normativity of people and their identity style.

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