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NEW CITY MEDIA FOR THE GENERATION OF MEDIA CONSUMERS

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Abstract

This analysis of the "Afisha" and "The Village" projects will enable us to find out the principles of building an effective media content that is based on an understanding of the generation characteristics of the audience of new media consumers, such as cognitive multitasking (involvement in several media formats at once), an active game realization (need or a game-like presentation of information) and interactive features (interaction with people via mobile devices and social networks). The methodological basis consists of the structural-functional method, where the projects are represented as structures, with media consumer are receivers/ creators of media texts as elements of these structures. The functional analysis of media content enables us to determine the practice level of the media in question in reference to the generation characteristics of the audience. The new city media offer involvement in several media formats at once via a cross-platform distribution of content, which supposes a maximum adaptation of the media product for the consumer. To attract the audience, the projects often use game realization by offering their audiences both interactive tests, and more serious "games" in the format of journalist experiments to answer consumers' questions. Participation of users in the formation of media content of mass media transforms the traditional characteristics of the audience of being just "readers" and changes the very essence of media consumption. An analysis of media content enables us to find examples of how the audience is attracted to such projects, that transform the socio-cultural part of the city life.

Keywords: Media consumers, millennials, new city media.

1. Introduction

In the network space of modern megapolises there has appeared and is now actively developing the phenomenon on "new city media", which focus their attention on both everyday and out-of-the ordinary events in the city as a multidimensional being. New city media are grounds for the formation of a "holistic public opinion of the city-dwellers in its sociocultural and political aspects" (Zelentsov, 2015, p. 266). City media, as is common among them, first of all have an urbanistic orientation: they search for a comfortably living and become a guide for a "qualified consumption of the city" (Abashev & Pechishchev, 2018, p. 19). In the present paper the term "media consumption" is based on the definition from the work of Kolomiets (2010, p. 61-62), and it is understood as an active social practice of using communication means to broadcast and interpret media content to interact with the audience.

The appearance of the city media phenomenon serves as a proof of the developing character of urbanization process, while network media, focused on an active formation and transformation of urban environment as a system of media communications, are its actors. The urbanist and theoretician of media McQuire (2018, p. 12) has put forward a theory about appearance of a new space at the intersection of the city basis and digital technologies. The researcher gives this space, which is created by interconnected trajectories of convergence, universal presence, geolocation and interactivity in real time, the name of "geomedia". Geomedia affect how relations are aligned in the city community, as well as the understanding of the "right to a network city" (McQuire, 2018, p. 34) – the ability of city-dwellers to actively master the environment in the context of digital networks.

We believe that "Afisha" and "The Village" are the most prominent models of city networks media that have managed to build an audience of readers – modern dwellers of Russian cities, by educating the audience and determining its lifestyle. These projects offer to their audience some new formats, characterized by their strife to maximally adapt information for the specific consumer, considering the principles of interactive co-authorship. According to the classification of Abashev and Pechischev (2018, p. 14), "Afisha" and "The Village" are a group of information internet resources, the main content thereof is made up by news, reports, interviews, think pieces and reviews, focused on the topics interesting for city-dwellers. The most typical audience of this group of city network media is the creative youth with a high degree of sensitivity and involvement (Bushev & Ivanova, 2016, p. 71) in the process of media consumption. The key characteristics of "Afisha" and "The Village" are "distancing" from the traditional information narrative for the federal and regional media; gathering of active city youth, "not inclined for radical political behavior" (Abashev & Pechishchev, 2018, p. 16) around the media.

2. Problem Statement

Studying of tools of new city media's interaction with their audience has a serious scientific potential. The results of such studies will enable us to determine the principles of information adaptation for the subject of communicative culture in accordance with the modern media consumption.

The city network media "Afisha" and "The Village" create a social discourse of their own, a phenomenon that unites the audience which one needs to build a relationship with, to attract to the project using multimedia tools. The target audience of "Afisha" and "The Village" are interested in everything new,

closely follows the development of technologies, values their free time and knows how to spend it. This audience consists mostly of dwellers of large cities under 35 years of age with an average or above average income, for whom the editors select materials about the cultural, entertainment, public spheres of life, stories of ordinary city-dwellers, and advice on how to make one's life in the megapolis a more comfortable one (Website Afisha. Mediakit, 2014, p. 15-16; Look At Media. Mediakit. The Village, 2019, p. 3). We believe that the audience of "Afisha" and "The Village" represents a new generation of media consumers, referred to in recent research as "Generation Y" (Ozhiganova, 2015, p. 94) or "Millennials". It is a generation of people born between 1981 and 2000 and characteristically actively involved with digital technologies. According to Twenge's (2018, p. 14) succinct definition, "it is a generation of people who are wholly self-centered and having no problems with that, a true "IGen".

Modern young people are inclined to make instant decisions, are little prone to the influence of authoritarianism and creation of "long-lasting" ideals. As a media audience, millennials are characterized by a high speed of consumption and achievement of goals, infantilism and addiction to game forms in presentation of media reality, dependence on information technologies (gadgets), inability to critically analyse and comprehend large volumes of complex information, allegiance to a visual format and short texts on social media, replacement of offline communication by virtual communication (Shesterina, 2018b, p. 168-169). Millennials are characterized by a need in the increasing role of games, irony and hyperbolisation of phenomena, which shows in the immense popularity of entertainment content in mass media. It is the game model of perception of reality that is a key characteristic feature of the "Y generation" as the bearer of a culture where there is a tendency to represent reality in a game-like, unreal form (Kachkaeva & Shomova, 2017, p. 18; Shesterina, 2018a, p. 86).

3. Research Questions

How should city media information be adapted for the subject of communicative culture?
What platforms are most effective for building an interaction with the audience of city network media?
What should be stressed while forming media content for the generation of new media consumers?

4. Purpose of the Study

This analysis of the "Afisha" and "The Village" projects will enable us to find out the principles of building an effective media content that is based on an understanding of the generation characteristics of the audience of new media consumers, such as cognitive multitasking (involvement in several media formats at once), an active game realization (need or a game-like presentation of information) and interactive features (interaction with people and communities via mobile devices and social networks).

5. Research Methods

To achieve the goals of the study, such methods were used as the structural-functional method and a system analysis. The methodological basis consists of the structural-functional method, where the "Afisha" and "The Village" projects are represented as structures, with media consumer are receivers/

creators of media texts and various grounds for broadcasting the content of the media resources in question resented as elements of these structures. The functional analysis of media content enables us to determine the practice level of the media in question in reference to the generation characteristics of the audience of new media consumers: realization of the functions of multitasking, game realization and interactivity. The use of the system analysis of the media projects' work on forming the principles of interaction with their audience of media consumers has enabled us to determine concise cause-and-effect relations within the phenomenon studied.

The main source of empirical data for our research was an analysis of the "Afisha" projects of 2014 – 2017, and that of "The Village" projects of 2017 – 2018. The empirical data obtained enables us to rather clearly see the principles of building an effective communication, including, first of all, an understanding of the generation of the audience.

6. Findings

1. Recently the editor's offices of "Afisha" and "The Village" has made their main emphasis on creating content in various formats for various platforms. In accordance with the multitasking cognitive features of the consumers, the projects fill their social networks accounts on Instagram, Facebook, VK, Twitter with content. "Afisha"s apps provide information about schedules and tickets, publish viewers' reviews, determine the user's location and suggest entertainment. All platforms of "Afisha" and "The Village" on social networks offer possibilities to publish commentaries, react through "like" and "share" buttons, they have photo and video reports, audio and video files with their author's commentaries and opinion polls on different events, as well as live broadcasts of events. For the generation of new media consumers "Afisha" and "The Village" offer involvement in several media formats at once via a cross-platform distribution of content, which supposes a maximum adaptation of the media product for the specific consumer in social networks, on websites, on mobile and iPad-platforms.

2. To attract the audience, both "Afisha" and "The Village" often use game realization by offering their audiences both interactive tests (for example, "Afisha" offers to try to do a face control of party-goers of the 2010-s and try to guess what an experienced person said about them (Kirillina, 2017), and more serious "games" in the format of journalist experiments to answer consumers' questions. "The Experiment" is the rubric in which the editors of "The Village" try out some statements (like whether people will react to beer in public places (Experiment: How to react to a bottle of beer in public places. What happens if you drink beer at work or after Pilates at 10 am, 2018)), by using an active visualization in the form of photo reports. Such materials are supported with photos and videos, they contain hyperlinks, commentaries can be added, articles can be shared on social media and they are followed up with game tests.

Thus, "Afisha" and "The Village" use a game format of presenting information and offer various variants of spending free time, which, naturally, propels the promotion of the media, as well as forms consumer loyalty to a certain set of stylistic features.

3. Participation of users in the formation of media content of mass media transforms the traditional characteristics of the audience of being just "readers" and changes the very essence of media consumption. A culture of "joint participation" (Baranova, 2014, p. 16) is formed, through which the audience is involved in preparation of media content, and the mass medium becomes more personalized in content consumption.

Thus, the website of "Afisha" offers interesting options of choosing an optimum variant of spending leisure time catering for personalized interests, detailed reviews of films, restaurants, TV series both from the editors and the consumers. The most popular genre within "Afisha" is that of a review connected to the user's location (specific restaurants, cinemas, exhibitions), while the most popular genre of "the Village" is an instruction (What toys a two-year old child needs; Steps to take if you find yourself in a hacked database), which is due to format nuances: "Afisha" is a daily story about culture, entertainment and lifestyle of modern dwellers of Russian cities, while "the Village" is a guide to a new perception of the city (Gross, 2016). We believe that this explains the active involvement of bloggers with content formation of "The Village". Bloggers post on their channels or social networks pages information stating that they have created materials specially for "the Village". In the texts there are no direct links to the bloggers' channels, only names are mentioned, but this is already enough to attract a new audience (Bondarenko, 2017).

Together with the editors, any registered user can take part in creation of materials. Thus, such areas as city life, leisure, style, beauty, health and relationships are discussed in the "Community" section in "The Village". The journalists of "Afisha" involve people, who work with information technologies, but do not use social networks, in creating materials about the possibility of a young person's life without social networks. The basis of such publication is an interview with the editor of a website, a photographer and the vice editor-in-chief of a magazine, who could not stand the "information noise and quarrels on Facebook and have been living for quite a while without them" (Ischenko, 2014). All the three heroes say unanimously that when they gave up using social networks, it made their lives quieter, more comfortable and freed up time for more important things. Thus, members of the audience tell in detail about their experience and for content as well as attract new readers to further discussions on the topic.

4. Media content can be used to attract socially active people to charity projects. Thus, the website of "Afisha Daily" offers to its audience a participation in a non-commercial project "And all for one": by using a daily selection of charity events one can help people who need help (Museum of strange things, a good concert, race and other charity events, 2017). For example, attending a traditional spring event of the charity fund "Sozidaniye" is an opportunity to taste baked desserts, to bring one's own "creation" for sale and take part in a charity raffle. All of this is done to raise money for medical treatment of children, for example, for the children's fund "Naked hearts".

What brings joy is that an analysis of mediacontent enables us to find examples of how the audience is attracted to such projects, that transform the socio-cultural part of the city life. Be it on a small scale, but still content is used not only for "a qualified consumption", but also for attracting socially active readers to improvement of city environment.

7. Conclusion

Media consumers realize their need for interactive communication through involvement in content formation. Creating platforms for voting and evaluation, finding out expert and audience opinions and preferences on the basis of an analysis of materials and illustration choice allows us to conclude that the mediacontent of "Afisha" and "The Village" belongs to an interactive format of information presentation for a generation of new media consumers.

As a result, the success of "Afisha" and "The Village" projects is determined by a clear understanding of the generation characteristics of new media consumers – their cognitive multitasking, an active game realization and interactivity. Our analysis of the principles of formation of effective mediacontent has shown that the new city media use various platforms for content dissemination which, on the one hand, provides opportunities for a longer interaction between the audience and the media project, and on the other hand it stimulates city network media to search for more and more interesting variants of interaction with the audience.

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