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"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
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MULTIMEDIA AND TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING FORMING
"SPIRITUAL TIES" BETWEEN RUSSIAN GENERATIONS

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Abstract

Technological innovations in the modern media industry have led to the emergence of the risk of insufficiently effective communication between “the analogue” and “the digital” generations of the Russians. Storytelling as a genre of narrative journalism has the potential of involvement, it facilitates the perception and holds the attention of “the digital youth”. The organization of multimedia and transmedia narratives is considered as the basis for possibly effective intergenerational communication and the forming of “spiritual ties” (as said by the President of Russia V. Putin). The work reveals the values and constructed meanings in storytelling projects like “1917. Free history” and “1968. Digital”, as well as the differences in their perception by the “analogue” and the “digital” generations. The results of the study show that representatives of both generations seem interested in the technological side of a storytelling called “1968”. However, the younger generation demonstrates less interest towards another storytelling, “1917”. Nevertheless, the projects’ messages are mostly not read by the “digital” generation. The values broadcasted in “1968” are not accepted by the “analogue” generation. In addition, the constructed values in the mentioned storytelling do not comply with the political demands of Russia, which makes it doubtful that they are used to form “spiritual ties” between the Russians.

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1. Introduction

The accelerated technological development of the modern media industry was the result of the use of information and communication technologies in the production process. In terms of integrating media platforms, the techniques that provide implementation of convergent journalism technologies are relevant. They include multi- and transmedia, hybridization of genres and formats, mixing and complementarity of expression. These processes have led to the emergence of new communication practices. Today, a user, who realizes these conditions, usually uses a combination of sources. Moreover, modern media have become the main source of producing knowledge and experience for the “digital” generation, since they not only comprehend a multifaceted state of the world, but also participate in shaping cultural, political, and social values

2. Problem Statement

The impact of technological innovations on journalistic creativity has led to the emergence of the risk of insufficiently productive communications with the “digital youth”, especially if the message is focused not only on solving everyday demands of the audience, but on the formation of “spiritual” (as said by Russian President V. Putin). This is especially vital because for the first time in the history of Russia, a special intergenerational gap has arisen due to differences in the usual communications that are made in different media spaces. Owing to the peculiarities of the forming and reproduction of communicative and cultural memory of different generations, communication failures occur. Nonetheless, the possibility of productive intergenerational communication even in an era of instability makes the awareness of belonging to one's country and identification with its interests, history, and culture more stable and effective. The “analogue” generation of journalists has a “privilege” of identity and is ready to broadcast its values, while not having a full command of the technological tools that are actively used by the “digital youth”. We believe that the use of multimedia and transmedia storytelling can be an answer to the audience “surfing” across platforms and a possible way of broadcasting the values of the “digital generation” of the Russians.

3. Research Questions

Storytelling as a genre of narrative journalism has the potential of involvement, it facilitates the perception and holds the attention of “the digital youth”. Mitasheva and Varakin (2017) recognize storytelling as the basic communication technology of a modern journalist. Malakhova (2018) writes that “journalistic story” has incorporated elements from cinema and literature. The researcher formulates the algorithm for creating a journalistic story: “ identifying a socially significant case, searching for an interesting character involved in the situation, choosing a genre and a manner of narration, determining own opinion on the case and the moral message and, finally, broadcasting the story to an audience” (Malakhova, 2018, p.232). As Sumskaya (2016) claims storytelling is actively used in American narrative practice, especially since the second half of the 20th century (p. 118). Nevertheless, the work of Russian folklorist Propp (1998) appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and made a significant contribution

to the development of the plot making process. In the mentioned study, the types of developed characters are of interest: a hero, a donor, a pest, a helper, an observer, a victim, a false hero.

According to Russia's researchers, for example, Gambarato & Lapina-Kratasyuk (2016), Sumsкая (2015), multimedia and transmedia projects are quite in demand by the Russian. Irish scholar McErlean (2018) summarizes the conceptual basics of multimedia and transmedia stories production. He bases his guide to creation of multimedia and transmedia storytelling on comprehending the concepts and principles of the works of DzigaVertov, Wassily Kandinsky, Lev Manovich, Vladimir Propp, Alexander Skryabin, Igor Stravinsky, Andrey Tarkovsky, Victor Shklovsky, Sergei Eisenstein, representatives of Russian creative community. Then the author applies the technocentric approach, “transforms” art into technology and formulates the mentioned guide.

American transmedia creator and writer Phillips (2012) in her guide for the creators of Transmedia Storytelling specifies positions on the construction of platforms for story-telling, which are crucial for practicing creators. She identifies 2 areas: Western (“Hollywood”), which involves broadcasting the story on a variety of “large” platforms – cinema, theater, print media, and others, and Eastern, fully focused on interactive online platforms (social media, Internet portals). Portuguese researchers Sousa, Martins, and Zagalo (2016) come to a conclusion that “transmedia storytelling is actually feeding a core hunger of their truest fans: to have more, richer, deeper stories”, “to other artefacts make the audience crave for more information, and search for it, and build communities so they can share their knowledge” (p. 134).

They make an extremely important conclusion applicable to this study: “Creators are still learning how to create good transmedia stories, whatever good means, to each different type of consumer/participant. They are still learning how to intertwine the partial stories in each artefact, so they can compose that larger story and fictional world and stimulate the search for the other extensions. Producers have to readjust their way of thinking to the new ways of media technology and consumption, which are, most often, different from those they knew as they were growing up. Academics and critics must also help in this process, not by closing themselves in nostalgic or catastrophic views of digital change, but by stepping out into the world with curious eyes and getting to know how this fresh, new model is actually functioning” (Sousa, Martins, & Zagalo, 2016, p.135).

At the same time, it must be remembered that the “skills” of narration and story creation should be combined with a deep knowledge of production technologies, virtual reality capabilities, and the potential of the new media. Manovich (2017), the author of the new media theory, states that technical knowledge is no longer necessary for the use of digital equipment, since modern devices are focused on the average consumer who is familiar with the elementary principles of their use and is ready for their regular replacement rather than modernization. In his Cultural Analytics Lab, the media theorist analyzes large amounts of visual materials and seeks to make the invisible layers of modern culture visible, thus objectifying the cultural memory of the “digital” generation. As Tarkovsky (1989) wisely remarked, “time cannot vanish without trace for it is a subjective, spiritual category; and the time we have lived settles in our soul as an experience placed within time” (p. 58).

In our research, we rely on the concept of the communicative and cultural collective memory of famous German researchers Jan and Aleida Assmann. In the theory of memory, J. Assmann highlights 2 poles – communicative (recent past) and cultural memory (absolute past) (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995,

p.133; Assmann, 2011). Aleida Assmann, a researcher of the historical consciousness of Germany and United Europe, in turn, distinguishes 3 poles: memory as a memory of the modern past, culture as a memory of the old past and a person as a representative of a society with memory. According to this theory, specification of identity” is ensured, since cultural memory ensures the preservation and reproduction of knowledge, under which “the group receives an awareness of its unity and characteristics (Assmann, 2006). Researchers conclude that the memory of the recent past passes into the status of “absolute past” after 2 generations. It is important to remember that the change of generations in the digital era occurs earlier than 10-15 years, which on the one hand causes a rapid build-up of the cultural memory array, and on the other, a “short memory” that provides intergenerational ties. In our study, conducted in collaboration with Sumszkaya and Simons (2018), a scientist from Sweden, we came to conclusion that in everyday communication, a person simultaneously uses communicative memory skills based on “historical experience in individual biographies” and reflects the meanings that are stored in the cultural memory of identical groups. Thus, in our opinion, “in each moment of communication only a communicative-cultural memory is used, which has the properties of syncretism and ensures the integrity of perception” (p.186).

The communicative-cultural memory of a generation is a kind of a conductor of spiritual values, which the President of Russian Federation refers to as “spiritual ties”. In his speech to the Federal Assembly of Russian Federation in 2012, V. Putin interpreted “spiritual ties” as something that “always made us stronger and stronger at all times and something we were always proud of”, these are “traditional values” that have historically proved their ability to transmit from generation to generation”.

Medvedev (2015), a professor at the Higher School of Economics Institute (Moscow, Russia) believes that fear is the main “spiritual ties” of the Russians. “Russia stands on fear. Russians feel like victims. This victimhood is spelled out inside any Russian person”, the professor says. “In other words,” he continues, “fear is that spiritual tie that ensured the existence of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union during periods of mobilization. And at the exit from this black box we get fear, a feeling of sacrifice, a painful Russian resentment...” (para. 20).

Maria Mcheldova, a Russian sociologist, head of the research group of the study of “markers of spiritual ties” “based on an analysis of the depth of the historical memory of the Russian population”, in her interview with the online media called “Slon”, explained that “spiritual ties are a system of values” prevailing in society” because “For society to be sustainable, there must be value consensus in it” (as cited in Shepelin, 2013, answer to 1 question). Further, she comments: “Society cannot exist without a common history that creates identity and consolidation of society <...> But it is necessary to clearly separate the ideology and identity of society, which cannot be reproduced somewhere in the classrooms. This is what comes from within a person. But naturally, this is the deepest level, the next level becomes reflective - what we call “value historical structures in a society” (Shepelin, 2013, answer to 8 question). “In society there is a colossal request for value identification, patriotism, historical memory and a desire to be proud of the country. <...> they did not expect that people [both young people, and adults - from the author] have such a keen demand for the formulation of Russian identity and such a request for feeling like Russians”- summarized M. Mcheldova (Shepelin, 2013, answer to 11 question). The results of the research of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences confirmed that “people are

united by common ideas about the development of society, historically established values, past history, cohesion around meaning-life goals” (Gorshkov & Tikhonova, 2016, p. 354).

According to Mastikova (2013), the value system of the Russians is “more conservative, traditional, focused on order, and not on the rights and freedom of an individual. The Russians might be characterized by a greater caution and a more expressed need for protection from a strong country; the needs for novelty, creativity, and independence are less pronounced” (p. 36). 77% of the population share everyday humanism; therefore, it serves as an integrating core of Russia's value space, but as Mastikova (2013) says “dual hierarchy of value positions of the Russian population (the humanistic majority of the population and a cynically authoritarian minority) can be considered a premise for civil conflict” (p. 46).

The sense of life goals of young Russians are formed on the basis of the “passionary” type of world view. It is precisely “passionaries” today, according to Sedova (2016), who are nowadays becoming the social group that can maintain social moods of social optimism and the mindset towards development, develop and disseminate life-planning practices, demonstrate examples of the implementation of these plans even in times of crisis. At the same time, it should be noted that this generation of “passionaries” opposes the generation of “average people”, mainly Russians of mature age. In our study, they belong to the “analogue” generation, because communication habits were formed during non-digital media. Representatives of the passive model of the world perception are focused not so much on achievement, but on health-saving and protective position, while they also transmit the priority of values that express the interests of the group.

Scientists have concluded that the basis of the development of Russian society is the dominance of short-term visions and life planning, and the “passionaries”, feeling the strength and desire to influence the world around them, feel involved in the development of their own lives, while not participating as authorities. At the same time, the commitment of the official ideology remains important for the “non-activist type” of Russians (Gorshkov & Tikhonova, 2016, p.234-236). The results of the above studies are vital for this work since they design a framework of the living arrangement and the attitudes of the “digital” generation of Russians who do not expect government support (neither moral nor material), are not carriers of collectivist values, are not mass audience of socio-political electronic media. This, of course, complicates intergenerational communication, which is capable of ensuring the transmission and formation of the demanded “spiritual ties”.

The construction of value systems in visual media materials, including multimedia and transmedia storytelling, is possible through the use of Fiske’s (1991) coding, which distinguishes 3 levels: reality level or “social codes” (appearance, clothing, behavior, speech, gestures); level of representation or “technical codes” (interface, camera work, lighting, editing, music, sound), level of ideology or level of ideological codes (ideologies, national and other stereotypes).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to reveal value attitudes, constructed meanings in multimedia, transmedia stories and differences in their perception by the “analogue” and the “digital” generation

5. Research Methods

The work is based on the new media theory of L. Manovich's, the collective communicative and cultural memory of Jan and Aleida Assmann, the concept of screen codes by J. Fiske.

At the empirical stage of work, we used methods of sociological analysis (a focus group and a structured interview); thematic analysis (professional analysis of a journalistic text); compositional analysis, including the study of the features of the location of the components of multimedia messages, the selection of semantic centers (key frames), the location of media text elements; comparative analysis, which allows comparing the perception of media texts by the "analogue" and the "digital" generation and revealing the common and the different in them.

A total of 2 focus groups of 15 people (representatives of the "digital youth"), 7 experts (representatives of the "analogue generation" of journalists, cultural studies) took part in the research.

The empirical base of the research was 2 joint projects of the "Stories of the Future" studio by M. Zygar and K. Shainyan and the international corporation "Bazelevs" by Timur Bekmambetov.

1. Project '1917. Free History' (<https://project1917.com/>) constructed a world that combined numerous plot lines and thus created a complete and faithful image of this dramatic epoch. Users did not have to study vast amounts of the information included in the project; instead, they could just enjoy their own experience of immersion in this content. This project was supported by many popular online platforms: from social networks to specific applications running on different operation systems. Each of these platforms had its own ways of presenting and organizing the material, which is a characteristic feature of transmedia stories.
2. Project 1968.DIGITAL (<http://1968.digital/en/main>) is the first Russian series for mobile phones, which shows how year 1968 changed the world. Each episode tells about a life path of a real hero from many different countries. The authors believe that they talk about the events in the world that have defined the values of people for 50 years ahead. The project includes a total of 40 episodes, there are currently 35 released. For the analysis, 10 episodes were selected; the basis for the sample is a reference to events in the USSR These are the episodes: "Gagarin against the moon" (No. 2), "How I stopped loving the atomic bomb" (No. 13), "When football became great" (No. 14), "One day of Alexander Isaevich" (No. 16), "Socialism with an inhuman face" (No. 18), "For Our and Your Freedom" (No. 19), "Island of Freedom" (No. 20), "Moscow-New York: Fasten Your Seatbelts" (No. 25), "Freedom and Dependence" (No. 29), "Computer Revolution" (No. 35).

6. Findings

Referring to the "1968" multimedia project, we first of all note its high manufacturability, which events of those years, the audience may be involved in what is happening, especially since the authors offer the necessary background for each story within the author's position and the chosen time format. We shall also take into account the desire to present each part of the series in a dramatic way, in part due to strong personalities who reveal their human and ideological potential in vivid direct clashes or indirectly constructed conflicts.

The social codes of the analyzed storytellings are manifested in the gestures and plasticity of the heroes, confirming the high level of socialization and civic activity, charisma and extraordinary energy. They are able to really make history against the system. The peculiarity of the heroes of the series favorably emphasizes the thoughtful distribution of votes of people invited to read the off-screen text of stories. The Solzhenitsyn's battle for justice is convincing in the vocal incarnation of Yevgeny Mironov, who had a role in the Moscow Art Theatre performance about Alexander Isaevich. The episode "Moscow - New York. Fasten your seat belts", one of the characters of which was Elizabeth Taylor, gets additional expressiveness with soft accent of Ingeborga Dapkunayte. All the main characters of the analyzed storytellings are victims of the socio-political system (Propp, 1998).

Technical codes of the project attract special attention. Styling the narrative screen as a mobile chat is, in fact, a reflection of the ideas of Manovich (2018), who proclaimed that in the era of new media, "the user interface plays apart <...> of the information society meta-tool" and affects the functioning of cultural and art objects" (para. 10). Dense clip editing provides the saturation of the story, the visual and auditory components of the project, almost without duplicating each other, twist the bright spirals of the 1968 happenings that irreversibly changed our world, according to the authors.

Let us pay attention to the final order of cadres of each episode, in which an assessment of the situation in a country that inherits the past of the USSR is often easily read. For instance, in the "Socialism with an inhuman face" episode, the story of the suppression of democratic reforms and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops in 1968 was unequivocally "rhymed" with Maidan in Ukraine and the flags of the Donetsk Republic. "One Day in the Life of Alexander Isayevich" - the story of the persecution of Solzhenitsyn, Soviet writer - ends with the arrest scene of Sentsov, Ukrainian director. "For our and your freedom" - the story of the protests against the entry of Soviet tanks into Prague - is summarized by members of the Pussy Riot group insulting police officers during the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Moscow. The episode "How I stopped loving the atomic bomb" about the disgraced professor who became one of the first opposition leaders of the Soviet Union ends with a series of portraits of Snowden, Rodchenkov, Nemtsov. Thus, putting these individuals in one row, the authors of the story remove the question about the legality of the actions and the historical scale of these persons. And the final frame with the President of the Russian Federation, presenting the world community a project suspiciously similar to the "cannibal" "super torpedo" that was once rejected by Sakharov, strongly connects the today's country with its "recent past". Of course, this installation constructs and reflects the position of the authors of the series. In this case, it is crucial to know and remember that the value orientations of the author of these storytellings were formed from the Russian rebellious 90s of the XX century, which influences the choice of material and their presentation.

What ideological codes can be considered in this creative historical-publicistic message to the "digital" generation? In our opinion, according to the authors, year 1968 becomes the point of crisis in the competition of two of the greatest ideologies of the modern world: on the one hand, the society of freedom, which proclaimed the rights of the individual as the greatest value, and on the other, the society based on the idea of public wellness and social justice.

The majority of episodes of this multimedia storytelling are built on this global conflict. Humanism (as an ideal) of western democracy and heartlessness, cynicism (in reality) of a system, only

technically caring for the well-being of people. It is the base of the dramatic situation of Gagarin and Leonov, who did not get the opportunity to fly to the moon (“Gagarin against the Moon”, “Moscow - New York. Fasten your seat belts”), Castro betraying the ideals of revolution (“Island of freedom”), the decision of Brezhnev to send troops to Czechoslovakia (“Socialism with an inhuman face”), Vysotsky being stalked (“Freedom and dependence”), a talented Soviet scientist Viktor Glushkov who failed to implement a “Soviet Internet” project (“Computer Revolution”). As for those heroes (Soviet intellectuals) who were able to overcome the limitations of the system, it is quite straightforwardly indicated that the “Western colleagues” had been ahead of them (or, at least, on the same level).

The leading value broadcasted in the analyzed episodes, is associated with the manifestation of the struggle in different areas of its application: against the current political system, “stiff bureaucracy”, injustice in any form, for freedom of creative and personal self-realization, for professional recognition, in other words, against circumstances limiting the freedom of an individual. These values are in tune with Western-style democracy - liberal ideology.

The transmedia project “1917” in terms of narration is more related to historical references and archival documents that came to life, rather than to the density of living, emotional, dynamic stories.

The social code seems to be laid in the dynamics of the narrative: the scale of an enormous empire, slowly losing the space of possible bailout decisions in the face of impending catastrophe, determines the relatively slow rhythm of the narrative changing to the telegraphic style at the scene of the social disaster.

Technical codes used when creating a project (blog style, flash animation, illustration icons, archived photos and videos, infographics, photo collages, pixel blur, text quotes, playing with scales of objects, special effects and sound accents, up sounds, etc.) p.), aimed at creating a “here and now” atmosphere, a modern view on the events of a century ago. One of the most successful examples of such time synthesis, in our opinion, is the episode “The most scandalous ballet in history.” The clash of time layers brings an amazing volume, sharpness and recognition to the events, fills the entrepreneur's figure with lively colors. All of S. Dyagilev's “scandalous actions” are now read as an ability of a talented Russian entrepreneur to bypass the obstacles built by artificially influential people in his path.

Ideological codes constructed in this project: Russia is one of the most popular countries in the world, war as a catalyst for the social catastrophe in the country, a clash of conservative traditions and emerging liberal and bourgeois tendencies leads to destruction of the state system, own initiative enables the realization of creative forces in various spheres of public life.

Leading value settings of storytellings: strong power, a partnership of creative individuals, a possibility of professional self-realization, team spirit, an ability to respond to calls for help (“die and help the comrades”). Finally, everything that is capable of overcoming the “senility” and providing the taste of victories that is extremely necessary.

The results of the focus groups work show that the perception of these storytelling by representatives of the Russian youth differs. The most significant for the respondents was the “1968. Digital” project, as it reproduces the “recent past” (according to Assmann (2006, 2011)), which is still understandable for the Millennials. Multimedia tools used to create stories are perceived as “usual everyday life.” Struggles broadcasted in the project are not significant for the “digital” generation, since their period of maturing and socialization occurred in the period of stable growth and economic well-

being in Russia. However, the values of freedom in decision making and self-realization are clear and meaningful for respondents.

The 1917 transmedia project turned out to be difficult for the “digital” generation to perceive, and although it belongs to the clip culture, it is used to short formats. The “distant past” described in the project does not correspond to the needs of their communicative memory. According to respondents, the project can be used for educational purposes. For instance, for schoolchildren to familiarize themselves with the country's cultural and historical heritage. The reduced interest in storytelling has led to superficial perception of values broadcasted in the project.

The results of interviewing experts of the “analogue” generation showed that the use of infotainment style in organizing the narration of “1968. Digital” had been its flaw. The transmitted values are destroying the traditional values of Russian society. At the same time, they noted that the production of storytelling based on the innovative screenlife technology may have been promising for organizing communication with the “digital” generation. The way of organizing the narration of the “1917” project is recognized by experts as an interesting discovery, attractive for perception of generations, accustomed to “long forms” of narration, but the accents in the content are perceived controversially, although the translated values, in their opinion, “relate more to historical truth.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the risk of ineffective communication between the “analogue” and “digital” generations is confirmed. It can be reduced through the use of technological innovations in the organization of the narrative. Multimedia and transmedia storytelling is advisable to use for the transmission of values, since the stories have the potential of involvement and, as the results of the study show, can attract the attention of the audience, solving important issues for their generation. However, the choice and method of presenting the material in order to organize the broadcasting of the cultural heritage of the Russians is appropriate to correlate with the actual needs of the communicative memory of generations of both the creators of storytelling and the target audience. The request from the President of Russian Federation to form “spiritual ties” using these specific storytellings that attract by their scale and quality of production can be implemented only partially.

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