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**THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES IN
THE BLOGOSPHERE (THE PARTHENON VLOG)**

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Abstract

February 16, 2018 Leonid Parfenov, after a long and prolonged resistance, created his channel on Youtube. At the time of writing this study, the number of subscribers is approaching half a million, the number of viewers of each new issue ranges from 300 to 400 thousand. The journalist explains his appearance on Youtube by the fact that he has decided to show current events of a week and analyze them. Thus, Parfenov has occupied a niche focused not only on his core audience that no longer watches TV, but also on those who grew up on Youtube and wants to develop. The format of the video blog is typical for Youtube, however, illustrations, quotes, photos, subtitles, custom videos, classic reporter stand-ups have become the advantage of the blog. Definitely new for Parfenov as an online journalist is the use of a selfie stick, which gives the author some kind of mobility and allows demonstrating the narrated objects nearby in a signature style. A subtitled video is a new and very relevant to the eventful context of Parfenov narration. Each reference to any cultural or socially significant events reflected, is accompanied with an inscription, caption on the screen with photo illustrations that give additional information about the subject of the conversation. In the present article we analyze each of these techniques in detail.

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Keywords: Vlog, audiovisualisation, technological methods, author's content, multimedia.



1. Introduction

Before becoming a true online media person on a regular basis and creating his own Youtube video blog, Parfenov (2018a) has been examining it for a few years. Since 2004, Leonid Parfenov has not appeared in the regular TV broadcasting schedule, however, he has got a blog on LiveJournal as well as invitations from online channels and radio stations. Infrequent appearances with documentary projects on Channel One ceased in 2013. At his best the ratings of the journalist and TV presenter, working on NTV (1999–2004), were much higher, but today the name of Parfyonov is no less recognizable than Pozner or Urgant. The weekly *Namedni – Nasha Era* gave the journalist a better occupational level (from March 1, 1997 to September 9, 2001), as well as the informational analytical show *Namedni* (from September 9, 2001 to May 30, 2004). The “promotion” of the name is certainly influenced by the five-time TEFI awards (1995, 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2004), the scandalous dismissal from NTV in 2004, several successful documentary television projects for the First Channel, an unexpected speech at the presentation of the award named in honor to Listyev in 2010. But, if Parfenov was not really a good journalist, he would have been forgotten as soon as he stopped appearing on the screens. The TV presenter also assisted himself to personalize by regularly appearing in the Internet space, with various messages, performed with the same talent and variety of genres and ways of information presenting. The recognizable Parfenov’s signature style is reflected in all his speeches from quotations to video messages. The TV presenter’s V Kontakte account is updated daily. All the meetings of Parfenov, his videos, achievements are reflected there as well as tickets for the presentations are distributed, all the information on his activities is also collected via V Kontakte since March 2011. There are also regular online discussions of Leonid’s previous works and public statements. The number of registered users and comments is impressive. V Kontakte community is closed, today it includes more than 13 thousand active members (Parfenov, 2019). The official site of the journalist is densely filled, still not updated since 2015 (Parfenov, 2018a). However, from the journalist professional activity in the past, it can be concluded that the rating of Parfenov’s personal accounts are as high as possible. Each new post appears weekly, the number of comments reaches about 200.

In October 2017, Parfenov took part in the show *VDud’*, where he told Yuri Dudyu why he did not appear on television, as well he promised to think about creating online channel (Dud, 2018). In February 2018, the first issue of the *Parthenon* took place, at the time of writing the study, the number of the online channel subscribers exceeded half a million, the viewership of each new issue ranged from 300 to 400 thousand. The first issue was watched by about 850 thousand viewers. Why is that so? Is that thanks to the phenomenon of personality or is it distribution channel features? And how can a TV journalist without a TV broadcast remain in the profession? What expressive means are implemented to attract the audience attention in the visual-centric era (Amzin, Galustyan, Gatov, & Castells, 2016, pp. 124-126)?

2. Problem Statement

The journalist himself explains his appearance on Youtube by the fact that he decided to show current events of a week and analyze them. This is what the channel description says. “*Parthenon* is about what is happening with me during the week, what I see, what I think about, what flickers in my mind for some reason. Conversations with a glass of wine about the passed week events, selected in accordance with

the circumstances. The age limit is 18 + since there is wine (Parfenov, 2018b). From the first release, it has become clear what the value of the show is: Parfenov speaks without a script but as if he was rehearsing beforehand. General literacy and intelligence immediately become the key to success of the channel. It is a stand up, no records in advance, which is the signature style of Vlog *Parfenon* (Brovin, 2018). "The logic of the appearance is clear: there are shows for the audience up to 25 years old, but there are a few for the 25+ . What Youtube channels can an educated, an engaged viewer check to find someone whose opinion is relevant. Whose experience is obvious, whose works are known to all, and the style over the years only gained perfection? *Parthenon* is a civilization for the civilized. And Parfenov is at the forefront," said Ilya Ovcharenko, the producer of the Parthenon (Poliksar.ru, 2019). Media experts immediately called the project a success. In particular, Ivan Zassoursky, the head of the department of new media and communication theory at the Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University, noted that Parfenov quickly found his online audience. Due to the fact that after leaving the TV shows Parfenov continued to make movies, he had his own audience, which rather quickly mobilized as soon as it became clear that now and there is something to watch on Youtube (Ivanova, 2019). At the same time, according to the expert, Parfenov does not make content for everyone. "To watch his vlog, one needs to have certain preferences, tastes and interests" (ibid.).

At the beginning of the first issue, the journalist clarified the concept of the show: he does not prepare texts, he will talk about the main events of the passing days from his own point of view, film himself and drink wine from his own collection. The author makes a blog in his usual television style, familiar from his *Namedni*, where there was a kaleidoscope of events, phenomena, without which it is impossible to imagine casual life. Now Parfenov in the same way looks at our present, literally this very day, what happened to him (and with all of us) the passing week. Since the author travels a lot, there are live stand ups in each video from different cities, both domestic and foreign. Each video is made in a peculiar way, however, a certain general format, a common thematic and genre component can be traced. Also, the technologies inherent in the blogosphere, introduced from the TV format and successfully embedded in the content of Youtube. It's as if we follow a hyperlink and read about what is now being exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery, what performance is going on in the Taganka Theater and who Pavel Philonov is.

Parthenon can be characterized as follows: socially educational, but purely personified resource. The journalist and broadcaster is carrying on some partial, involved observation of life, as if connecting our daily life with a common cultural and geographical space. This is an author's diary of observations, and since he travels a lot while making films, his blog can be called travel journalism.

Thus, Parfenov occupied a niche focused not only on his core audience, which no longer wants to watch TV, but also on those who grew up on Youtube, and wants to develop. And in this case, the professional background of the journalist concedes a penalty since his outlook is wider than the homebrew blogger, Parfenov also understands the agenda that is relevant for his audience (Kashin, 2019).

Stanislav Apetyan, a media manager, predicts that in the coming years, TV journalists, following Parfenov's example, will go online, for example, Nevzorov, Druzhko and Dudham. The success of professional journalists in Youtube is also explained by the fact that their audience (25+) is more actively using Youtube, because the content offered by traditional platforms does not fully satisfy them. Not to get digital now means not to prepare for the near future: it is clear that in 5 years, and even more than 10 years,

all communications will get only online (Lyudogovskaya, 2019). So, according to forecasts, this year online media gets the vast majority of the audience. So, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Korea was watched by 3.5 million unique users only in Odnoklassniki.

Thus, the study highlights several problems: we look at the trends of the journalists drain to the Internet and the format (content) ways of retaining users' attention (Kibirov, n.d.). I would like to dwell in detail on the ways of visualization, application and adaptation of traditional television techniques in a kind of interactive Youtube format.

3. Research Questions

The main question is whether it is possible to leave the television screen and not fall into oblivion, resolved positively. It is important to formulate the details: how to do this? with the help of what means and methods? what is necessary for this? and is it possible to everyone? The last question also has an answer: not everyone is possible, it requires talent and flexibility of thinking, the ability to feel the challenges of time and fall into the expectations of the audience. As we see, the 58-year-old Parfenov has enough talent and progressive mind (Parfenov, 2018c). Let's talk about the means.

Currently, the third season of Parfenon 3 has started. Each season has about 15 weekly editions lasting about 35 minutes. Plus live broadcasts, announcements of new releases and the promotion of the films with the prefaces of the author. For the time being, there are three films: *The Voice of God*, *The Color of the Nation and Russian Jews* (Tsoulaya, 2018). Another project in the framework of *Parfenon* is *Namedni*, adapted for Youtube, but executed in the traditional television manner. The first video was devoted to 1946, the post-war period (Newsru.com, 2019).

The structural component of each release is already clear. Each video is formed in a peculiar way, however, a certain general format, a common thematic and genre paradigm can be traced. The sections are floating, but there are some constant sections. Firstly, the section, devoted to the wine of the video (which is negotiated separately and consulted with the audience). Secondly, there are always answers to questions (comments). Thirdly, there is a creative advertisement created by Parfenov himself. What regular in the video are: events, people, phenomena, just like before in *Namedni* releases. And as the journalist himself made a good call in his announcement at the New Year's live broadcast: There will be me, as always, wine, cinema and domeneos (Parfenov, 2019).

The themes are also traced from the very first issue. There are approximate ranges of topics that concern the author, allow him to make certain judgments, explain them visually and give additional information using various techniques: titles, walks with a selfie stick, reportage techniques (here and now), interviews with various people who turn out to be around. Moreover, these interlocutors can be quite simple people, unknown to the general public: restaurateurs, sommeliers, travelers, just people doing something interesting, etc.

The main source of information is Leonid Parfenov himself, who extrapolates our reality both in the world philosophically and practically, making generalizations. Turning to historical events, giving reviews of the films watched, visited places, art galleries and political events that occurred and found a response with the public and with himself.

The video begins and ends with a story about wine. Parfenov acts as a sommelier, he thoughtfully and thoroughly talks about grape varieties, about the history of a particular brand and how to grow grapes, and the proper storage of wine. The habit of drinking with Parfenov has already started with many people who are not indifferent to his work. After 15–20 videos, even those who have never been well versed in wine begin to distinguish wine from the single-component one, cabernet sauvignon from merlot, pinot noir, shiraz, nebiolo, etc., to understand what orange wine is and why Georgian wines are coming back to the wine list of the world (ibid.).

Each video episode, as a rule, contains a statement on a general political, socially significant topic. If something happened in the political sphere during a week, and this is probably true, if someone from the politicians said something or did something extraordinary, this is always reflected in Parfenov's blog in his inherent sarcastic manner.

Art and cultural studies are also touched upon in each issue, either it is a movie released or watched by Parfenov this week, or a museum that he visited in a particular country, art galleries, exhibitions or just some memorable places or interesting events. Often there is a local history moment, especially Parfenov loves to return to his native city, which is Cherepovets.

Gastronomic themes are performed in almost every issue. Parfenov is a great gourmet! His wife Elena Chekalova used to be a TV presenter of a cookery programs and generally cooks very well. In 2015, her restaurant Poehali took the bronze prize among the restaurants, and the main restaurant prize of the magazine *Sdelano v Rossyii* by *SNOB*, which did not prevent the restaurant from closing a year later. So Parfenov shot very clever and detailed reviews on the restaurants of those countries and cities where he has been.

Interviews are also present in the blog, the conversation is conducted naturally and without journalistic pathos. Acquaintance with the Parfenov's journalistic works is an almost obligatory section, as well as a section about wine. Parfenov gives a lot of information about the future film *Russkie gruzini*, announces the previous films: *Glass Boziyi*, which is about how Tsvetaev collected all the classics in moulds in Moscow at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Schukin and Morozov collected all avant-garde originals. *Tsvet Natsii* deals with Sergey Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky, who is the Russian photographer, inventor, pioneer of color photography in Russia. *Russkie evrei* presents how the Jews naturalized in Russia, without losing their identity (Tsvetkova, 2018).

4. Purpose of the Study

The main thing I would like to talk about are those multimedia tools (formats), that define trendy visual works of Russian journalists, and about the peculiarities of multimedia content visualization in the works of Leonid Parfenov. Thus, the main goal of the research is to identify specific multimedia tools necessary for creating high-quality visual works in modern domestic journalism. We cannot do without identifying the features of the multimedia implementation in the visual works of Parfenov, as well as without a comparative analysis of the multimedia appliance in the Parthenon slogan of programs for TV and film distribution.

The author proposes the following hypothesis of the research: at present, the placement of multimedia content in various media (the classical or new ones) does not matter much. Over time, the

difference between television / cinema and Internet visualization will be even more leveled due to the diffusion, the interpenetration of methods and techniques of multimedia formats. Online placement will be unimportant, but this does not mean that the multimedia product will not need to be adapted, taking into account the characteristics of the media. The ability of a modern journalist to apply creative skills and adequately combine all possible multimedia formats will remain the same value.

5. Research Methods

The basis of the research is a systematic approach and a structural principle that contribute to the formation of an objective assessment of the state of the modern visual space, based on the complex fundamental research in the field of screen art. The approach reveals the principles of historicism and social cultural conditionality, contributing to the formation of an objective assessment of the state of multimedia journalism in different environments and information spaces on the example of the work of Parfenov.

The main research methods are description, comparative analysis, synthesis, observation, generalization, classification method, content analysis.

6. Findings

There is a feature in Parthenon that came from *Namedni*, which is the equalization of various events. That is traced immediately from the video title. For example, the 25th edition: “Rap ban. Vienna-university: Bruegel and opera. Pirosmeni and "Do not grieve!" ". Equalization: it could be Medvedev with his “and that’s ok” and a cinema in Cherepovets, a pension reform from Putin and a restaurant in Georgia. Selection of important milestones are marked only for the personal taste of the author. Blog is a personal matter! But they are, as a rule, on the “general current agenda”.

Another feature is the constant self-identification in this or that situation: the “yes, exactly!” effect of the video episodes. Moreover, the author travels a lot, each video has inclusions from different cities, domestic and foreign. Still the inclusions turn to the journalist favorite table with a bottle of wine. Here is a reference to dissident gatherings in the Brezhnev times with telling jokes, only in a modern format.

One more multimedia feature is the information flow density, both visual and mental. Information penetrates with several channels of perception: through listening (even if it is just Parfenov's speech, it is saturated with intonation dramaturgy), through watching (gestures, facial expressions, clothing of the presenter), through meaning (many metaphors, street-clichés of films and Soviet past with corresponding imitative intonations , quotes from books, reciting). All these altogether are performed in one video in a vigorous pace, as if the fact is well-known. Such information density distinguishes Parfenov’s video blog from other similar Youtube phenomena, as well as the presence literacy pieces that enrich the viewer with new knowledge in culture, painting, music, cinematography, history and literature.

The maximum effect of information density is achieved using subtitling. Titles, accompanied by the characteristic intershum of computer keys, explain all the incomprehensible terms, surnames, names, places. Additionally, poems, statements are cited, photographic images or drawings are shown, in the author’s signature style, very superficially and fluently, but wildly fascinating and causing the desire to learn more. This is where such hidden hypertextuality is born - i.e. there is no transition through a hyperlink

to more detailed information (technically it's not yet invented for the online videos), that is why there is a wish to hit the pause button and google it. Most important multimedia part of the project are the users' comments. For example, for the 25th video, Ernan Rey writes in a crony manner: "Leo, you will laugh, of course, but I think that your Parthenon releases, all your films, you need to canonize, include in the mandatory school program. Why? So it cultivates good taste, just a taste for life, cultivate love of art and of culture, as well as understanding of how you can spend your leisure time, and most importantly, after watching even your short program, the false and pompous TV pathos is inappropriate". Here, Marina Viynskovsky's commentary: "Thank you for the opportunity to listen to fluent, well-bred Russian speech" (as cited in Parfenov, 2019). Finally, I want to give here a comment that feels it all. Someone nicknamed Yuri Rupasov comments after watching the 26th video episode (the last December issue of 2018): "I was watching at 9:30 p.m., it is 41 degree below zero outside, it is darkness. I have splashed the dump water, and stared into the parallel world of the Parthenon ... " (ibid.).

7. Conclusion

Thus, modern technologies allow to work with the use of new multimedia storytelling techniques. We tried to show that Leonid Parfenov, as a representative of the traditional television school, perfectly fits into the new digital conditions, successfully applying his vlog multimedia formats that can be classified into two large sections. They can be divided into technical and creative technological. According to Silantyeva (2018), the media manager and producer, there are 92 multimedia formats. There is a focus on 15 in the present research (pp. 22 - 62).

Technical multimedia formats include: infographics (interactive Storymap, maps + photos + videos + text, Google Maps, Yandex.Maps); feeds (Timeline (service Timeline JS); interactive; mind maps; subtitling (cards); audio podcast; photo, pixelated, and many others.

Creative multimedia formats consist of: photos, slideshows, photo reports; interactive photo, face-tracking; photo slider (the ability to compare "before and after"); insert user content into multimedia materials; online conferences and user comments (can be attributed to the first group); rotoscoping; interaction formats: voting, quizzes, tests; multimedia video: video clips, interactive video; audio (audio fragments inside the text, audio slideshow); multiformat text: structure of informational text for video; storyline extension chain (story planning on multiple platforms).

Thus, it can be said that of all the listed mini-formats and sub-formats are traced in the creative work of Leonid Parfenov at different online content placement. Almost every format, except frankly technical and unacceptable for on-screen creativity, is identified in the blog of Parfenov, which includes television works, works for film distribution, as well as editions of the famous *Namedni*, adapted for the online format. After all, it was the TV *Namedni*-2001 format, that had the visual effect of the computer mouse clicking around the screen.

The present study has made an attempt to impose like with a tracing paper multimedia tools on Parfenov's journalistic work to show in detail where and how he implement them. We believe that the "set of tools" of the master of domestic journalism should be applied in modern storytelling, professional information message "packing" in texts, photos, home videos, chronicles, numbers, statistics, video, audio,

music and more source materials from which the visual journalistic work is created, especially if to speak about such a sophisticated and demanding viewer, as an online users.

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