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## Teacher's Social Media Profile as Seen by Participants of Educational Relations

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### Abstract

This scientific paper is dedicated to the study of the participants' ideas of educational relations about what content is preferable in the teacher's profile in social media. The relevance of the topic is due to the importance and social acuteness of the problem of teachers' self-presentation in social media. A total of 137 respondents took part in the study, of which 28 were teachers, 39 parents, 70 students in grades 8-11. In this research were applied such research methods as: content analysis, conversation, questioning. As a result of the study, it was revealed that there are significant differences in educational relations participants' perception about the teacher's profile in social media – parents are more interested in it than students. Most of the students are neutral about any content posted by teachers on their page on the social network, explaining this by lack of interest. Parents are more critical to the content of the teacher's page than students. Most of the teachers, students and parents perceive their social media accounts as a personal space, not as a place for professional self-presentation and, in general, try not to violate the boundaries of this space and do not “make friends” on social networks.

**Keywords:** teacher's image, teacher's profile in social media, social media content, professional content.

### 1. Introduction

In modern society, communication turns into a virtual format and the interaction of participants in educational relations is no exception. The Internet has a huge impact on the way people interact, and social media plays an important role in changing or expanding our relationships with others. (Jordan, Weller, 2018).

In 2012, Russia ranked first in terms of the length of time the population spent on social media: according to ComScore, Russian Internet users spend an average of 12.8 hours a month on them.

According to "Digital Economy: 2020", published by the Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge of the Higher School of Economics in partnership with the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of Russia and Rosstat, almost every day 68.8 % of Russians aged 15-74 use the Internet, including 88.9 % of young people aged 15-24. For Russians, the most requested use case was being on social networks. This is done by 78 % of Russian users with access to the Internet. Only in Japan (89 %) the share of fans of social networks is higher, according to the collection "Digital Economy: 2020" (Gokhberg et al., 2020).

It can be assumed that adolescents spend significantly more time on social networks, since they are more often addicted to new technologies, and, accordingly, run the risk of becoming dependent on them.

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Thus, the space of social networks becomes a meeting place and intersection of teachers, students and their parents, and the rules for this interaction are not regulated and are established spontaneously.

It is worth noting the social relevance of this topic. An analysis of high-profile discussions in the Internet space shows that interest in the topic is high, at the same time, there is no consensus in society about this issue, there are disputes whether a page on a social network is a personal space or is it a place for professional self-presentation of a teacher (Frolova et al., 2018).

## 2. Materials and methods

Research methods and techniques: content analysis, conversation, questioning.

Sample group. A total of 137 respondents took part in the study, of which 28 were teachers, 39 students' parents, 70 students in grades 8-11.

The conversation was attended by: teachers – 28 respondents (men – 6, women – 22, students in grades 8-11 – 19 respondents (boys – 9, girls – 10), parents of students in grades 8-11 – 24 respondents (men – 5, women – 19).

70 students (boys – 40, girls – 30) and 39 parents (men – 5, women – 34) took part in the survey.

At the first stage, based on the content analysis of the profiles of users of social networks, three main groups of content posted on social networks were identified: personal, public and professional. For each group, questions for conversation were drawn up, which also formed the basis of our questionnaire.

At the second stage, a conversation was held with teachers, students and parents.

At the third stage, a survey of students and parents was carried out.

## 3. Discussion

Throughout the entire existence of teacher's profession, it is considered as "ethical compass" for both students and society. Currently, the public, mainly in the face of the parents said that teachers need to be perfect representatives of the profession with "perfect" image.

An important component of modern teacher image is his profile on social networks. However, according to the results of a study by the Kaspersky Academy, 90 % of teachers consider social networks to be their personal space, 73 % of them add their students to their "friends". Research data from recent years show that 52 % of Moscow schoolchildren, at least in one of the social networks, have teachers as friends. Modern research makes it possible to state the activity of young teachers in social networks. At the same time, young specialists correspond both with the parents of students (57 %) and with the students themselves (48 %) in social networks (Moiseev, 2020). Thus, we can say that teachers "keep pace with the times" and use modern forms of contact with students and their parents. In this regard, it can be argued that a sufficient number of students and parents are familiar with the teacher's profile. Emerging social networking technologies such as blogging offer potential to support professional learning through the development of like-minded communities not geographically or temporally constrained (Luehmann et al., 2008). The results show that most users of social networking try the suggestions and ideas that they find on this network, which have a positive impact on their teaching (Rosell-Aguilar, 2018).

An analysis of media's publications and on the Internet shows that the question remains debatable: is a page on a social network a place for a professional presentation for a teacher, or just a personal space (Davidson, Joinson, 2021).

The urgency of the problem under discussion is evidenced by the statement of the Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Public Relations, Press Secretary of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation A. Emelyanov on the development of recommendations to help teachers in maintaining social networks to form a professional image.

Many scientists consider the influence of the teacher's image as a factor of professional activity, which helps to build relationships with others. So V.N. Cherepanova, the individual image of a teacher is considered as a set of external and internal personal, as well as individual and professional qualities of a teacher, showing his desire and readiness for subject-subject communication in his pedagogical activity (Cherepanova, 1998). G.M. Kodzhaspirova, A.Yu. Kojaspirov define the image of a teacher as an emotionally colored stereotype of the

perception of the image of a teacher in the minds of the pupil, colleagues, social environment, and mass consciousness (Kodzhaspirova, Kodzhaspirov, 2000).

V.M. Shepel points out that the image is the form through which a person represents his/her "I" to the world: this is the only form of self-presentation in front of other people (Shepel, 2002). In this regard, in this article, the teacher's image is considered not only as a visual representation that arises in other people, but also as his assessment, a certain attitude towards this image in the form of an opinion.

Over the past 10-15 years, social networks have become a possible space for self-presentation and image creation for a teacher. According to the information in the user's account, you can find out about his interests in different areas of life and connections with other users. In modern society, the idea of the connection between professional success and the need to work on an image is taking root more and more, and social networks seem to be an excellent space for creating the desired image. An important question remains what algorithms of interaction in a social network are the most popular. It has been found that strategies for how users think about algorithms are context-dependent, triggered by expectation violations and explicit personalization signals (Swart, 2021).

Researchers are trying to answer three main questions: why do people go to virtual social networks, what do they do there, and how does it affect their real social life. It seems interesting, in our opinion, to observe the study of the English researcher A. Joyson, who, based on factor analysis, identified key motives for using social networks: 1) communication with friends and acquaintances; 2) search for identity – motive of affiliation – belonging to a group, (searching for people by interests); 3) the consumption of content (games, applications); 4) social investigation or the motive of "voyeurism" (includes the observation of the profiles of other users and meeting new people); 5) surfing on social networks with the purpose of the observation of the profiles of other users; 6) self-presentation; 7) updating the profile including scrolling the news feed (Joinson, 2008). Ellison and others give prominence to five main motives for using social media: presentational authenticity, circumvention of social expectations, self-exploration, identity management and self-presentation, establishment and development of relationships (Ellison, 2016).

The past five years have seen a resurgence in research into what teachers do on and with social media. Using a qualitative paradigm, experienced ICT teachers from Australia, Europe and the United States of America were interviewed about their conceptualization of vocational education and related activities on the Internet. The results of these studies represent a typology of reasoning based on two continua: Self and Interactivity. Four categories of teacher involvement in the network have been identified: information consumer; info-networker; self-serving participant and professional. This introduces a new paradigm for professional development that is essential for understanding the role of social media in teacher training and for changing what we consider effective professional development (Prestridge, 2019).

In the concept of social compensation (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010, Jordan, Weller, 2018), the relationship between the success of an individual and the goals of creating a profile in social networks is considered. In particular, the authors put forward a hypothesis that the most socially successful individuals tend to use social networks as a means to strengthen existing connections (Sheldon, 2008), while less socially successful individuals tend to express themselves more in the network and, in particular, to search for new contacts, since in real life it is quite difficult for them.

The main components of the teacher's image identified by the researchers, the key motives for their use of social networks allow us to determine the basis for studying the representations of the subjects of educational relations about the profile of teachers in social networks.

#### **4. Results**

##### *Results of interviews with teachers*

Initially, a conversation was conducted with 28 teachers, including 6 men and 22 women teaching in grades 8-11, who outlined their idea of the content of the teacher's page on the social network and interaction with students and their parents through the social network.

Teachers were asked about their use of social media and posts content on their pages.

From teachers' responses it follows that 20 respondents (71 %) add their students as friends on social networks, 8 respondents do not add (29 %). Students are usually the initiators of adding a teacher as a friend. 13 teachers (65 %) answered that students were the initiators, 7 (35 %)

answered that sometimes they, sometimes students, none of the teachers answered that usually he/she initiates adding students to the friends.

To the question "Do you add your students' parents as friends?" 18 teachers (64.3 %) answered that they add their students' parents as friends, 10 (35.7 %) do not. The initiative also comes more often from parents (13 teachers (72.2 %) added parents upon parents' requests, 5 teachers (27.8 %) answered that sometimes they can add parents themselves, sometimes parents can initiate it. The main reasons for teachers' refusal to "be friends" on social networks with students and their parents can be grouped as follows:

1. Privacy protection ("I don't want them to watch my life"),
2. Observance of the distance ("There must be a distance between the teacher and the student"),
3. Fundamental friendship in the social network with those who are friends ("I don't add anyone as a friend except friends", "I have no friends among the parents of students", "These are the parents of students, not friends").
4. Fear of being misunderstood ("It comes to picking faults in the teacher, because of how he or she spends his/her free time, while parents draw very peculiar conclusions")
5. Lack of interest ("There were neither a need nor those who wish", "I do not see the need for this", "Parents themselves are not interested in this", "There is no need (there are other types of communication for this)", "I see no point").

All interviewed teachers were asked the question "Do you post educational content on your page?". The answers were divided in half, 14 teachers (50 %) post and 14 (50 %) do not post educational content on their personal page on the social network.

To the question "Do you post content related with public topics (politics, religion, etc.) on your page?" 23 teachers (82.1 %) answered "no", only 5 teachers (17.9 %) answered that they post posts and re-posts related to socially significant topics on their page.

To the question "Do you post personal content on your page on a social network (photos of how you spend your free time)?" 23 teachers (82.1 %) answered yes, 5 teachers (17.9 %) do not post such content.

To the last question: "Have you ever received any complaints from parents about the content of your page?" All respondents answered "no".

Summing up the results of the conversations, we can say that usually teachers accepted students and their parents requests on social networks; in most cases, the initiators of sending requests are students and their parents, and not the teachers themselves. Among all the different possible content in social media (educational, social, personal), teachers give preference to posting personal content on their page. First of all, teachers consider their accounts as a personal space, and not as a way of professional communication or professional self-presentation.

#### *Results of conversation with students*

Students tend to deny interest to the teacher's social media profile. When a new teacher appears, only 3 students (16 %) look for his/her page on social networks, 16 students (84 %) do not.

To the question "Do you track teachers' life in social networks?" only 1 student (5 %) answered yes, 18 students (95 %) claim that they do not follow the teachers' pages on the social network.

6 students (32 %) are on friendly terms with the teachers in social networks, students are often acting like the initiators, 13 students (68 %) don't follow teachers in social media.

The reasons why students try not to be friends with teachers are, in general, the same as those named by teachers, but lack of interest comes first:

1. Lack of interest ("There is no definite reason for this, but I think I'm just not interested in their personal life", "I don't consider it necessary for the educational process", "I don't need it", "I don't need this, I have mobile number, and that's enough, I think").
2. Privacy protection ("I don't want anyone to follow me from school"),
3. Fundamental friendship in a social network with those who are friends ("They are not my friends").

To the question "What content would you like to see in the teacher's profile on the social network?" students answered:

1. Informational ("Some useful tasks to prepare for exams", "Any information about the school and concerts, events");

2. Entertaining ("Humorous and educational content", "From the field of his/her subject, or probably some funny jokes", "Memes");

However, the majority of the surveyed schoolchildren expressed complete indifference to the materials on the teacher's page ("All the same. This is personal social profile, he/she has the right to lead it as he/she wants", "None, this is their business", "Not interesting", "None", "I don't care", "I don't care. I don't follow them", "None, I don't correspond with them").

The students also did not admit that they wrote to teachers from fake pages or were engaged in trolling. To the question "Have you created fake social media profiles to write a message to the teacher anonymously?" all the participants in the conversation answered – no, to the question "did you look for any information about the teacher in the teacher's profile with the aim of further trolling the teacher?" only 1 student answered positively. We assume that in answering this question, the students were not sincere enough, but the teachers did not tell about such stories either, which generally confirms the observation that students are more interested in the content of their peers and popular bloggers.

Summing up the results of the conversation with the students, we can say that the students themselves do not seek to find teachers and do not track their activity on social networks. Most do not add themselves to teachers as friends, as they do not consider it necessary. Moreover, students emphasize that they are not interested in teachers' lives, which suggests that adolescents are striving to create their own isolated world on the Internet, fenced off in it from the world of adults.

#### *Results of the conversation with the parents*

The conversation was attended by 24 parents, students in grades 8-11, 5 men and 19 women.

Parents are more likely to look for a teacher's profile on social networks than their children (8 parents (33 %) answered yes to this question, 16 parents (67 %) – no), in about a third of cases they add teachers as friends (7 people, 29 %).

The reasons for avoiding doing this mainly boil down to:

1. Respect for the teacher's right to privacy ("Observance of subordination", "This is incorrect", "I think the teacher should have a private life", "I prefer to observe personal boundaries and business distance", "I believe that between the teacher and the parent should to be partnerships, not friendships", "I don't see the point. A teacher should also have a personal life").

2. No need ("No need" "Why?") "No need".

3. Fundamental friendship in a social network with those who are friends "I have only my close friends and colleagues as friends".

All parents, regardless of whether the teachers were added as friends on the social network, were asked the question: "Do you follow the life of your child's teachers on social networks?" 4 respondents answered that they follow teacher's life on the social network. Only 2 respondents answered that they were alarmed by the teacher's closed profile.

To the question "In your opinion, what moments of personal life can a teacher share on his/her page?" the answers boiled down to the fact that this is a personal matter of the teacher ("All", "Anyone. This is his/her personal life", "Everyone's personal matter", "What he considers necessary", "Everything except intimate moments", "The teacher is free to cover any moments of personal life. This information does not concern me", "At its discretion", "What it considers necessary").

When asked about inadmissible content from their point of view, the parents listed obscene language, calls for violence, immoral topics, obscene photos, porn, calls for the use of alcohol, drugs, extremist information, content that offends the honor and dignity of other people, the imposition of political or religious views. Actually, parents expect that the teacher will observe "the same standards that apply to any other person, regardless of profession".

Some parents (4 respondents) noted that teachers should not post photos in swimsuits, "and some parents (4 people) noted that the teacher should not post photos in swimsuits, "unsightly photos".

When asked about the desired content, most of the parents identified the following: professional, aimed at child development, related with school events. Some of them are interested in "The story of those events in teacher's life that emphasize the individuality of a person, give detailed information about his/her life and professional interests", some parents emphasized that they were not interested in teacher's profiles themselves and looking for the necessary materials in other places.



Summing up the results of the conversation with the parents, we can say that parents do not seek to be friends with their children's teachers, almost do not follow the teachers' lives on the social network. Basically, they perceive the account as a personal space, and not as a space for professional self-presentation, they try to maintain correctness and subordination. Parents are calm about any content on the teacher's page that does not contradict moral and ethical principles, does not promote alcohol, cigarettes and violence. Parents can be interested in professional content related to the educational process.

*Results of the third stage of the study – questionnaires of students and parents*

After analyzing the data obtained during the conversation with teachers, students and parents, a questionnaire was drawn up. It was presented to the student and parents. They are to fill in the questionnaire online at a convenient time for them.

The respondents should have shared their attitude to the content posted by teachers on their pages in social media. The questionnaire contained 3 blocks: Block 1 – assessment of teacher's personal content (materials that teacher posts about himself /herself and his/her hobbies); Block 2 – assessment of how teacher distributes scientific and educational content).

You had to express your attitude on the scale: I do not approve; I am neutral; I approve.

*Results of the student survey*

The questionnaires were filled in by 70 pupils of grades 8-11, 40 boys and 30 girls.

In the first block of the questionnaire (about content of a personal nature), the most interest was aroused by the teacher's creative work, information about the teacher's attendance at cultural events, photos and videos about the teacher's activities in extreme sports.

The most dispraised was the content from festive events as well as photos of outfits and dishes prepared by the teacher.

Among the topics that can be classified as public, the content about music gained the most approval from schoolchildren, then posts and reposts about social problems, followed by posts about sports. The content about religion, politics and media personalities received the most disapproval rate among students.

In the third block, devoted to professional activity, scientific articles and methodological materials were most approved by students. The most disapproval turned out the content about the participation of students in the class activities. As we have already noted, adolescents try to limit their Internet space and minimize its intersection with the “adult”.

The ranking of students' answers shows that of all the content (personal, social and professional), the content about teacher's creative work (handicraft, construction, modeling, etc.) is the most approved – 42.86 %, followed by information about teacher's visit cultural events (cinema, theater, concert, exhibition, etc.) and posts, reposts about music – 38.57 % (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Ranking of students' ratings of teacher's social media content on his/her page (approval)

Content	Number of approvals (%)
Photo and video of the teacher's creative work (needlework, construction, modeling, etc.)	42.86
Photo and video of the teacher's visit to cultural events (cinema, theater, concert, exhibition, etc.)	38.57
Posts, reposts about music	38.57
Scientific articles, educational materials	37.14
Educational materials for students	35.71
Photos and videos of extreme sports lessons by a teacher	34.29
Photos and videos of the teacher's pets	31.43
Posts, reposts about social problems	31.43
Posts, reposts about sports	30.00
Photo and video of the teacher's participation in conferences, master classes, etc.	28.57
Photo and video of teacher's vacation / travel	25.71
Photos and videos from the festive events	22.86



Photos and videos of the participation of class students in activities	22.86
Photos, videos, posts about intra-school problems	22.86
Photos and videos of dishes prepared by the teacher	21.43
Photo and video of teacher's outfits	18.57
Posts, reposts about media personalities	12.86
Posts, reposts about politics	10.00

In the same way the content was ranked in terms of students' disapprovals. From all the blocks of the questionnaire, the greatest students' disapproval was caused by posts and reposts about religion – 24.29 %, posts and reposts about politics – 17.14 % (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Ranking of students' ratings of teacher's social media content on his/her page (disapproval)

Content	Number of disapprovals (%)
Posts, reposts about religion	24.29
Posts, reposts about politics	17.14
Photos and videos from the festive events	15.71
Photos and videos of in class activities	15.71
Posts, reposts about media personalities	12.86
Photo and video of teacher's outfits	11.43
Scientific articles, educational materials	10.00
Posts, reposts about social problems	8.57
Photos, videos, posts about intra-school problems	8.57
Photos and videos of dishes prepared by the teacher	8.57
Photos and videos of extreme sports lessons by a teacher	7.14
Posts, reposts about sports	7.14
Photo and video of teacher's vacation / travel	7.14
Photo and video of the teacher's participation in conferences, master classes, refresher courses, etc.	5.71

#### *Parents' survey results*

The questionnaire was completed by 39 parents, 5 men and 34 women.

Photos and videos about teacher's creative work, teacher's attendance at cultural events, and teacher's pets received the most approving ratings from parents (Tab. 3). Most of all the disapproval predictably came from the photos and videos from holiday feasts and teacher's outfits. The most approved content of the second block (social problems) turned out to be posts and reposts about sports, music and social issues. The most disapproved topic is the content about religion and media personalities.

In the third block (professional content), educational materials for students, scientific articles, photos and videos of teacher's participation in conferences, master classes, etc. – received the highest rate of approval from parents. Of all the topics of the three blocks of the questionnaire (personal, social and professional), the highest parents' approval was caused by scientific articles, methodological and educational materials for students – 82.05 %.

**Table 3.** Ranking of parents' ratings of teacher's social media content on his/her page (approval)

Content	Number of approvals (%)
Scientific articles, educational materials	82.05
Educational materials for students	82.05
Photo and video of teacher's participation in conferences, master classes, etc.	79.49
Photo and video of teacher's creative work (needlework, construction, modeling, etc.)	74.36
Photos and videos of in class activities	69.23
Photo and video of the teacher's visit to cultural events (cinema, theater, concert, exhibition, etc.)	66.67
Posts, reposts about sports	53.85
Photos and videos of teacher's pets	48.72
Posts, reposts about music	48.72
Photos and videos of extreme sports lessons by a teacher	43.59
Photo and video of teacher's vacation / travel	41.03
Posts, reposts about social problems	41.03
Photos and videos of dishes prepared by the teacher	41.03
Photos, videos, posts about intra-school problems	35.90
Photo and video of teacher's outfits	28.21
Posts, reposts about politics	23.08
Posts, reposts about religion	23.08
Posts, reposts about media personalities	17.95
Photos and videos from the festive events	10.26

The highest parents' disapproval was caused by photos and videos from the festive feast – 46.15 % (Table 4).

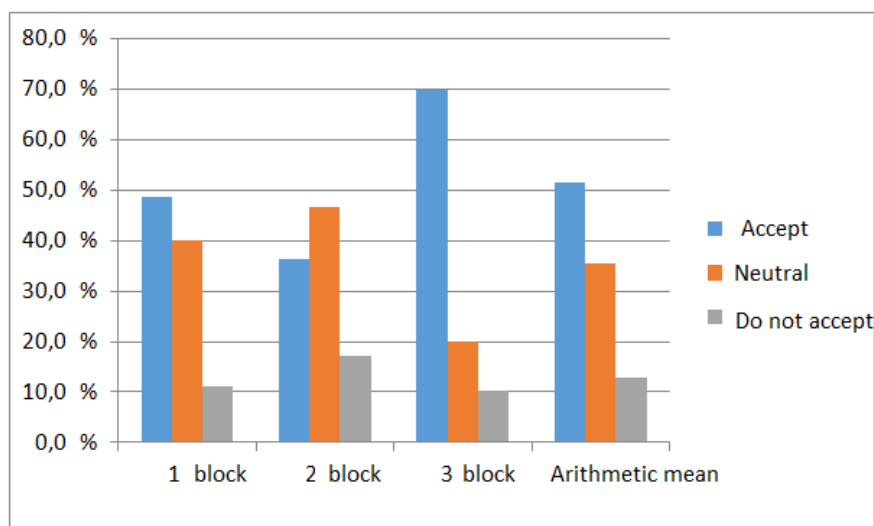
**Table 4.** Ranking of parents' ratings of teacher's social media content on his/her page (disapproval)

Content	Number of disapprovals (%)
Photos and videos from the festive feast	46.15
Photo and video of teacher's outfits	30.77
Posts, reposts about religion	30.77
Posts, reposts about media personalities	30.77
Photos, videos, posts about intra-school problems	28.21
Posts, reposts about politics	25.64
Photos and videos of in class activities	15.38
Photos and videos of extreme sports lessons by a teacher	15.38
Photo and video of teacher's vacation / travel	12.82
Posts, reposts about social problems	12.82
Photos and videos of the teacher's pets	7.69
Posts, reposts about music	7.69
Photos and videos of dishes prepared by teacher	7.69
Posts, reposts about sports	5.13
Scientific articles, teaching materials	2.56

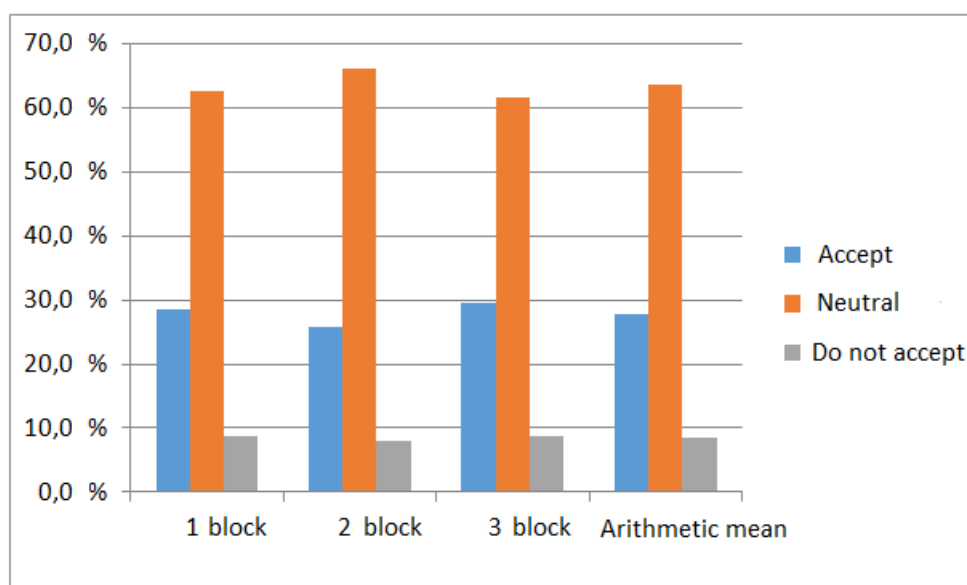
Educational materials for students	2.56
Photo and video of teacher's participation in conferences, master classes, refresher courses, etc.	2.56
Photo and video of teacher's creative work (needlework, construction, modeling, etc.)	2.56
Photo and video of teacher's visit to cultural events (cinema, theater, concert, exhibition, etc.)	2.56

*Comparative analysis of the results of students' and parents' survey*

The analysis was carried out in 3 blocks that were in the questionnaire: 1 block – personal content, 2 block – social topics, 3 side – professional activity (Figures 1, 2).



**Fig. 1.** Distribution of parents' answers



**Fig. 2.** Distribution of students' answers

The data from the students' questionnaires, in general, correlate with the results of the conversation. Students are more neutral about both the teacher's social media profile and their content. Parents, although they claim that they have little interest in the content of the teacher's profile, do not treat this topic more biasedly and have a clearer idea of what should be in it and what should not. There is a noticeable discrepancy between students and parents regarding photos

and videos of feasts, as well as photos of outfits posted by teachers on their pages on social networks (more than 40 % of parents consider this unacceptable, while most students are indifferent to such content).

Compared to children, parents express more approval of such topics as the creative work of teachers, photos and videos of cooked dishes, and pets.

Parents and students' ratings of social content differ across almost all social topics, and the general trend is similar: parents seem to accept many topics on the teacher's page, and students show indifference to whether the teacher reflects these topics on their page. The exception is posts /re-posts about media personalities, which cause disapproval from a third of parents, which significantly exceeds the percentage of students.

Most of the discrepancies were caused by the question of the relevance of photos and videos of the participation of students in the in-class activities on the teacher's page ( $\varphi_{emp.} = 4.848$ ,  $p = 0.0$ ). Parents show interest in and approve of such coverage of their children's school life, while students show "neutrality" and indifference.

There are many representatives among parents who approve of teachers' photo reports about their participation in conferences, master classes, courses (the differences are significant  $\varphi_{emp.} = 5.373$ ,  $p = 0.0$ ).

The result shows that there are significantly more parents than students who disapprove of photos, videos and posts on the teacher's social network page about intra-school problems ( $\varphi_{emp.} = 2.63$ ,  $p = 0.0043$ ). There are also significantly more parents than students who approve of educational materials, scientific articles and methodological developments for students on the teacher's page in a social network.

In the "Professional activity" block, we see the greatest differences: almost 70 % of parents approve of this kind of content, and 61.71 % of students have a neutral attitude to this content (Figures 1, 2).

Since a large number of students are neutral to any content posted by a teacher on their page on a social network, it can be assumed that the interests of students in the online space are more related to communication with peers, tracking posts of bloggers popular among schoolchildren, exchange and discussion of this content. This is probably due to the fact that the "secret world" of adolescents has moved to the Internet space, adolescents strive to respect its boundaries, trying to ensure that their virtual "worlds" and "worlds" of adults do not overlap too much.

## 5. Conclusion

Most of the students are neutral about any content posted by teachers on their page on the social network, explaining this by lack of interest.

Parents' opinions about the content posted on the teacher's page are more polarized, parents are more critical and biased about the content of teacher profiles on the social media than students.

The study revealed differences in the content of the ideas of parents and students about the content posted by the teacher on his/her page on the social network: the content about teacher's creative work (handicraft, design, modeling, etc.) evokes the greatest approval of the students. Also, the approval of the students was received by the teacher's visit to cultural events (theater, films, exhibitions, museums)

Parents, unlike students, have a clearer idea of what should be in the teacher's content. And among the parents the greatest approval was caused by scientific articles and methodological materials.

Parents are more positive about professional content than any other content posted by a teacher.

Parents, to a greater extent than students, disapprove of posts and reposts about media personalities on the teacher's page on the social network. The most disapproved content for students is post (repost) about religion, and for parents – photos and videos from the festive events.

Most of the teachers, students and parents perceive their social media accounts as a personal space, not as a place for professional self-presentation and, in general, try not to violate the boundaries of this space and do not "make friends" on social networks.

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## Media-Communicative Occupational Guidance Based on the Platform of Online Game

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### Abstract

The forced transition of institution of learning to distance education during the pandemic stimulated the active introduction of digital technologies in the process of forming students' competencies. For the Russian educational system, which is focused on traditional teaching technologies, this situation has identified a number of problems. The main one is the lack of effective communication in the digital area.

The study is devoted to the developing and testing of a new psychological and teaching methodology, that is used for solving the problem of optimization the process of media studies applicants' communication. The study results are of an intermediate nature and require a longer period of testing of the methodology along with a change of digital technologies used in the course of training. At the same time, the empirical data are of scientific interest and interdisciplinary and can be used in teaching humanitarian and technical disciplines.

For the experiment it is chosen an online gaming platform "Minecraft". It allows to teach applicants to separate themselves as a communicative personality existing in the real world from their digital twin.

**Keywords:** media education, digital education, digital transformation, gamification of education, distance education.

### 1. Introduction

Currently, the process of digitalization of education all over the world is developing rapidly and irreversibly. This development seems to be natural and, accordingly, defining new realities. And the main point is the provision of specialists who meet the requirements of the digital age and are in demand on the labor market.

Today, the learning process becomes more effective with the active use of educational innovations based on the use of information and communication technologies.

A pandemic has become a catalyst for the digital transformation of education around the world, forcing all participants in the educational process to participate in the development of digital technologies. The Russian education system was not ready to work in the online environment, but it received a powerful incentive for change. At the same time, a number of problems emerged, including a decrease in mental activity and a weakening of students' memory, loss of communication and argumentation skills, poor vocabulary, inability to express their thoughts, and, as a consequence, the processing of teaching and learning methods and an increase in the digital literacy of professors (Shamshovich et al., 2020: 138-139).

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Another problem of the Russian educational system is the formation of professional competencies of students in the absence of well-functioning online education technologies. Most of the Russian experts agreed on a significant decline in the quality of student training ([Shamshovich et al., 2020](#); [Goncharov, 2020](#)).

And on the contrary, studies conducted by foreign authors in 2020-2021 proved the effectiveness of using digital technologies in the educational process to form the necessary skills. So, in particular, the inclusion of neural network technologies, VR and AR technologies, online gamification, interactive and transmedia storytelling significantly increase the quality of knowledge assimilation and the ability to apply them in practice. It is a mistake to believe that online education will completely replace offline learning in the coming decades, but modern educational technologies certainly open up new opportunities for students and teachers.

One of the main threats to the development of e-education in Russia is the underestimation of the possibilities of the digital environment. Today, online education is mostly imitating face-to-face classes using the Internet. Meanwhile, the advantage and competitiveness of the digital teaching is in the direction of creative expansion of tools for creating and presenting educational products.

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## 2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in the 2020-2021 academic year as part of vocational guidance work with applicants, begun by the authors in 2019 at the Omsk State Technical University (OmSTU). The purpose of this work is to recruit applicants wishing to study in media communication areas and university training profiles. They are "Advertising and public relations in digital media", "Information systems and technologies in the media industry" and "Graphic design".

In 2019, on the basis of the anti-digital camp organized by the authors, an experiment was carried out using digital-detox technologies to identify and develop the communication skills of adolescents, as well as to form their responsible attitude towards communication in the digital environment. The temporary abandonment of gadgets and digital technologies made it possible for the camp participants to reveal their communication skills in full and understand how they are focused on further education and a career in the media communications area ([Anashkina et al., 2020](#)).

The new study was started in October 2020 and was finished in May 2021. It was focused on active involvement of digital technologies in the vocational guidance program.

The purpose of the study is testing of proprietary technology aimed at revealing the communicative potential of applicants using digital gamification. For its implementation it was attended 347 11th grade schoolbodies who were trained in preparatory courses for the Unified State Examination (USE) in social studies.

Trial hypothesis is that in the process of preparing for the USE tasks, applicants develop a model of passive communicative behavior, and the introduction of digital gamification will help to reveal their real communicative potential and, will help to make a high-quality vocational guidance selection for media communication specializations of OmSTU.

In the course of the study, there were used general scientific theoretical methods and special scientific empirical methods and techniques.

1. Theoretical methods made it possible to justify the urgency of the problem that the authors encountered in practice when conducting vocational guidance program. Theoretical basis was selected with the help of analysis, generalization and deduction. It is necessary for a comprehensive study of the problem, also research material was structured, that allows to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of various digital technologies in the learning process of adolescents. Also, the basic conceptual apparatus was formed to determine the goal and hypothesis of empirical research.

2. Empirical modeling of the teaching process of applicants using digital gamification was carried out on the basis of the online game "Minecraft". It included conducting of ascertaining, educational and pilot experiments, as well as observing the participants and comparing models of their communicative behavior.

To conduct the ascertaining experiment, it was chosen a psycho-diagnostic technique, which is used as a test. It allowed assessing in quantitative terms the communicative potential of the participants in the experiment (applicants) and the opportunity to introduce them to the media communication specializations of OmSTU.

The program of the educational experiment included a series of training sessions on writing essays (task 29 of the USE in social studies) and the correct selection of arguments. Classes were delivered in a traditional way and on online gaming platform *Minecraft*, which allowed to compare the empirical data obtained. Also, during the gamification, there were used other digital tools that are necessary for effective communication between the organizers and the participants of the experiment. One of the tools is Zoom, an online platform for holding conferences, another one is a social network *Vkontakte*. At the same time, the assessment of the dynamics of disclosing the communicative potential of applicants was made on the basis of a content analysis of their essays, written at the stage of ascertaining and pilot experiments.

Thus, in the course of the study, it was tested the proprietary technology, that aimed to its goal's achievement – revealing the communicative potential of applicants in the preparation for the USE in social studies process.

### 3. Discussion

The digitalization of education is developing rapidly. This process actualizes the need to study the best practices, apply technological approaches that guarantee the mastery of the necessary competencies in a rapidly changing world.

Let's turn to the experience of our foreign colleagues.

O. Zawacki-Richter considers the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teaching and learning in German universities. Considering the question of whether the practice of an emergency transition to distance learning will lead to an acceleration of the digitalization of education, the author concludes that the situation had a positive impact on the implementation of digital innovation in university education in Germany, as well as the optimization of teaching resources (Zawacki-Richter, 2020).

Another example is a study, that was carried out at the University of Malaga as part of an innovative educational project “Professors Versus COVID-19”. This project aimed to verify whether the figure of teacher-prosumer, that is, consumers of media culture and creators of their own educational resources, favors the initial training of teachers during the pandemic. For this, students from the course in Didactics of Social Sciences created 37 educational videos that teach the social sciences curriculum to children between 6 and 12 years. These videos were disseminated through the project's YouTube channel. The results of this study corroborate the effectiveness of turning students into teachers-prosumers, generating the development of critical, creative, digital, and socio-emotional skills (Triviño-Cabrera et al., 2021).

Educational projects based on AR and VR technologies have become more and more popular. This has been achieved through the using of e-books, VR and AR learning content and through the using of smartphones. The dissertation of South Korean scientists describes a positive learning experience based on virtual and augmented reality. It presents the development of AR implementation tools and the principles of an AR curriculum (Mi-Young et al., 2021: 659-661).

Researches of the using computer-generated VR in teaching instructional content that have spatial frameworks such as in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, conclude that VR has a positive compensatory effect on students with low spatial abilities (Safadel, White, 2020).

The pandemic keeps up to date studies devoted to the using of digital technologies for disabled students. One such study was conducted at the New Zealand's university on the group of students with vision disorder. Result showed that disabled students often use online technologies and adapt them to solve various problems. Authors of the research recommend higher education institutions to use interactive digital tools in addition to events for disabled students in order to motivate them studying (Pacheco et al., 2020: 200).

Another research describes using of iAnimate Live project. Such tool helps to create virtual environments, virtual characters (avatars), augmented reality and animation. It could be used for creating educational content to teach social skills to individuals with autism (Kellems et al., 2020).

The usage of neural network in the educational process is a productive way of teaching in a number of studies. For instance, T. Saito and Y. Watanobe suggest to solve the problem of lack of teaching materials and human resources with the help of machine learning. The paper also

presents a recommendation system for learning paths that applies a repetitive neural network to a student's ability diagram, which displays the student's grades and is used as an indicator of his current knowledge (Saito, Watanobe, 2020: 50-63).

S. Aydogdu has got similar approach. It describes the model, which predicts final students' performance with an accuracy of 80.47 % using an artificial neural network in the online learning platform (Aydogdu, 2020).

There is a hybrid model in the department of computer studies at the Iraqi university. A hybrid model combines two artificial intelligence techniques inside the design and the development of an intelligent e-learning system. The utilization of artificial neural networks algorithm especially recurrent neural networks (RNN) is a way of implementing deep learning technique to predict the students' final out comes in virtual class room based on their grades and their learning behaviors. The results of the proposed model showed a promising accuracy when compared with the mentioned machine learning algorithms (Kadhim, Hassan, 2020: 186-187).

According to the data from the research project "Media competencies of citizens in emerging digital media in university environments" funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain, there is little use of social networks for educational and creative purposes in Spanish universities. This served as the basis for an experiment to incorporate student use of social media into university teaching practice. The social network WhatsApp was chosen as an experimental platform for communication between students and professors during classes. Students appreciate the direct and immediate communication of these networks, but are concerned about the possibility that teachers could invade their privacy (Figueras-Maz et al., 2020).

Transmedia storytelling has great potential in the field of education. M.S. Perry explores the use of transmedia storytelling as a multimodal pedagogical tool for students from a Malaysian public university. Students' project output including campaign pitches, campaign designs and artefacts such as scripts, storyboards, posters, photos and videos submitted via digital formats were collated and analyzed using a multimodal framework. As a result, the conceptualisation and production of a transmedia storytelling campaign enabled students to develop various skills and competencies (Perry, 2020: 35-38).

Project-based approach is one of the relevant and effective way of teaching. There are some natural questions about the difference of face-to-face and online team projects in terms of prevalence of personal goals, team tasks and individual or social strategies. Comparing face-to-face and online projects, swiss researchers conclude that students, who work online, tend to manifest a significantly lower prevalence of specific challenges and strategies, suggesting that online teamwork may have involved less group deliberation. These results provide evidence for the "equivalency theory" between online and face-to-face learning in a context where all systemic levels transitioned to a digital modality (Goñi et al., 2020: 15).

Gamification as a pedagogical approach has become increasingly popular in educational contexts. Using of this technology shows positive results in terms of promoting students' motivation for learning. Gamification is actively and effectively used for teaching different subjects. For example, Spanish researchers share with the results of their study, where they describe successful implementation of P.E. curriculum, based on the Marvel Cinematographic Universe (Fernandez-Rio et al., 2020).

Study, devoted to the exploring gamification techniques in higher education, describes experience in use of popular online platform Kahoot as an effective tool to make students to get motivated. Within the project 101 undergraduate students participated in online Kahoot quizzes designing their own questions. According to the results of the pre- and post-tests, the integration of this game-based student response system into the teaching process improved students' perception of certain concepts in social science teaching, increased their active participation in the lesson, and motivated them towards learning in a more interactive and environment (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020).

Another research presents the pilot testing on the use of gamification in the educational process, based on the use of Agile methodology for receiving better results in the process of software developing (Al-Azawi et al., 2019).

Students remember 10 % of what they read, 30 % of what they see, 50 % of what they see and hear, 70 % of what they say or write, and 90 % of what they do. Therefore, it is very important to implement systems that increase student engagement in order to consolidate long-term knowledge.

In this context, the use of all the described technologies can be useful for mastering the training competencies necessary for their professional activity.

#### 4. Results

The study was carrying out for 7 months from October, 5 2020 to May, 14 2021 on the basis of preparatory courses for the Unified State Exam in social studies. The research duration is justified by the fact that several groups of applicants are recruit with different periods of study during academic year (from 24 to 104 academic hours). In general, 347 11<sup>th</sup> grades who were trained in the courses took part in the study.

The decision to organize vocational guidance selection in the 2020-2021 academic year, as well as to conduct a related study on the basis of preparatory courses, was not made by chance. It is substantiated by real complaints, conspired in the practice of carrying out vocational guidance work in OmSTU, namely:

1) The process of preparing schoolchildren is increasingly reduced to completing only test tasks that are required from adolescents' conveyors of thoughts, avoiding oral communication to written communication. As a result, their communicative potential remains completely undeveloped even when mastering humanitarian disciplines.

2) Students who entered the university for media communication specializations have to master the skills of oral public communication from scratch and learn to creatively approach the implementation of educational tasks. Not all of them manage to switch to such way of learning. As a result of decreased motivation and loss of interest in professional development.

3) Over the past 1,5 years, education for both students and schoolbodies is increasingly carried out remotely using digital technologies. As a rule, these are online services for conducting classes and conferences, where communication interaction occurs through text chats. The practice of using the digital environment in this format has a negative impact on the communication skills of adolescents.

It is obvious that the educational process will increasingly go into the digital space. It is no longer possible to refuse to use digital technologies in it due to a decrease in the quality of communication practices between a teacher and a student. Therefore, it is necessary to develop new pedagogical methods for the changing reality, using digital products within them, taking into account the peculiarities of the influence of the digital environment on the formation of universal and professional competencies of students.

That is why the study was devoted to the development and testing of a new psychological and pedagogical methodology, with the help of which the authors tried to solve the above problems. Its results are of an intermediate nature and require a longer approbation of the proposed methodology with a change in digital technologies used in the course of training. At the same time, the empirical data obtained are of scientific interest, since they are interdisciplinary in nature and can be used in teaching humanitarian and technical disciplines.

Imagine how the study went.

The organization of experiments started with the identification of applicants' problems that arise when it comes to the preparation for the USE in social studies. According to the survey's results, the most difficult USE task is exercise number 29 – essay.

Essay is a written creative way of communication by which author has to express his opinion and to show his communicative potential with the help of arguments.

Analysis of demo tasks, teaching notes and assessment criteria of the task number 29 on the site of Federal Institute for Pedagogical Measurements (FIPM) shows that the execution of the task involves the sequence of the following steps:

– to describe the intent of one of five quotes, that were said by well-known individuals (each quote corresponds to a topic in sociology, government, law, economics or philosophy, which are included in the subject social studies),

– to determine the position of the author (applicant) regarding the idea contained in the quote (for example, "I agree with the opinion of V.V. Putin on the role of the media in modern society, because ..." or "I do not agree with the opinion of V.V. Putin about the role of the media in modern society, because..."),

– to provide with at least three arguments that can be based on historical events, literary examples or examples from the media, as well as the applicant's own life experience,

– to summarize the above and to structure the conclusion on the topic.

The essay is worth 6 points: 1 point is for disclosing the author's intention according to the selected quotation, 1 point – for each argument given as confirmation of the applicant's position, 1 point – for the use of terminology on a social science problem, and 1 point – for the ability to briefly and state your position in a structured way.

On the basis of these data, a program of ascertaining, educational and pilot experiments was developed.

As part of ascertaining experiment, there were two applied methods:

1) Content-analysis of applicants' essays.

Applicants who came to the first lesson of the preparatory courses for the Unified State Exam in social studies were given a test. After its completion, the test results were recorded in an electronic journal, and the content of the essay was analyzed for the applicants' use of their communication skills within the framework of written communication.

2) Psychological testing of applicants.

The authors used a special psychological technique to identify and assess the level of communicative and organizational inclinations of the individual, which involves testing on 40 closed questions (Fetiskin et al., 2002: 184-186).

Comparison of the obtained data made it possible to divide students into 4 groups.

Group number 1 consists of applicants, whose essay score is 3 or 4 out of 6. At the same time, during the psychological test they show high level of communicative potential. They turned out to be 19 % of the total number of participants in the experiment.

Group number 2 includes applicants with high level of communicative potential, but their essay score is 1-2 points. Their share was 26 % of the total number of participants in the experiment.

Group number 3 consists of applicants with middle level of communicative potential and essay score range from 0 to 3 points. Their share was 42 % of the total number of participants in the experiment.

Group number 4 includes applicants with low level of communicative potential and their essay score range from 0 to 1 point.

In addition, the results of the content analysis of the essay at the stage of the ascertaining experiment showed obvious communication problems of adolescents: 54 % of them could not structure their own opinion on the statement of a famous person (they reformulated it using synonyms), 67 % of applicants did not understand the difference between the value judgments and the factual judgments, and 72 % did not distinguish theoretical judgments from actual ones, which significantly complicated a structured and clear presentation of their position.

These data show that the absence of clear boundaries between events in the real world and events in the digital space negatively affects the communicative behavior of an individual. In the conditions of passive consumption of information, for example, when listening to online lectures, reading a news feed, viewing bloggers' comments on social networks, it becomes increasingly difficult for teenagers to form their own opinion and convey it to the people around them. That is why the online gaming platform *Minecraft* was chosen for the educational experiment, which allows in the digital space to teach applicants to separate themselves as a communicative personality existing in the real world from their digital twin.

*Minecraft* is a digital gaming environment that allows its users to explore randomly generated worlds and transform them by constructing various virtual objects. It can be played alone or as a large team via public servers. These advantages of *Minecraft* were used in the development of a methodology for disclosing the communicative potential of applicants and its further testing.

The methodology proposed by the authors is based on the data of analysis and compilation of theoretical material on the development of critical thinking in a person and the formation of his need for active communicative and organizational activity. It involves the implementation of three stages of preparation in each study group for each unit of the subject social science (sociology, political science, economics, law and philosophy):

1) *Introductory class*. Professor presents requirements for the structure and volume of the essay, types and examples of arguments and criteria for assessing this task by expert teachers.

In the context of the transition to e-learning, this class was delivered using *Zoom*, which provides users with the opportunity to conduct online training using presentations, videos, text messages along with voice and video communication between all conference participants.



After delivering the class, each student was sent a guide for completing homework on the online gaming platform *Minecraft*, as well as instructions on how to use it and a link to a conversation organized on the social network *Vkontakte* to solve technical problems. It is worth noting that about 23 % of the applicants, who participated in the experiment, have never used *Minecraft*, but at the same time mastered its functionality on their own.

2) Applicants do their homework on the online gaming platform “*Minecraft*” according to a guide, that is developed for each of the 5 units of subject.

At this stage the theoretical material on each unit of subject social studies has already been learned within the framework of the school curriculum, the terms, concepts and methods used in sociology, political science, philosophy, economics and law have been mastered. It was important to ensure their correct application in practice in the progress of the essay.

The guide for each of these units differed in the wording of the initial phrases that the applicant had to continue based on the study of the *Minecraft*'s world, but at the same time had the same structure, corresponding to the course of writing the essay.

There is an example of the task (that included in the guide) from philosophy unit. Applicants have to explore *Minecraft* world, generated by system, and then to make a video presentation, continuing following phrases:

I want to introduce my virtual *Minecraft* world. At first sight you could think it looks like “\_\_\_\_\_”. It's your subjective view, which is based on “\_\_\_\_\_”. I invite you to explore it with me.

To distinguish between real and *Minecraft* world I'm going to use such ways of viewing as “\_\_\_\_\_”. Philosopher “\_\_\_\_\_” considered that I can/can't explore the world using these ways of viewing because “\_\_\_\_\_”. Although, another well-known philosopher “\_\_\_\_\_” would describe my approach for knowing as “\_\_\_\_\_”. Such a discrepancy is possible because “\_\_\_\_\_”.

Scientists from fields of knowledge such as “\_\_\_\_\_” would say, that we can/can't compare real and virtual world, because “\_\_\_\_\_”. In order to get objective and reliable information about real world it is necessary to use such scientific methods of enquiry as “\_\_\_\_\_”. I'm going to show you how to distinguish between empirical and theoretical methods of enquiry using *Minecraft*. Thus, the advantage of virtual world is that such method of learning as “\_\_\_\_\_” is applicable in this case.

As you can see, there are different objects in *Minecraft* world. I'm going to introduce them to you. In real world I can/can't do it, because “\_\_\_\_\_”. But first, I will test this statement in the virtual world. Then I can predict “\_\_\_\_\_”.

After exploring the virtual *Minecraft* world, my initial opinion about it has/hasn't changed. It's better/worse than real world I live because “\_\_\_\_\_”.

It can be seen from the example of the guide, the tasks of this stage of the educational experiment were aimed at developing critical thinking among. This was achieved through the exploratory activity of various *Minecraft* worlds and the delineation of what reflects students' theoretical and factual knowledge of the real world from what can only be done in digital reality.

An important condition for completing tasks, contributing to the disclosure of the communicative potential of applicants, was the creation of a five-minute video presentation. Applicants can interestingly present their *Minecraft* world in terms of social studies in a group through the video. It required adolescents to immerse themselves in the information needs of the audience (not the teacher, but the group that will vote for the video), actively use communication skills in arguing their position, show initiative and organizational skills in the creating of video content and the selection of tools for editing and animation, as well as control over speech and emotions in the process of voice-over.

3) Applicants present their videos using *Minecraft* with the help of voting system.

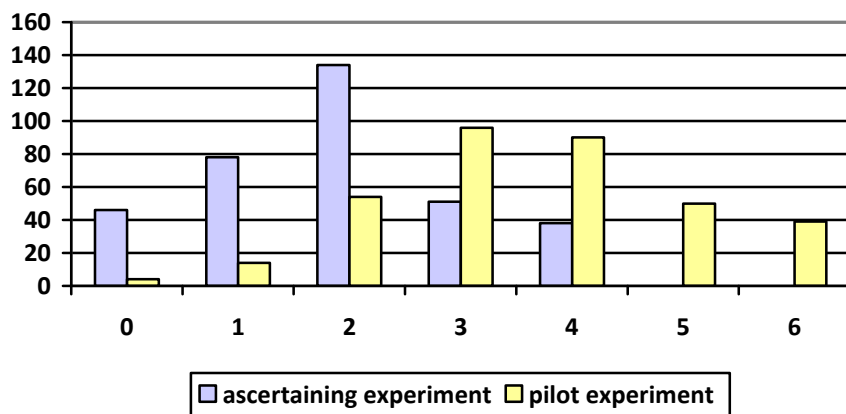
After completing previous steps there was an online presentation of applicants' videos. They were assessed by voting on *Vkontakte*, created specifically for this purpose. Thus, a competitive environment was maintained, motivating adolescents to realize themselves as a video blogger and to improve the quality of their tasks with each new unit of social science.

At the stage of the pilot experiment, which coincided in time with the final lessons in the preparatory courses for the Unified State Exam in social studies, applicants completed their essays in traditional written way. Applicants were assessed using criteria approved by the FIPM listed below:



- 1) The explanation of the problem suggested by the author of the quote.
- 2) Statement of the theoretical basis, confirming the applicant's own position on this issue.
- 3) Description of reliable facts from public life, demonstrating the objectivity of theoretical judgments.
- 4) Correct presentation of the argument based on the applicant's own life experience.
- 5) Use of social science terms.
- 6) Writing an essay in full compliance with the requirements for the structure and volume of this form of written communication.

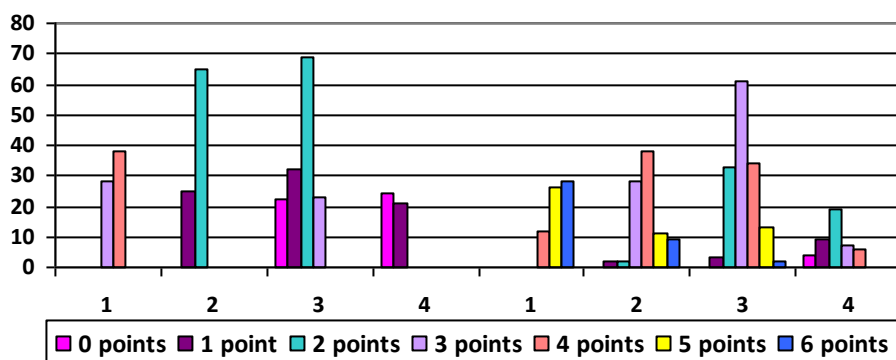
In order to track the dynamics, we have to compare the results of the essay of 347 participants at the stage of the pilot experiment with the results obtained at the stage of the ascertaining experiment, and present them in [Figure 1](#).



**Fig. 1.** Dynamics of the results of participants' essay writing at the stage of ascertaining and pilot experiments

It can be seen from the data in [Figure 1](#), we can speak about the presence of positive dynamics. After conducting an educational experiment using digital gamification technologies, applicants significantly improved quality of their essays. Most of the participants began to state their position reasonably and consistently. Content analysis of the essay showed high level of disclosure of the communicative potential of 52 % of the applicants who participated in the study.

There is a comparison of the results of the essay in 4 groups of applicants at the stage of the ascertaining experiment ([Figure 2](#): data are presented on the left) and the pilot experiment ([Figure 2](#): data are presented on the right).



**Fig. 2.** Results of the essay writing in 4 groups of applicants

It can be seen from the data in [Figure 2](#), positive dynamics was found in all four groups, but the maximum was in group number 2. At the stage of ascertaining experiment applicants with high level of communicative potential were included in the second group. But they couldn't reveal their potential during the writing of demo essay. The score is 1-2 out of 6. After the applicants took part

in the educational experiment, their results in this way of written communication increased: 64 % of them wrote an essay with 4-6 points. Only 4 participants (1 %) with a low level of communication potential wrote an essay with 0 points. For 41 % of applicants, the individual dynamics of improving the quality of essay writing ranged from 2 to 3 points.

Thus, the results of the study, presented in the figures 1-2, confirm the effectiveness of the proprietary technology for revealing the communicative potential of adolescents using digital gamification, as well as its relevance for identifying their professional involvement in media communication areas and training specializations at university. This allows to speak about the possibility of its active use for vocational guidance selection of applicants even at the stage of preparation for passing the USE.

## 5. Conclusion

The transition of the educational system to e-learning is not “digitalization” of different processes, it also requires an integrated approach that changes the structure and content of the educational process. The forced transition to distance learning during the pandemic taught many teachers not to be afraid of the already come future. The transition became a catalyst for changing approaches to teaching and understanding the role of the teacher in it.

In the context of a natural experiment in the digital transformation of education, the teacher becomes not a source of knowledge as a mediator in a vast ocean of information, a guide in using all digital and analog opportunities for studying the subject. An important component of successful digital learning is staff training and the development of effective and creative techniques for organizing work with students.

That is why, the authors organized and conducted an empirical study, the results of which speak of the possibility of effective use of the digital environment and digital gaming technologies for the development of universal communicative competencies of adolescents.

In the course of this study, the proprietary technology for revealing the communicative potential of adolescents was tested in the process of preparing for the Unified State Exam in social studies, and on the basis of its results, a vocational guidance selection of applicants to OmSTU was made and recommendations were formed on the choice of various media communication specializations.

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## Importance of Media Literacy for Political Communication in Russia: A Case of Student Community

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to develop and test a new model of political communication with the emphasis on media literacy as an important factor for political information dissemination in the society suggesting new perspectives for political public relations activities. The authors combine concepts from media literacy studies (Buckingham, 2003; Carlsson, 2019; Jones-Jang et al., 2021; Len-Ríos et al., 2016; Rasi et al., 2021), public relations research (Friedenberg, 1997; Holladay, Coombs, 2013; Moloney, 2006; Newman, 1999), and public opinion theory (Bykov, Kuzmin, 2017; Lilleker, 2014; McNair, 2007; Simons, 2019; Zaller, 1992) to derive a four-component model, conceptualizing the importance of media literacy for political communication in Russia, comprising specific factors into a four components: socio-demographic profile, media literacy, media effects, and political effects. Results show how socio-demographic profile, media literacy, media effects, and political effects vary in affecting the process of political communication in Russia. It is also demonstrated how digital literacy acts as a mediator in the political communication process. The study relies on the results of the available public opinion polls in Russia (Kazakov, 2017; Levada-Center, 2019) and online survey (N = 632) conducted by the authors in the beginning of 2021.

**Keywords:** media literacy, public relations, mass media, political communication, Russia, students.

### 1. Introduction

In times of digitalization and mediatization, political communication is increasingly influenced by the personal skills and abilities to consume political content from varieties of information sources: political communication has become highly dependent on media literacy (or media competence) of the public. Media literacy concept has been in the focus of scientists in pedagogy since 60-s (Carlsson, 2019), In 1990-s, media literacy as a concept and practice attracted worldwide recognition as a tool for sustainable development and as a part of human rights and democratic development (Singh et al., 2016).

In Russia, the problem of media literacy firstly has got attention and been recognized among pedagogics researchers for mass media are suggesting alternative ways of learning (Fedorov, Levitskaya 2017). A.V. Fedorov, being a leading researcher in the field, published a scientific journal *Media Education* since 2005. The journal focuses on the problems of media literacy education development in primary, secondary and high levels of the education system. Today, one can observe the rapid development of media literacy education research with application to different fields of knowledge including political science (Bykov et al., 2019; Kazakov, 2017; Vartanova, 2019; Voynilov, 2016). For example, last year A.A. Kazakov defended doctoral

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dissertation “The political role of media literacy in the context of the technological transformation of mass communication” in Moscow State University (Kazakov, 2020).

Obviously, media literacy education has great importance for mass media and public opinion. However, there is a lack of studies in the field of public relations and media literacy (Holladay, Coombs, 2013). The topic undoubtedly has great potential for practical implications since media literacy directly impacts on public relations. Effectiveness of PR-strategies, tactics, and tools directly depends on how the target groups filter and verify the content of mass media. The studies in the field media literacy and public relations have a certain potential to facilitate a public discussion about media literacy development and to raise the awareness among PR-practitioners on the topic of responsible campaigning. The social and practical implications of the study have a great importance for political communication. Public relations being fully adopted by political actors contribute to the mediatization of politics with supposedly negative overall results (Lau et al., 2007; Moloney, 2006; Newman, 1999; McNair, 2004). The paper seeks to explore the importance of media literacy for political communication and political public relations.

In the following, this task is approached in three steps: First, approaches to studying media literacy from different fields of research are introduced, leading to a synthesis of central research gaps with the emphasis on political communication. Second, the public relations perspective is applied to develop a new four-component model of political communication by combining concepts from public opinion, media literacy, media effects and public relations. Third, we demonstrate how this model can be operationalized and used for empirical evaluation of the state and effects of media literacy by drawing on a student sample and using the politics in Russia as an example.

## 2. Materials and methods

The following conceptual model is rooted inside the political processes in Russia, thus should be treated cautiously keeping in mind national circumstances. Political communication in today's Russia has a unique configuration with sharp polarization on two opposing parts of society: the bigger part of middle and elder generations with TV as a main source of information and the younger and smaller part with social media and the Internet as a main source of information (Levada-Center, 2020). Of course, this picture is far more complicated since 76.3 % of the population (12+) uses the Internet and 82.8 million people are going online every day in 2019 (Davydov, 2019). It means that media audiences are overlapping. However, studies show striking differences in political information consumption among generations in Russia: only 13 % of the 18-30s age group is watching social and political programs on TV or over channels, while 33 % of the over 60s age group enjoys such programs (Kazakov, 2017). There is another important issue in the political system of Russia: voter's turnout is much higher in senior generations and much lower in younger generations (Smyth, Soboleva, 2014). Political and social-information campaigns are broadcasted exclusively on television and are not intended for a younger audience. Young people are somehow excluded from political communication. Unfortunately, prolonged communication disruption and miscommunication tends to cause political crises like the ‘Facebook revolution’ in Moscow in 2011 or recent ‘Tik-Tok protests’ (White, McAllister, 2014).

Recent developments of political communication in Russia are influenced by two corresponding processes: media transformations with the emphasis on the digital mediums (Vartanova, 2019) and advances in public relations and advertising as a tool of political management (Samoilenko, Erzikova, 2017). Public relations as a set of technologies and principles of mass communication were introduced in Russia in the 1990-s. Since then ‘some Western ‘ways of doing PR’ have infiltrated Russian PR field, simultaneously changing it and mutating under the field's influence’ (Erzikova, 2013). There is a big industry of PR-education and PR-services including political and government communication (Bykov et al., 2016). The tool-box of PR-practitioners in Russia is astonishingly wide and strong, especially in the field of political PR where the proactive press-relations approach is used in the first place (Larsson, 2012). Activities in the field of media-relations and press-liaisons seem to be strongly linked to the presidential job approval (Kioussis, Strömbäck, 2010).

Advances in political image-making are clearly on the top if one bears in mind a figure of the President Putin (Kazun, 2016; Robertson, Greene, 2017; Simons, 2019). Russian communication consultants also show excellent skills with political mythmaking (Laruelle, 2016; Persson, Petersson, 2014). The study by Robertson and Greene finds that ‘television propaganda did indeed matter’ in Russia (Robertson, Greene, 2017). Possible explanation roots on the adaptations of agenda-setting and



framing theories by political consultants (Bodrunova, Nigmatullina, 2019; Bykov, Kuzmin, 2017; Kazun 2016). As a result, it is clear why Guriev and Treisman argue that the political regime in Russia belongs to the new category of informational authoritarianism that is characterized by massive investment in mass media control and political PR (Guriev, Treisman, 2020).

Despite firm control over political agenda and media, there is a strong feeling of political system instability in Russia. The problem seems to have several dimensions. One of them deals with the generation gap mentioned above. Second one is about the quality of PR on the peripheral branches of the regime (Dollbaum, 2020). The other problem is grounded on new developments in political marketing. Classic technologies of informational influence usually include segmenting the audience into target groups with highlighting specific socio-demographic characteristics, after that goes specification of media channels which helps to focus communication on the target groups (Burton, Shea, 2010; Farrell, Schmitt-Beck, 2002; McNair, 2007; Newman, 1999). In this model, media provides some media effects for socio-demographic groups. In this way, mass media influence the political process (Klapper, 1960).

Lilliker puts digital literacy on the periphery of the political communication system combining social uses of media, media literacy and political interest in one of the three context elements (media system and regulation of media use being two others) (Lilleker, 2014). This marketing-orienting model worked fine until recently helping to form public opinion all around the world (Zaller, 1992). Several miscalculations by opinion pollsters (Trump campaign being mostly remembered) and mass protests raise some questions about this model (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). Today's media rich society depends on digital literacy for the users who are filtering information and navigating the media landscape according to digital skills and level of critical thinking (Singh et al., 2016). F. Toepfl indicates this problem like this: 'the study of audiences received astonishingly little attention' (Toepfl, 2014). So, it is reasonable to suggest that both socio-demographic profiling and media literacy profiling could work as basic parameters for political communication. In this regard media literacy should have a great importance, since it is it that determines how political information will be perceived by consumers.

This study suggests a new scheme of political communication in Russia comprising specific factors into four components: socio-demographic profile, media literacy, media effects, and political effects. The overwhelming majority of authors consider media literacy as an undoubtedly positive factor in political communication: the higher the media literacy, the better. However, in the context of Russian politics, a high level of media literacy is able to prevent young adults from participation in political life (Toepfl, 2014). The idea of media literacy levels is well presented in special literature (Catts, 2010; Literat, 2014; Voynilov et al., 2016). So, concerns about manipulation in the media (Bagdikian, 2004) and spin-doctoring in PR (McNair, 2004) may lead to the phenomenon of excessive media literacy, to boost conspiracy thinking, and discourage political participation. Authoritarian regimes learn how to use new social media to protect their activities by corrupting the public sphere (Gunitsky, 2015; Morozov, 2011). However, in all levels of media literacy it leaves an open door for practices of political propaganda and political PR.

Based on this conceptual model and the literature review it is reasonable to formulate four specific research questions:

*RQ1. How can we integrate the concept of media literacy into the model of modern political communication?*

*RQ2. How can we specify and measure media literacy and its individual dimensions?*

*RQ3. How do different political communication dimensions interrelate and affect each other?*

*RQ4. Is it possible to prove that media literacy replaces socio-demographic profile as a basic parameter?*

Empirical studies of digital literacy in Russia are very rare, digital literacy is considered to be in the medium level at best (Kazakov, 2020). Voynilov and colleagues conducted a study and came to surprising conclusions: only 60 % of the respondents are able to find necessary information with search engines, and 56 % said that they compare information from different sources in order to verify it (Voynilov et al., 2016). Bondarenko and colleagues reported that according to the data from Universities only 87 % of students with higher education have the skills of communication in the digital environment and working with digital information (Bondarenko et al., 2019). This study aims to study digital literacy, media effects and political effects in the student community in Russia. The study focuses on the students since the recent political events in Russia indicate that young



people could be mobilized by political campaigning in social media. All data is available at GitHub (<https://github.com/prof-bykov/MediaLiteracyRu>).

**Tab. 1.** Socio-demographic profile of student sample (N = 632)

Parameter	N	%
Age		
16-20	387	61.2
21-25	222	35.1
26-30	18	2.8
31-35	5	0.7
Gender		
Male	293	46.4
Female	339	53.6
Location		
Megacities	408	64.6
Cities	224	35.4
Education		
Humanitarian	339	53.6
Technological	293	46.4

This study uses the method of online-survey because of COVID-19 limitations. The data were collected in January-February of 2021. Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the sample. The sample tries to repeat proportions of the student population in Russia by the parameters of age, gender, education, and location. According to Bondarenko and colleagues, there were about 4.161.700 students in Russia in 2019: 54.6 % being female and 54.3 % with humanitarian specialization (Bondarenko et al., 2019). The sample is also diversified and quoted by location: 64.6 % of the respondents are students from Universities located in big cities like Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, and Kazan. The other respondents are from not so big cities located all around Russia: Vladivostok, Ufa, Perm, Saratov, Stavropol, Astrakhan', Vladimir, Tula, Yaroslavl, Syktyvkar, Irkutsk, etc. The sample is non-parametric data by the parameter of age (Mean=20.24, SD=2.348, Skewness=1.969, Kurtosis=6.722) due to the fact that high-level education in Russia starts at the age of 17 with life-long opportunities to have a new diploma. A survey questionnaire includes 20 questions. Within the framework of the questionnaire, we set four blocks of questions: socio-demographic profile, media literacy, media effects, and media competence.

The time required to complete the final survey was approximately 5 minutes.

To evaluate media literacy competencies of students the questionnaire contained six questions. First three were about media literacy awareness including simple questions like 'Have you heard something about media literacy?'. Next two were about skills of fact-checking and alternative sources practice including simple questions like 'Do you compare news in different mass media?' The last question was about the necessity of media education in secondary schools. These questions used Likert scale. To simplify this component the study uses a media literacy awareness index (MLAI) which summarizes maximum positive answers. According to this study, MLAI could fall in the range from 0 to 9 (first 3 questions have 1 point each, next 3 questions have 2 points each). So, respondents can get 9 maximum and 0 minimum.

To test media effects the questionnaire has, first of all, there was a question whether respondents trust the information distributed by the media. To understand the opinion about media manipulation there was a question on whether the respondents believe that the media is manipulating their opinion. Another question tested the respondents' opinion on news and media content to be aggressive. And one more question related to the orientation of political talk shows: are they entertaining or serious in nature. In addition, we raised the question of whether the media primarily act in the interests of the owner or in the interests of the target audience. All these questions helped to understand students' opinion about the main media effects: reliability, manipulations, politainment, public or private interest, etc.

To control political effects the questionnaire suggested four questions. The first one was about interest in political news. In the next, active reactions or online participation were examined with the question whether the students share political information on social networks, comment on them, post likes/dislikes, etc. Another question is directly related to the trust of politicians who run various online blogs: respondents were asked to choose whether they trust politicians more, as primary sources or the media. And one question related to the problem of trust in experts in the field of politics, the respondents were asked to choose and evaluate how much they trust experts on the Likert scale. These questions helped us to analyze the following political effects: interest in politics, trust in experts, trust in politicians, and online participation.

### 3. Discussion

Development of media literacy concept caused by rapid spread of electronic mass media and especially the Internet. Modern political communication is constantly changing: too many information sources with too many media channels (and counting). To be a modern person means to have digital skills to keep up with information flows. So, media literacy is supposed to be an important part of contemporary education. The simplest definition argues that media literacy is a result of media education, and in its turn “media education is the process of teaching and learning about media” (Buckingham, 2003). The idea of media education appeared in the 1970s, when UNESCO announced media education as a priority area for the next decade (Carlsson, 2019). Several UNESCO documents and reports emphasized that media literacy enables people to understand the communication media used in their society and acquire skills of using these media to communicate with other people (Singh et al., 2016). Media literacy usually is the outcome of media education which forms the ability of an individual to understand media flows and information due to a certain set of media competencies that a person acquires along with life.

Bulger and Davison sum the essentials of the definition: ‘Media literacy is most commonly described as a skill set that promotes critical engagement with messages produced by the media. At its most basic, media literacy is the active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create’ (Bulger, Davison, 2018). Hoobs argues that ‘media literacy has been alternately framed in one of two ways: empowerment is a form of taste discrimination that enables people to make good decisions about evaluating the quality of media content, while protection is rooted in the idea that critical thinking about media reduces people’s likelihood of negative influence to media content, including violence, sexuality, propaganda and misrepresentation’ (Hobbs, 2017).

Carlsson connects media literacy with basic human rights: ‘The complexities of modern society demand educated, skilled and critical citizens in many different areas if freedom of expression, democracy and social progress are to be maintained and developed. Some of the knowledge and skills required relate to media and communication culture. Media and information literacy takes its place alongside other things people need in order to be active citizens: knowledge of how political decisions are taken, the principles of the rule of law, the rights and obligations of citizens, the meaning of universal human rights, national and international security’ (Carlsson, 2019).

Researchers of media literacy from Russia usually work in the same directions. A.V. Fedorov thinks that media literacy is a personal ‘communication culture with the media, creativity, communication skills, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, to teach different forms of self-expression by means of media technology, media literacy acquisition’ (Fedorov, 2012). His definition tends to support the classical approach of media literacy as a result of media education. E.L. Vartanova, as a head of Journalism Department at the Moscow State University, emphasises the role of journalism and mass media. She argues that media literacy implies ‘understanding the nature and fundamental principles of mass media, the development of information technology, improving skills of analysis and evaluation of information content and the ability to use this information consciously’ (Vartanova, 2019). A.A. Kazakov defines media literacy as ‘the ability of a person to find the information that interests him in the mass media materials, to critically comprehend it and verify its authenticity, as well as, if necessary, to create elementary media messages’ (Kazakov, 2017).

Several definitions of digital literacy include critical thinking as a part of the concept. The non-government organization “National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking” defines critical thinking as “an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness” (Critical..., 1987).

As an ideal type, critical thinking is purposeful, self-regulating judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, assessment and inference, as well as an explanation of the factual, conceptual, methodological, criteriological or contextual considerations on which this judgment is based. Critical thinking is essential as a research tool, but totally a human phenomenon. Yusupova with colleagues picture: “The ideal critical thinker is usually curious, well-informed, trusts the correct thinking, broad and open-minded, flexible, impartial in assessments, honestly admits his own biases, prudent in making decisions and judging, ready to reconsider his point of view, clearly sets out the essence of the case, organized in complex cases, persistent in seeking relevant information, rational in choosing criteria, focused on research and persistent in finding results that are as accurate as the circumstances and the subject of research require” (Yusupova et al., 2020). However, it is really hard to expect that common audiences of mass media will fall into the category of scientists.

Some authors insist that media literacy should be developed to the concept of media competency. Martens and Hobbs propose one of the best definitions of the competencies of digital and media literacy which must ‘include the ability to make responsible choices and access information by locating and sharing materials and comprehending information and ideas; analyze messages in a variety of forms by identifying the author, purpose, and point of view and evaluating the quality and credibility of the content; create content in a variety of forms, making use of language, images, sound and new digital tools and technologies; reflect on one's own conduct and communication behaviour by applying social responsibility and ethical principles; and take social action by working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, workplace, and nation and by participating as a member of a community’ (Martens, Hobbs, 2015).

A.V. Fedorov follows this lead: ‘The positive outcome of media education should be media competence of a personality – the set of his/her motives, knowledge, skills, abilities (indicators: motivational, contact, information, perceptual, interpretative, practical (hands-on), creative)’ (Fedorov, 2012). It seems that, as basic literacy for education, media literacy is a basic level for media competency.

There are many ways then individuals, groups, and society are able to benefit from media literacy. It seems that media literacy helps to fight fake-news and to protect public discussion (Jones-Jang et al., 2021). According to Martens and Hobbs, Internet skills help to improve citizens' participation in politics and, in particular, in elections. (Martens, Hoobs, 2015). Another study shows that individuals with higher levels of education use the Internet for ‘capital-enhancing’ activities, which includes seeking political or government information (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, 2014). Deursen and Helsper have found that investments in digital skills and media literacy do affect ‘outcomes in other domains and that this is independent of the characteristics of the person’ (Van Deursen, Helsper, 2018). Christensen and Bengtsson suggest that political activities in Finland today via the Internet are run by virtual citizens who are at least as politically competent as traditional activists which requires a certain level of digital literacy (Christensen, Bengtsson, 2011).

On the other hand, poor media literacy is able to provoke aggressive communication in social media (Bykov et al., 2018). Internet activity in social networks strengthens our aspirations for individualization and weakens our social ties (Scheerder et al., 2019). The question of how to resist this becomes much more relevant in this regard. How to maintain your individuality and uniqueness and not become a victim of external manipulators or even bots and mal-ware? (Murthy, 2016) Study shows that in Twitter more than 50 % of internet-traffic is generated by bots (Al-Rawi, 2018). Being a part of life-long education, media literacy needs to be developed constantly, however there are many problems in media education for generations like senior adults or children and teens (Hobbs, 2017; Len-Ríos et al., 2019; Rasi et al., 2021).

Summing up the literature review, one should conclude that media literacy is a complicated phenomenon with competing approaches and definitions. The authors argue that further development of the media literacy concept involves the idea of media competency as a combination of digital skills, media consumption experience and critical thinking. The important goal of media literacy studies today is to understand how these skills help the individuals to navigate the main information flows and not to become a victim of deception or manipulation.

#### 4. Results

The results show that students in Russia generally are aware of media literacy: 64.24 % has heard about media literacy, 84.49 % - about fake-news, 55.38 % - about fact-checking, 81.49 % says that they compare news in different mass media (at least often), 60.44 % declares that they check out primary sources of the news in mass media, and 81.01 % supports the idea of media education in secondary schools. Calculated MLAI mean is 5.43 (SD = 2.145). These figures are rather high compared to the total population.

Table 2 contains statistics based on X-square testing of students' responses to the questionnaire. Calculated media literacy awareness index was applied. The data clearly indicates that only specialization in education matters in formation of media literacy among students: students with humanitarian specializations have higher media literacy awareness index than students with hard science specializations.

**Table 2.** The effects of media literacy in student community in Russia with media literacy awareness index (N = 632)

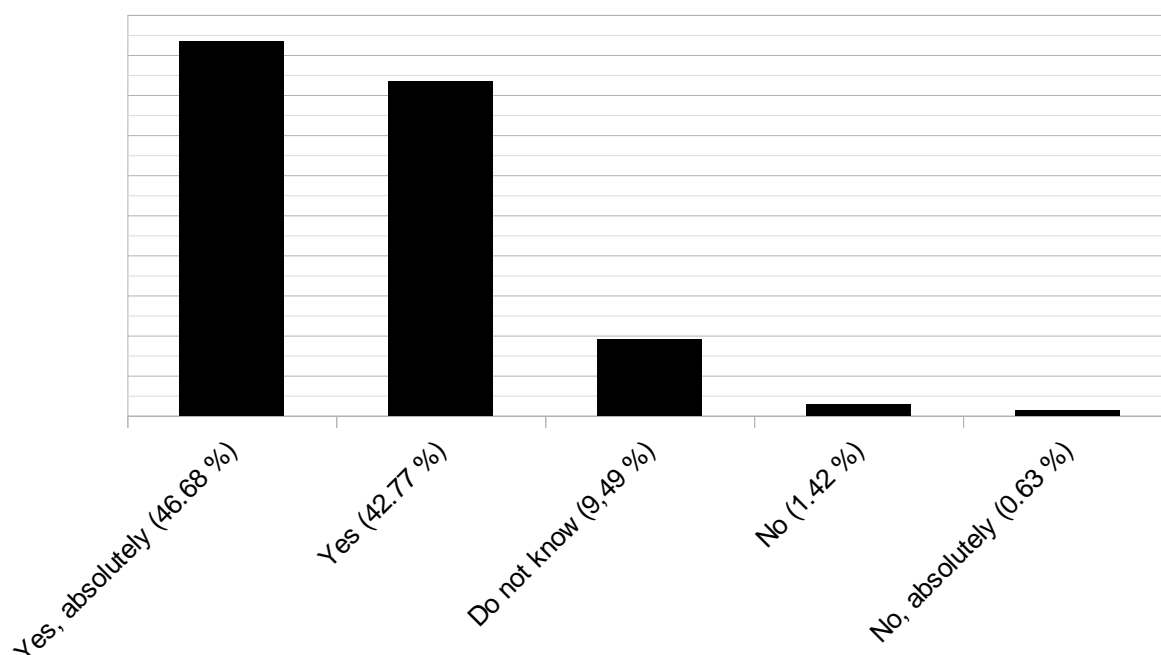
	X-square	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Socio-demographic profile			
Age	33.386	27	0.185
Gender	12.720	9	0.176
Education	34.828	9	0.000
Location	13.248	9	0.152
Media effects			
Trust in mass media	34.433	36	0.543
Politainment	66.157	36	0.002
Communicative aggression	62.410	36	0.004
Property	81.454	36	0.000
Media interest	53.330	36	0.031
Media manipulation	103.845	36	0.000
Political effects			
Interest in politics	143.212	36	0.000
Trust in politicians	50.002	36	0.060
Online participation	77.192	36	0.000
Trust in experts	59.788	36	0.008

Table 2 also indicates that MLAI has a great potential to influence both media effects and political effects. MLAI is especially important for boosting interest in politics and political news among students. It is absolutely clear that the more media literacy a student has, the more he/she is interested in politics.

The other striking result is that a high level of media literacy usually corresponds with a high level of opinion that mass media use manipulation techniques. Totally, 88.45 % says that mass media probably manipulate audiences (see Figure 1). A significant number of respondents indicated that the media owner most likely has influence on the published materials and it also corresponds with media literacy. However, there are two questions which do not correspond with the MLAI. One of them (Trust in politicians) is very close to being statistically significant. Probably, it was not a clear question formula. The question about trust in media sounds too generalized for there are different sorts of media with certain reputation to be or not to be trusted. Probably, it should be replaced.

To prove that media literacy can replace socio-demographic profile as a basic component of political communication model, the x-square tests were applied to all parameters (see Table 3). The results show that the most important linkage to all components is specialization of students. However, sometimes this linkage works in different directions and has unclear results. For example, students in humanities are more informed about media literacy and are more welcome for media education in secondary school. However, students in hard science practically do

more fact-checking and news-comparing. At the same time, it looks like education is the most important variable both in media literacy awareness index and over three components.



**Fig. 1.** Distribution of answers to question ‘Do you agree that mass media use manipulation in news?’ (N = 632)

**Table 3.** Socio-demographic profile as a component in political communication model (Value of X-square Tests, N = 632)

Parameters	Age	Gender	Education	Location
Media literacy				
Media literacy awareness	9.992 (df=6)	10.709* (df=2)	31.664* (df=2)	0.790 (df=2)
Fact-checking awareness	9.367 (df=6)	30.648*(df=2)	1.129 (df=2)	4.130 (df=2)
Fake-news awareness	4.343 (df=6)	17.285* (df=2)	3.651 (df=2)	5.331 (df=2)
Alternative sources practice	18.311 (df=12)	1.933 (df=4)	14.431* (df=4)	13.335* (df=4)
Fact-checking practice	10.133 (df=12)	1.621 (df=4)	5.077 (df=4)	1.024 (df=4)
Media education	10.732 (df=12)	20.267*(df=4)	40.637*(df=4)	16.143* (df=4)
Media effects				
Trust in mass media	11.631 (df=12)	15.515* (df=4)	27.979* (df=4)	7.235 (df=4)
Politainment	21.877* (df=12)	5.609 (df=4)	9.770* (df=4)	4.287 (df=4)
Communicative aggression	16.167 (df=12)	10.313* (df=4)	16.882*(df=4)	5.845 (df=4)
Property	7.329 (df=12)	5.582 (df=4)	9.823* (df=4)	2.608 (df=4)
Media interest	15.274 (df=12)	24.460*(df=4)	41.475* (df=4)	19.026*(df=4)
Media manipulation	3.750 (df=12)	1.189 (df=4)	11.658* (df=4)	7.872 (df=4)
Political effects				
Interest in politics	12.012 (df=12)	11.557*(df=4)	15.003* (df=4)	10.872*(df=4)
Trust in politicians	27.397*(df=12)	16.380*(df=4)	30.770*(df=4)	10.411* (df=4)
Online participation	13.309 (df=12)	1.428 (df=4)	30.754*(df=4)	18.422*(df=4)
Trust in experts	17.763 (df=12)	19.225*(df=4)	50.380*(df=4)	8.143 (df=4)

\* - Asymptotic significance (2-sided) < 0.05

## 5. Conclusion

Media literacy became a central target construct in political public relations today. In this paper the authors applied an integrative perspective in order to combine a recent model from



media literacy research, public relations, political communication, and public opinion. The concept of media literacy is multifaceted and, as we can see from the review of the literature, it is still in the development stage. The authors argue that future progress of the concept is in the idea of media competency which differs by levels of digital skills, critical thinking, and experience. Critical thinking is an essential part of media competencies since it helps to evaluate information received from the mass media, as well as the ability to recognize political manipulation. Additionally critical thinking enables users' ability to generate their own message and respond to messages by others.

The empirical part of study suggests that media literacy among students in Russia is generally present. Compared to other age groups students have a high index of media literacy awareness proposed by the authors. According to the results, students are sure that the mass media uses methods of manipulating public opinion. This sense of being manipulated is partly the reason why young people don't trust the media. The study argues that there is a direct link between the level of media literacy and political communication among young people today in Russia. Being over (wrongly) media educated, students can not see reasons to participate in politics. The study participates in calculation of the potential political risks for government institutions, as well as in an objective assessment of the situation with the level of media literacy in Russia.

In continuation to this study, in April 2021, the first focus group was held in Irkutsk, a city in Siberia, with twelfth students participating. The focus group discussed the results of the sociological survey. The respondents showed interest in the topic. Many respondents noted the importance of media literacy for modern youth and their significant interest in politics. The respondents stated that in the modern world the media are constantly trying to manipulate the opinion of the audience, and also often act not in its interests, but in the interests of the owner or the advertisers. However, today's young people often have no desire or no time to check and verify the news, so they read the news only for informational purposes. One older respondent, aged closer to 30 years, reported that if he is interested in the news, they often try to find the very first information guide in search of information and consider it more informative and, possibly, more truthful, because, from his point of view, it is not yet biased. In general, respondents note that they perceive all news information quite septically. During the discussion, the topic of critical thinking was raised. Respondents ambiguously evaluate the term critical thinking itself. One of the respondents said that the term critical thinking is, in general, an adequate perception. And it is the criterion of adequacy that plays a key role in the analysis of information.

The authors argue that the media literacy component is a very important part of the modern political communication model. Media literacy awareness index is able to influence media and political effects. At least, it makes analysis more compact and understandable. The parameter of education (humanitarian or technical) once again raises a question of critical thinking and the quality of the modern educational system, at least, in Russia.

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## Russian Topic on *Euronews* and Media Manipulations

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### Abstract

Based on the previously developed theoretical model of anti-manipulation media educational activities, the authors of the article analyzed 752 materials connected to Russia published in the Russian language on the *Euronews* website over the period of 2021. Unlike many Western newspapers, where most materials on the Russian topic contain signs of media manipulation, *Euronews* is significantly characterized by a much greater balance. The results are drawn that two-thirds of *Euronews* materials on Russian topics contained objective information that was not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Nevertheless, about a third of *Euronews* materials to some extent exhibited signs of manipulation and propaganda clichés. In particular, the most common manipulative techniques used by *Euronews* journalists in their materials associated with Russia, are omission, selectivity and appeal to authority.

**Keywords:** media manipulation, media, press, TV, Euronews, Russia, fake news, analysis, media studies, media literacy, propaganda, ideology.

### 1. Introduction

Positioning itself as an independent and objective media agency, *Euronews* defines its main objectives as follows: “We believe All Views matter”: “At *Euronews*, our mission is to provide unfiltered, unbiased, fact-based journalism that empowers rather than unsettles. Unapologetically impartial, we believe all views matter, and we actively resist the temptation to bait clicks or views through bias, outrage, or sensationalism. By staying true to facts but giving voice to many opinions, we provide our audiences with the resources they need to make up their own mind — or perhaps even change it. By focusing on facts, ideas, and solutions, our journalists cultivate clarity, empathy, and integrity” ([Euronews, n.d.](#)). Is this so in fact? In the present article, we attempt to analyze *Euronews* media texts linked to Russia in order to understand how the declared *Euronews* mission is supported by facts.

### 2. Materials and methods

In the course of the research, we have analyzed a number of scientific studies related to media manipulations and 752 materials connected to Russia published in the Russian language on the *Euronews* website over the period of 2021. We have drawn on the model of anti-manipulation media educational activities developed during our previous research ([Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332](#)). The analysis of media texts was carried out taking into account the theoretical model developed by us. This model, based on problematic questions, helps to better understand the essence of the information presented by various media sources.

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### 3. Discussion

The problems of propaganda, misinformation, media manipulations and fake news have been extensively analyzed in scientific research (Azzimonti, Fernandes, 2021; Balmas, 2012; Bean, 2017; Berghel, 2017; Bertin et al, 2018; Bharali, Goswami, 2018; Bradshaw, Howard, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2021; Colomina et al., 2021; Conroy et al., 2015; Dentith, 2017; Derakhshan Wardle, 2017; Farkas, Schou, 2018; Figueira, Oliveira, 2017; Goering, Thomas, 2018; Howard et al., 2021; Janze, Risius, 2017; Marwick, 2018; Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; Quandt et al, 2019; Ruchansky et al., 2017; Vargo et al., 2018 and others).

For example, P.N. Howard, L.-M. Neudert and N. Prakash point out that “the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation (mis/disinformation) online has emerged as a pressing public issue of the 21st century that affects all those accessing online networks, as well as those offline. ... Digital mis/disinformation can proliferate through people, bots and troll factories – organized groups that wage coordinated mis/disinformation campaigns – for a range of reasons: to intentionally deceive and harm, to gain political influence, for financial gain, or unwittingly to share information or garner approval and popularity. Algorithms drive personalized news feeds and curate search results, content and recommendations based on individual profiles that have been created by tracking user behaviour. By sometimes promoting misleading, sensationalist and conspiratorial content over factual information, algorithms are a key part of the mis/disinformation flow” (Howard et al., 2021: 4).

We agree that “the news stories distributed are designed to influence or manipulate users' opinions on a certain topic towards certain objectives. While the concept of propaganda is not new, social media has made the spreading of ideas faster and more scalable, making it potentially easier for propaganda material to reach a wider set of people. Relative to more traditional ways of spreading propaganda, fake news are extremely difficult to detect posing a challenge for social media users, moderators, and governmental agencies trying to control their dissemination” (Azzimonti, Fernandes, 2021).

The teaching manual published by the team of researchers in 2021 justly emphasizes that “to be an independent and informed thinker in the digital world of the 21st century is a real challenge and, in reality, few people are prepared effectively to navigate the online environment. This deficit in Digital Media Literacy across the world has been identified as a critical factor explaining widespread belief in online false information, be it misinformation or disinformation, which has led to changes in education policy across Europe and the world, changes in the governance of personal data and the rethinking of the design of technology platforms. This widespread belief in false information circulating online is a critical challenge for today's societies. Indeed, this has become even more apparent in the last year during the pandemic. “The time is now,” tweeted the European Commission: “There has never been a more urgent need for an Internet free of false or misleading information than during the coronavirus pandemic.” Media Literacy is crucial to being safe, positive and respectful online” (Teaching..., 2021: 8).

In this regard, we believe it is important to apply the critical analysis to the media texts of major information agencies, such as, for example, *Euronews*.

### 4. Results

In practical application of the model of anti-manipulation media education that we had developed (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332), key challenging questions were used to uncover the goals and techniques of the authors of media texts (Wilson, 2019). Based on this model and the questions, we analyzed 752 materials related to Russia on the *Euronews* website published in the Russian language.

Unlike many Western newspapers, where many materials on the Russian topic contain signs of media manipulation, *Euronews* is significantly more balanced: about a third of the materials of this agency analyzed, to some extent related to Russia, have positive connotation, another third is predominantly neutral, but about one third exhibits negative connotation with the use of manipulation techniques.

For example, such materials of *Euronews* entitled “Recognition of the Russian *Sputnik V* vaccine: the result is obvious” (Dovil, 2021), “The success of *Sputnik V* in San Marino” (Sheludkova, 2021), “Yuri Gagarin - forever the first one” (Alexandrova, 2021), “The ISS film crew returned to Earth” (Pozdnyakov, 2021), “Sakhalin turns into a green island” (Alexandrova, 2021),



“Ekaterina Alekhina: a female path to Michelin stars” (Kepinski, 2021) contribute to a rather positive image of Russia:

*Media text genre:* material on current events (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible agency 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?*

In the story “Recognition of the Russian *Sputnik V* vaccine: the result is obvious” (Dovil, 2021), one of the most authoritative medical journals in the world, *The Lancet*, is presented as the main source of information, which published the results of the third phase of clinical trials of the Russian vaccine *Sputnik V*, confirming its safety and high efficiency against coronavirus. It amounted to 91.6 % (Dovil, 2021).

The report “Success of *Sputnik V* in San Marino” reports (with reference to the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund K. Dmitriev) that the use of the Russian *Sputnik V* vaccine allowed San Marino to become the first country in Europe to defeat the coronavirus and reduced the infection rate and mortality to zero (Sheludkova, 2021).

The text “Yuri Gagarin – forever the first one” reminds the audience of *Euronews* that the first human to be in space, sixty years after the historic flight that opened the vast space of the Universe to mankind, Yuri Gagarin still evokes admiration and pride (Alexandrova, 2021), and the house of the Gagarins in Klushino, in the Smolensk region, was reconstructed and turned into a museum (Alexandrova, 2021). The quotes of the adviser to the director of the Gagarin Museum T. Filatova, the writer and journalist A. Pervushin, and others are provided.

The text “The ISS film crew returned to Earth” (Pozdnyakov, 2021) tells about the successful completion of the space flight of cosmonaut O. Novitsky, actress Y. Peresild and a film director K. Shipenko, who for twelve days filmed episodes for the film *Challenge*. As *Euronews* points out, this is the first professional feature film shooting in orbit (Pozdnyakov, 2021).

The media text “Sakhalin turns into a green island” is dedicated to a reportage from the Sakhalin Region, which is expected to become the greenest region in Russia in the near future. They intend to achieve a carbon neutral balance by 2025. Laminaria can help to implement the plan (Alexandrova, 2021).

The story “Yekaterina Alyokhina: a female path to Michelin stars” (Kepinski, 2021) gives a positive image of a restaurant in the suburbs of Moscow with the concept of “zero waste”, which was opened about a year ago by a business lady, who became the first woman chef in Russia to get a Michelin star. The restaurant has received a star as a very good restaurant in its category and a green star as well, which is given to those that are seasonally aware, reduce food waste and use innovations caring about the future (Kepinski, 2021).

However, a fly in the ointment in this material is the opinion of a restaurant critic who was dissatisfied with the quality of food in the restaurant and whose confidence in the Michelin rating had been undermined. The critic claimed that one reason for giving the star was “politically correct ethics, since the chef of the restaurant is a woman” (Kepinski, 2021).

*Can you verify the source?*

The source of the text “Recognition of the Russian *Sputnik V*” vaccine: the result is obvious can be easily verified, because the article in *The Lancet* (Logunov et al., 2021) is freely accessible on the Internet, and it does make favorable conclusions about the *Sputnik-V* vaccine.

The source of the story “Success of *Sputnik V* in San Marino” was the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund and real facts about the total vaccination of San Marino residents with the Russian vaccine, this can be verified by numerous similar reports in Western and Russian media.

The reliability of the information in the text “Yuri Gagarin – forever the first one” is out of the question, this fact is enshrined in history.

Adequacy of the sources of materials “The ISS film crew returned to Earth”, “Sakhalin turns into a green island” and “Ekaterina Alekhina: a female path to Michelin stars” can also be verified by the news stories by other news agencies around the world.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

These messages are more focused on logic and facts, although, of course, affect the emotional sphere.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main objective of these messages is to provide objective, fact-based information related to “Russian” topic.

*Is there any information missing?*

The article “Recognition of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine: the result is obvious” does not contain the opinions of the opponents of the Russian vaccine, and the article “The ISS film crew returned to Earth” does not reflect the views of opponents of filmmakers' flight into space.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

These messages successfully represent the core concept of *Euronews* as an agency that provides objective and unbiased information to a mass audience.

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

As a result, supporters of objective and non-politicized information will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of reliability of the media text:* these media texts contain true and verified information.

Below are some examples of *Euronews* media texts related to Russia in a neutral key: “Moldova and Russia have agreed on gas supplies” (Pozdnyakov, 2021), “COVID-19 in Russia: a new highest record of deaths” (Alexandrova, 2021), “Scammers offering fake vaccination certificates have become more active in Russia” (Alexandrova, 2021), “Mockery on the verge of sadism: the Russian Foreign Ministry criticized the United States for issuing visas to Russians in Warsaw” (Pozdnyakov, 2021), “Vladimir Putin is a true friend of Israel” (Barsukov, 2021), “Nord Stream 2 is ready to launch” (Barsukov, 2021), “Latvia stops broadcasting Russian TV channels” (Kepinski, 2021).

*Genre of media texts:* materials about current events (in Russia), news texts.

*Analysis of media texts for reliability (identification of the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identification of possible agencies 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 material “Moldova and Russia have agreed on gas supplies” (Pozdnyakov, 2021) provides real facts reflected in dozens of reports from news agencies around the world with links to Gazprom and the Moldovan government. The *Euronews* article also presents the opinion of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs J. Borrell, who “accused the Russian side of using the gas price dispute for political pressure on Moldova” (Pozdnyakov, 2021).

The text “COVID-19 in Russia: a new highest record of deaths” sets out the real facts that in October 2021 in Russia, against the background of an outbreak of coronavirus infection, the daily number of deaths from COVID-19 reached another maximum (Alexandrova, 2021). One of the sources of information for this media text is the opinion of the head of the temporary infectious diseases hospital R. Dmitrishin. *Euronews* notes that, “trying to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the Russian authorities declared eleven days non-working - from October 30 to November 7, and allowed the regions to vary these periods depending on the epidemic situation” (Alexandrova, 2021).

Just as neutrally *Euronews* presents the text “Scammers offering fake vaccination certificates have become more active in Russia” (Alexandrova, 2021). This media text accurately notes that the Russian authorities “urge Russians to get vaccinated, since this is the only way to defeat the virus,” but “the campaign to immunize the population is complicated not only by the reluctance of many to refuse vaccination, or to postpone it. Scammers have intensified their activities by posting advertisements of fake vaccination certificates and promising to enter the data into the State Services database for a fee. There is also medical personnel among violators of the law” (Alexandrova, 2021). The statement is sustained by opinion of the director of the National Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology of the N.F. Gamalei.

Quite objectively, *Euronews* covers the US-Russian visa conflict in an article entitled “Mockery on the verge of sadism”: Russian Foreign Ministry criticized the U.S. for issuing visas to Russians in Warsaw” (Pozdnyakov, 2021). It is objectively noted here that “Moscow is outraged by the refusal to issue American visas in Russia after the demand of the Russian government to reduce the US diplomatic mission. Moscow criticized Washington for issuing US visas to Russians outside Russia. To draw up documents for entering the United States, Russian citizens need to contact the American Embassy in Warsaw, - says the new edition of the State Department's instructions on the work of diplomatic missions. ... The Russian Foreign Ministry called it “mockery on the verge of sadism”. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused American diplomats of

prolonged and consistent destruction of the system of rendering consular services in Russia created before them (Pozdnyakov, 2021). The media text cites the opinion of M. Zakharova that “the decision of the State Department no longer affects only tourism or cultural exchanges, but also families and relatives” (Pozdnyakov, 2021), as well as a brief history of the mutual confrontation between the United States and Russia from 2014 to our days.

The article “Vladimir Putin is a true friend of Israel” (Barsukov, 2021) provides a neutral overview of the brief visit to Russia by Israeli Prime Minister N. Bennett. Avoiding any evaluative comments, the *Euronews* channel quotes the key statements of V. Putin and N. Bennett, which they made at this meeting in Sochi.

The media text “Nord Stream 2 is ready to launch” (Barsukov, 2021) gives account of the facts that technical gas was pumped into the first string of the pipeline, which runs along the bottom of the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. *Euronews* reports that “the Russian side is only waiting for permission from the German regulatory authorities ... Moscow calls on Berlin to respond as soon as possible, given the very small volumes of European reserves on the eve of winter. Several countries have already had to raise tariffs for heating and electricity. At the same time, the price of gas in Europe on Monday again exceeded \$ 1,100 per thousand cubic meters” (Barsukov, 2021). Objectively, *Euronews* informs the audience that, at the same time, there are some opponents of this project (for example, Naftogaz of Ukraine) (Barsukov, 2021).

In the *Euronews* text “Latvia stops broadcasting Russian TV channels” (Kepinski, 2021), it is reported that “the largest telecommunications company in Latvia, Tet, from February 1, 2021, will stop relaying five Russian TV channels on the territory of the republic ... within ten days it plans to make a decision to restrict the retransmission of the Russia-RTR TV channel on the territory of the republic. ... The Russian Foreign Ministry called the actions of the Latvian authorities against Russian-speaking journalists a punitive action and a blatant example of violating the foundations of a democratic society – freedom of the media and expression. The Russian Embassy in Latvia emphasized that the searches and criminal prosecution of the company's management “testify to only one thing - the desire of the local elite to restrict residents' access to alternative sources of information” (Kepinski, 2021).

*Can you verify the source?*

All sources of the above media texts are available for verification, the information presented is objective and based on real facts.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

These messages primarily refer to audience's logical thinking.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main task of these media texts is to provide the *Euronews* audience with objective information related to international (related to Russia) political, business, and healthcare news.

*Is there any information missing?*

In media texts, in many cases, the points of view of different parties are presented, which creates the effect of a balanced presentation of materials.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

These messages successfully stand for the core concept of *Euronews* as an agency that provides objective and unbiased information to a mass audience.

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

As a result, supporters of objective information will benefit, without the biased politicization of situations and conflicts.

*Assessment of the level of reliability of the media text:* the media texts contain objective and balanced information.

The third group of the analyzed *Euronews* media texts includes materials where manipulation techniques can be found. Unlike many Western media sources, *Euronews*, generally, does not slip into Russophobic propaganda and apparent distortion of facts. Media manipulations are used more subtly – in the form of deliberated omissions and selection. Examples can be found in: “NATO has decided how to restrain Russia” (Alexandrova, 2021), “The head of the Pentagon in Romania accused Russia” (Khachatryan, 2021), “Navalny is accused of extremism. He faces up to 10 years in prison” (Pozdnyakov, 2021), “Award to the Kremlin's opponent” (Sheludkova, 2021).

*Media text genre:* material on current events (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible agency 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?*

In the article “NATO decided how to restrain Russia” it is reported that “NATO defense ministers assessed the threats from Russia's missile potential, decided to strengthen their air force and air defense, and agreed on a general defense plan” (Alexandrova, 2021)

The media text “The head of the Pentagon in Romania accused Russia” states that “the United States will continue to help strengthen the navies of Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Georgia to support their efforts to contain and defend against hostile Russian actions in the Black Sea region” (Khachatryan, 2021).

The sources of this material about NATO and the Pentagon are NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Pentagon Chief Lloyd Austin.

The news story “Navalny is accused of extremism. He faces up to 10 years in prison” repeats popular in European and American media propaganda clichés at the level of uncorroborated allegations (Novichok poison, etc.) and mixes them with actual points of fact (Navalny's charges of the criminal case Yves Rocher, street demonstrations in support for Navalny, etc.).

The media text “Prize to the Kremlin's Opponent” first states that “Alexei Navalny has become a laureate of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In Russia, an oppositionist is serving a sentence in a colony on a fraud case, and the Anti-Corruption Foundation, which he heads, has been recognized as an extremist and a foreign agent organization” (Sheludkova, 2021). And then the Muscovites' quotes selected by the *Euronews* correspondent follow: 1) “I believe that Alexei Navalny was absolutely justified in receiving this award, because he really did a lot to ensure that civil liberties took place”; 2) “I believe that he deserves this award, because he has been fighting for our rights, for the rights of people in general, for a very long time, and sits (is in prison) for the fact that many people are silent and cannot express their opinion on politics”; 3) “Even if you don't sympathize with him as a person, there is still some respect for what he has experienced, some sympathy from people, this is also important”; 4) “Of course he hasn't deserved the award. Why was it given to him? I don't see any of his feats, except for scandals” (Quoted in: Sheludkova, 2021).

Thus, the main sources of *Euronews* materials about A. Navalny are the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, statements by A. Navalny himself and some anonymous residents of Moscow.

*Can you verify the source?*

The statements of officials contained in the above materials can be easily verified, since they were widely replicated by the media of different countries, including video versions. The statements of anonymous sources are of course much more difficult to verify, most likely it is impossible.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

To a greater extent, these materials are addressed to the audience's emotions.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main aim of these media texts is to shape the image of Russia as a state with non-legal practices that might become a military threat to the West.

*Is there any information missing?*

The media texts presenting the anti-Russian views of the NATO and Pentagon leaders lack any alternative information. Not only are the views of the Russian leadership on the topic of military confrontation not presented, but also any information about the number of US and NATO bases placed in the states directly bordering on Russia.

In the story about A. Navalny (Sheludkova, 2021), three positive opinions of Moscow residents about his activities and significance were intentionally selected, and only one negative one, so the *Euronews* audience may get the impression that the overwhelming number of Russians (75 % against 25 %) sympathize with opposition leader A. Navalny and his supporters.

Meanwhile, the reality of A. Navalny's reputation in Russia is utterly different. According to the results of the elections to the State Duma, the United Russia party received 49.82 % of the vote, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation – 18.93 %, the Liberal Democratic Party – 7.55 %, A Just Russia – Patriots – For the Truth – 7.46 %, New People – 5.32 %, Party of Pensioners – 2.45 %, Yabloko – 1.34 % (RBC, 2021). It is clear that the voters of United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, and Fair Russia have never been and never will be A. Navalny's electorate. And if Navalny's



opposition party had run in the 2021 elections, it could have probably only counted on a small fraction of the popular vote that eventually went to the New People and Yabloko parties. But taking into account that these parties also have an electorate determined to vote specifically for these, and not for other oppositionists, the logic leads to the fact that Navalny's supporters on an all-Russian scale cannot collect more than 5 % of the vote. However *Euronews* in its text, through omission of data and selection of opinions to quote, strives to create the illusion of Navalny's recognition and support by a significant part of the population in Russia.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

These media texts represent the point of view of opponents of Russian foreign and domestic policy.

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

If the audience accepts the political position of these media texts uncritically, anti-Russian-minded political forces will win, and supporters of dialogue between Russia and the West will lose.

*Assessment of the level of straightforwardness of the media text:* the analyzed media texts contain a mixture of factual accounts and biased manipulative messages.

## 5. Conclusion

While the role of media in shaping public opinion and the value of critical perception of information is by now common knowledge, media agencies and educational institutions continually fail to confront this issue with the urgency it deserves. By examining 752 *Euronews* materials, related to Russia and published on the website in the Russian language in 2021, this study established that two-thirds of them contained objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Still about a third of *Euronews* materials contained some signs of manipulation and propaganda clichés. We need to consider the implications of such manipulations. These manipulations might contribute to social, international misunderstanding, making the gap between cultures and nations wider and sharper. Media literacy education, among other things, is designed to evaluate ourselves and our communities, to activate critical thinking, intelligence, and cross-cultural awareness in the spirit of mutual respect and looking for common values and attitudes to unite people.

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## Media Competence of Modern Students: Problems and Possibilities of Its Formation in the System of Higher Education

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### Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyze the level of students' media competence, to study the possibilities of its formation in the higher education system. The results of the study showed that the respondents highly appreciate the level of their own media competence. Students consider themselves competent in creating presentations, however, more complex activities are rated in the middle range. It can be assumed that those aspects of activities that are in demand when studying at a university show higher grades. At the same time, the skills associated with in-depth analysis of information and the creation of media products, are not included in the focus of attention when organizing educational activities. These tendencies illustrate the presence of risk zones in the process of forming students' media competence: insufficient attention to evaluative/interpretive and practical-operational skills of working with information. Only less than half of the surveyed respondents believe that conditions have been created in the modern education system for the development of a person's media competence. The analysis of the problems that limit this process is centered, according to students, in the field of organizing training sessions, a knowledge assessment system, and setting assignments for independent work.

**Keywords:** media competence, media education, social media, students, higher education.

### 1. Introduction

The development of media education in modern conditions is caused by the influence of such factors as the dynamic penetration of digital technologies into all areas, growth of the volume and channels of information transmission. Young people today consume huge amounts of information that is posted on various platforms on the Internet, create and exchange electronic messages (Genedy, 2021: 30-36). This puts on the agenda the issues of the formation of media literacy and media culture of the individual. The digitalization of education, the technological modernization of the learning process, the development of new means of communication, the virtual educational space of social interactions (Al-Msie'deen et al., 2021: 104-118) should be accompanied by the creation of conditions for the formation of appropriate skills in working in a digital environment.

The rapid integration of social networks into the personal, professional and educational spheres, the absence of boundaries in the process of use acts as an additional risk factor for influencing the social well-being of the individual (Zhu et al., 2020: 1935-1955). In particular, T. Ho, S. Huynh and V. Chi found that heavy use of social media leads to an increase in depression, stress and anxiety among students (Ho et al., 2021: 112-118).

Scientists pay special attention to the danger of spreading "fake" news, destructive content from social networks (Jormand et al., 2021: 38-52). According to S. Troyanskaya, in the process of

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interacting with aggressive news from the media and conflicting content, consciousness of people become chaotic (Troyanskaya, 2014: 156-159). Risks of distortion of information, the possibility of manipulating public consciousness impose new requirements on the institute of education (Frolova et al., 2020: 331-336). In this context, the key task of media education is the practice of developing skills that allow one to «resist» the randomly increasing information flows. Developing this idea, R. Kamenev, V. Krasheninnikov, A. Trotskaya conclude that the skills of analyzing media texts become a condition for preserving the country's human capital, developing its cultural potential, and increasing the competitiveness of the national economy (Kamenev et al., 2019: 65-71).

## 2. Materials and methods

The purpose of the article is to analyze the level of students' media competence, to study the possibilities of its formation in the higher education system of the Russian Federation.

The article used both general scientific and empirical research methods. The authors carried out a pilot study; a questionnaire survey of students was chosen as the key method. The questionnaire was posted on the Google platform: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JEAGGV2v3HmfJ27u1gkw2UVj2M1FPHhZVwetCN7NrKM/edit>. The sample is spontaneous (N=148). Respondents recruited through social media. The spontaneous nature of the sample, as well as the number of respondents, can be considered as limitations of the study. However, the data obtained made it possible to test the hypotheses put forward, to form conclusions and directions for further research.

During the study, the following hypotheses were put forward:

1. Media competence of young people includes basic skills in working with information and communication technologies (preparing presentations, working on the Internet), with an insufficient level of development of evaluative / interpretive and practical-operational skills of working with information.
2. The modern system of higher education, with ample opportunities for access to knowledge bases, does not provide for the formation of media competence of young people; versatile practices of enhancing the evaluative and creative activity of students when working with media content are insufficiently used.
3. Students with a higher level of media competence are more responsible in finding the necessary information in preparation for classes.

## 3. Discussion

New trends associated with an increase in the volume of information make special demands on the media competence of today's youth. Searching, reading, analyzing, understanding and interpreting information content are among the basic competencies required for work and study (Pereira, Moura, 2019: 678-689). In modern conditions «media competence includes not only the skills of using information technologies, the ability to navigate the Internet, but also the presence of a culture of media communication, interaction with other media users» (Konkov, 2019: 128).

As A. Fedorov, the media competence of an individual is a combination of his motives, knowledge, skills that contribute to the choice, use, critical analysis, assessment, creation and transmission of media texts (Fedorov, 2010: 64). Of particular interest is the indicators of the development of media competence developed by the scientist: motivational, contact, informational, perceptual, interpretive/evaluative, practical-operational, creative (Fedorov, 2013: 231-247).

Based on the analysis of in-depth media-biographical interviews with respondents of different age groups, factors were identified that prevent the negative influence of the media on the consciousness of individuals. These included the following: selective criticality, pragmatic trust and competence in the analysis of information, navigation through the news (Schwarzenegger, 2020: 361-377). These conclusions make it possible to single out the elements of a person's media competence, where the central link is criticality in the process of information consumption.

This conclusion was confirmed by the TGLA study by van der Meer and M. Hameleers. Consumers of online news prefer to read and evaluate positively political news that confirms their previous views (Van der Meer, Hameleers, 2021: 3156-3178). In this context, the conclusions of S. Choi gain importance, which substantiates the role of selection and evaluation of news content (Choi, 2021: 3677-3701). The formation of the skill of critical perception of information should be based on the skills of identifying stereotypes that affect the assessment of media content (Tian et al., 2021).



O. Mavropulo and E. Muryukina single out another key element of the personality's media competence. They talk about “creative indicator, which is the “embodiment” of the consolidated use of theoretical knowledge and practical skills to develop new media texts through creativity” (Mavropulo, Muryukina, 2018: 99).

In the study A. Kuatbekov, E. Vershitskaya, I. Kosareva, V. Ananishnev provided a description of the most important elements of the structure of media competence: digital literacy, content interpretation, content creation and digital awareness. The authors propose mechanisms for the formation of media competence in the educational environment: the involvement of students in the development of media content, group interactions. The authors conclude that media competence is the result of effective planning and organization of students' practical activities in the digital media space (Kuatbekov et al., 2020).

Modern youth has basic skills in working with media, the foundation of which is digital literacy, an active user position on the Internet. However, access to information and its consumption does not guarantee the development of more fundamental competencies when working with media. V. Lugovsky and M. Kokh note that modern students “lack the ability to navigate sources, to be critical of information”, young people experience difficulties in conducting a comparative analysis of the opinions of different authors, avoids turning to alternative points of view (Lugovsky, Koh, 2018: 146). Increased access to mobile news, fast reading of news on social media form new patterns of consumption of media products, the basis of which is fragmentation, superficiality, and chance (Yanardağoğlu, 2021: 149-166).

Despite the wide availability of educational materials in the information space of modern universities, students do not fully use all the possibilities of using scientific literature in the learning process (Vetrova et al., 2019: 370-377). Young people are primarily focused on the consumption of entertainment content (Frolova, Rogach, 2021: 616-625). Media skills are determined by the level of digital literacy of young people, their economic and social status (Banaji, Moreno-Almeida, 2021: 121-142).

The need to change approaches to the formation of youth media competence in the modern education system is emphasized by many researchers. O. Tikhonova, I. Azizyan and N. Grechushkina point to the need to transform pedagogical practices in organizing classroom and independent work of students. The conclusion is made about the priority of creative, research and project tasks in the process of preparing students (Tikhonova et al., 2019: 114).

The conclusions made by J. Jenson and M. Droumeva are of interest. Scientists insist on the need to apply innovative approaches to the development media competence of “digital” generation. J. Jenson and M. Droumeva conclude that the pedagogy of “game design” can be an effective method of increasing not only the computer literacy of young people, but also the formation of their skills when working with media content (Jenson, Droumeva, 2017: 212-225). Similar conclusions were obtained in the studies of other scientists who consider game teaching methods as one of the possible alternatives for achieving the necessary educational results (Goncharova, 2012: 38-44; Vinichenko et al., 2020: 694), factors of activating routine or complex processes (Kamalodeen et al., 2021: 36).

Al-Sawy recommends expanding training programs, actively using electronic information resources, and applying research methods. In addition, the scientist proposes to intensify the use of the Internet in the learning process, to link electronic information resources to academic courses (Al-Sawy, 2021: 43-49).

A. Morozova considers social networks, on the one hand, as a material for study (as an element of the media sphere); on the other hand, as a tool for media education (Morozova, 2015: 24-31). T. Boronenko, A. Kaisina and V. Fedotova believe that the use of social networks is one of the most demanded forms of enhancing the research interests of young people (Boronenko et al., 2017: 15-26). Social networks today are becoming a platform for exchanging opinions, searching for and creating groups of like-minded people, posting their publications, which creates the foundation for the development of media competence of the individual (Paßmann, Schubert, 2021: 2947-2963; Mäkinen, 2021: 2964-2978; Khalil A, Storie, 2021: 3038-3061). These ideas were developed in the research of E. Bloch. The author reveals the possibilities of using the social network VKontakte to develop such skills of young people as creating media products, collecting and analyzing information, PR competence (event advertising), forming communities and exchanging information (Blokh, 2016: 38-43).

#### 4. Results

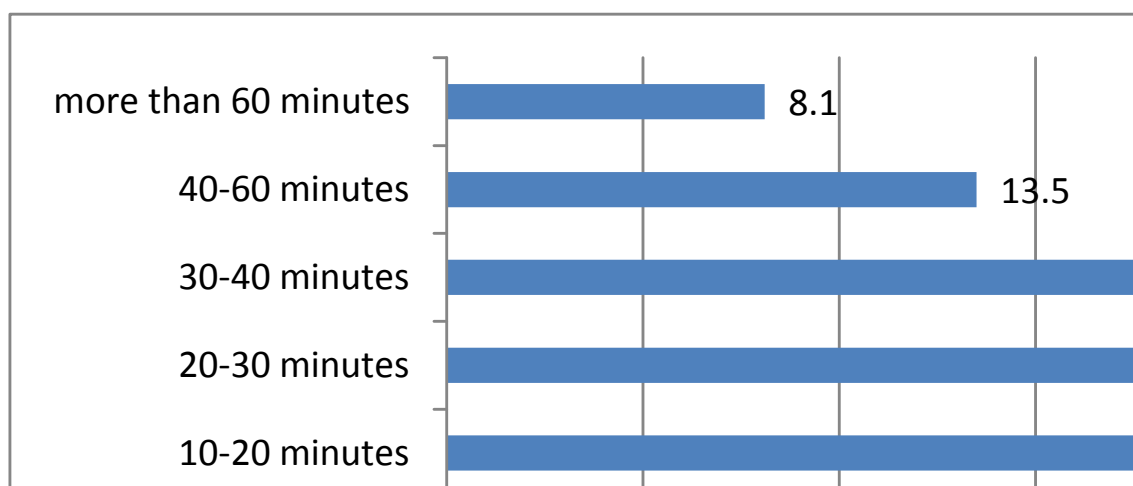
Most of the surveyed respondents (60.8 %) rated their skills in working with the media and on the Internet rather high (4 and 5 on a five-point scale). When posing this question, the respondents were explained that the score “5” corresponds to a high level of media competence: “I can set filters when working with media, create my own blogs, post all the special information and knows a number of special program”, and the score “1” corresponds to the user level: “I have a general idea of the possibilities of the network, I use search queries and social networks”.

Almost every third (29.7 %) respondent chose the answer “satisfactory” (3 points) when answering this question. At the same time, almost every tenth (9.5 %) respondent is very pessimistic about the level of his media competence, considering skills in working with the media and the Internet to be unsatisfactory (1 and 2 points). The detailing of the respondents' answers shows the differentiation of assessments of students' media competence: a high level - preparation of presentations, an average level - posting your own materials on social networks, infographic preparation and preparation of analytical reports on statistical data (Table 1). It can be assumed that students either assess their skills insufficiently critically, or narrowly understand the concept of “media competence”.

**Table 1.** Distribution of answers to the question: “Rate how competent you are in the following aspects of the activity”, %

	not competent	practically incompetent	practically competent	fully competent
preparation of analytical reports on statistical data	4	14.9	51.4	29.7
checking the source of information for reliability	0.8	12.8	45.9	40.5
infographic preparation	6.8	15.5	48	29.7
selection of publications on the topic, comparative analysis, preparation of own conclusions	2.7	10.8	46.6	39.9
posting your own materials on social networks on various issues	4.1	18.2	36.5	41.2
preparation of presentations	4.1	4.7	22.3	68.9

It is interesting that every third student spends no more than 20 minutes looking for information in preparation for classes, while 7.4 % of them spend only 5-10 minutes (Figure 1). The results obtained indirectly indicate an insufficient attention to the search and selection of information, its fragmentary analysis.



**Fig. 1.** Distribution of answers to the question: “How much time do you usually spend to find the necessary information in preparation for a lesson?”, %

To test one of the research hypotheses, let us consider the dependence of assessments of the level of development of individual aspects of media competence and the amount of time spent searching for information in preparation for classes (Table 2).

According to the first criterion «preparation of analytical reports on statistical data» the following results were obtained: the number of degrees of freedom is 15. The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 18,082. At a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ , the critical value of  $\chi^2$  is 24,996. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is  $p > 0.05$ .

**Table 2.** Correlation between the length of time to search for information in preparation for classes and assessments of the competence of individual capabilities, pers.

Rate how competent you are in the following aspects of the activity	How much time do you usually spend to find the necessary information in preparation for a lesson						Total
	5-10 minutes	10-20 minutes	20-30 minutes	30-40 minutes	40-60 minutes	more than 60 minutes	
<i>preparation of analytical reports on statistical data</i>							
not competent	1	1	3	0	0	1	6
practically incompetent	3	4	5	3	4	3	22
practically competent	3	28	14	19	8	4	76
fully competent	4	8	12	8	8	4	44
<i>checking the source of information for reliability</i>							
not competent	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
practically incompetent	2	4	4	4	4	1	19
practically competent	5	20	18	13	7	5	68
fully competent	4	17	12	13	9	5	60

According to the second criterion “checking the source of information for reliability” the following results were obtained: the number of degrees of freedom is 15. The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 14,401. At a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ , the critical value of  $\chi^2$  is 24,996. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is  $p > 0.05$ .

Thus, the third hypothesis of the study was not confirmed. A high level of media competence (in the subjective assessments of respondents) does not guarantee a thoughtful attitude to information, awareness of the need for significant time expenditures on its search, selection and critical understanding.

During the study, the respondents were asked the question: “How many data sources do you read and study in order to draw conclusions on a particular topic?”. The survey results showed that the majority of respondents use «3-5 versatile data sources» (49.3 %); 43.2 % chose the answer “2-3 versatile data sources». Only 2 % use «1 any data source»; 5.4 % – “1 data source you verified”. At the same time, course of study does not affect the number of used sources of information (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Correlation between the use of a different number of sources and the course of training of students, pers.

Course of study	In order to draw a conclusion on a particular topic, will you study and read the material of:				Total
	1 any data source	1 data source you verified	2-3 versatile data sources	3-5 versatile data sources	
1	1	1	8	14	24
2	1	3	17	15	36
3	0	3	27	30	60
4	1	1	12	14	28
Total	3	8	64	73	148

The value of the Pearson's chi-square test is 4,571. At a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ , the critical value of  $\chi^2$  is 16,919. The relationship between factorial and effective indicators is statistically insignificant, the level of significance is  $p > 0.05$ . The results obtained indicate that the complication of educational activity with the transition to senior courses of study does not affect the behavioral models when working with information.

Only 45.9 % of the respondents believe that conditions have been created in the modern education system for the formation of media competence. Almost every third (29.1 %) is skeptical about the capabilities of the educational system in the formation of skills to find, evaluate and effectively use information in personal and professional activities.

The majority of respondents (49.3 %) believe that the presence of a test system is a key limitation of the formation of media competence in the higher education system. According to students, the test system limits the development of skills such as analyzing and evaluating information. The second most important limitation is the lack of special tasks that would be aimed at critical analysis of texts (26.4 %). Every fifth respondent (20.9 %) believes that the problem is the lack of an individual approach to the student on the part of the teacher.

Let us consider what forms of work with students can act as mechanisms for the formation of media competence in the higher education system. According to students, the priority forms of work can be: showing presentations, videos, films, special tasks, including the analysis of statistics, the formation of summary analytical tables (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Distribution of answers to the question: “What, in your opinion, will help to form media competence (the ability to find, evaluate and effectively use information in personal and professional activities) within the framework of training at a university?”, %

Answer options	It will help a lot	Will partly help	Will not help
use of media technology (projectors, interactive whiteboards)	46.6	49.3	4.1
showing presentations, videos, films	62.8	35.8	1.4
special tasks, including the analysis of statistics, the formation of summary analytical tables	66.2	30.4	3.4
social networks	45.3	47.9	6.8
constant work on the Internet	44.6	50.7	4.7

Most of the respondents believe that the consumption of visual information (videos, films), as well as data analysis will contribute to the formation of media competence to the greatest extent. Social networks, constant work on the Internet also, according to students, will help in the formation of skills to search, use and evaluate information for personal and professional purposes.

#### 4. Conclusion

Despite the fact that modern students have basic skills in working with media, interpretive/evaluative and practical-operational competencies are insufficiently formed. The results of the study showed that students have a low assessment of the possibilities of forming media competence in the higher education system in the Russian Federation. On the one hand, the test system of knowledge control, focused on memorizing information, limits the possibilities of forming a pedagogical request for the development of students' research competencies. On the other hand, students pay attention to the need to modernize the approach to independent work of students in universities. It is required to strengthen the focus of attention on tasks that provide critical analysis of texts, interpretation of media content.

It can be assumed that the insufficient level of students' media competence is due to the absence of strict requirements in preparation for classes, the need to refer to primary sources, and to conduct a comparative analysis. An indirect confirmation of this conclusion is the insufficient amount of time that a modern student spends looking for information in preparation for classes.

Promising areas in this context can be work with social networks, play, research and practice-oriented forms of educational activity. The focus of attention in organizing students' independent work should be shifted towards more complex activities, such as the preparation of infographics, analytical reports on statistical data, comparative analysis of media texts.



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## **A Course in Argumentation in Journalism in the Master's Curriculum: Using Russian Popular Science Magazines as Case Studies**

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### **Abstract**

At the end of the twentieth century, the mission of the discursive practice of popular science magazines was to draw public attention to environmental issues. The peak of interest in ecology fell on this period: environmental problems in Russia occupied the front pages of newspapers and magazines and featured widely on radio and television. By the mid-2000s, the level of interest in environmental issues had decreased markedly. Environmental issues in popular science magazines gave way to entertainment. Today, many environmental magazines provide tourist information in the format of creolized texts about holiday destinations, a healthy lifestyle, or the life of celebrities. Arguments calling for the preservation of the environment and sustainable lifestyles have been replaced by arguments calling for a life of enjoyment. This paper discusses the concept of a master degree course in argumentation in journalism as illustrated by the evolution of environmental argumentation in the popular science magazine, *Vokrug Sveta*.

**Keywords:** environmental media discourse, popular science magazine, argumentation, the *Vokrug Sveta* journal.

### **1. Introduction**

The Master's Degree Program in Foreign Languages and Translation in the Media offered by St Petersburg University is in a class of its own in the Russian higher education system. The program is interdisciplinary, and contains courses from both linguistic and media disciplines. Training is conducted primarily in English. In addition, students have the opportunity to take media studies courses in a second foreign language, either Spanish or Chinese. This academic program is aimed at meeting a market need for qualified experts possessing the combined skills required by a linguist, translator and interpreter with those of an international journalist. They will be immersed in the news agenda and able to analyze Russian political, socio-economic and cultural processes; and adapt to the new linguistic technologies which figure so prominently in the wide range of electronic systems now used within the communications and language professions. Equally critical is the ability to keep up with an ever-changing global landscape; have the capacity to generate cutting-edge media content within a variety of media forms; and to display a sound awareness of the cultural dimension of events, diplomatic protocol and business etiquette.

The program includes over forty different courses each of which develops a specific set of skills in the students. We highlight the importance of developing in students skills for creating media messages that have a persuasive impact. The course Argumentation in Journalism is designed to do just that. The objectives of the course include teaching students about argumentation as a field of communication theory and the concept of persuasive impact, helping them to identify the media genres

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in which argumentation is used, carry out a critical analysis of media messages, aimed to argue and persuade, and produce their own argumentative media discourse.

## 2. Materials and methods

The importance of this course is corroborated by a number of studies. A. Levitskaya and A. Fedorov stress the importance of developing of students' media competence so that they would be able to analyze manipulative influences in the media and test the reliability of media texts (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021). Bearing in mind that the course focuses on argumentation in the socio-political domain, it is worthwhile to draw upon a recent review of five monographs of Alexander Fedorov in which the author argues for integrating the media education component into school and university curricula with a special focus on developing a sociopolitical direction of media education (Kazakov, 2021). Another study urges the need for a humanitarian vector of studying the use of media and digital resources in education, addressing the phenomenon of the teacher's potential to use such resources (Tyunnikov et al., 2021).

Environmental discourse has featured in a number of studies in recent years. P. Ermolaeva et al provide critical reflections on the environmental media coverage across two Russian cities following environmental themes including air and water pollution, waste, sustainable transport, energy, environmental civic engagement, and organic food. Based on the media discourse analysis of twelve national and six regional Russian online mass media they come to the conclusion that national media focus primarily on the city of Moscow and cite pro-governmental journalists whereas the regional press gives voice to environmental activists and non-governmental organizations along with pro-governmental journalists. Collectively, the results demonstrate that media coverage does not accurately reflect the complex issues of urban stakeholders' relationship with environmental conflicts which are inevitable in the context of Russia's continuous reliance on the hydrocarbon sector (Ermolaeva et al., 2020)

A. Castrechini, E. Pol, and J. Guàrdia-Olmos analyze media representations of environmental issues and how they have been constructed and transformed after the Rio Summit in 1992 in Spanish newspapers (*La Vanguardia* and *El País*). The results suggest that there has been a movement from scientific to political discourse and a change towards greater reflection and social recognition of the relevance of environmental issues. The environment has shifted from being associated with nature to being predominately associated with the urban environment (Castrechini et al., 2014: 213-220).

Other studies focusing on the environmental and popular science discourses in the media include (Hjermitslev, 2019; Molek-Kozakowska, 2017; Jarreau, Porter, 2017)

Several researchers trace the evolution of Russian popular science magazines, whose educational mission in the late 1980s and early 1990s was to draw public attention to environmental problems (Kalinina, 2012: 108). She points out that this period saw the peak of interest in the environment: on the pages of newspapers and magazines, in radio and television programs, ecological ruin in the country had become one of the leading subjects. The high-quality *Ecos-Inform* magazine was launched in 1990. It had both Russian and English versions. In 1992, two new environmental publications emerged on the Russian information market at once: the *Eurasia-Monitoring* magazine and the *Greenpeace in Russia* newsletter, which gradually grew into a magazine. By the mid-1990s, attention to environmental issues had noticeably decreased. The topic of ecology was present in the press in the so-called "background" mode (Orekhova, 2000: 67). The reasons were the government's withdrawal from the environmental agenda, the decline of the grassroots environmental movement and the near death of the press caused by the most severe economic crisis of the 1990s. Environmental coverage came in waves with global environmental disasters, hazardous waste leaks, natural disasters, epidemics, etc.

In our analysis, we will focus on the present-day discourse of a former popular science magazine with a particular emphasis on identifying the rhetorical techniques used by arguers to influence their readers. The subject of the study is the *Vokrug Sveta (Around the World)* magazine, which is the oldest representative of popular science magazines in Russia. Since its founding in 1861, it has focused on travel, geography and the environment. Today, it largely covers tourism, travel to national attractions of Russia and ecotourism.

The objectives of the study determined the choice of methods of analysis. To confirm the hypothesis about the role of argumentation in diversifying the conceptual content of popular science discourse about tourism, argumentation discourse analysis methods were used. We drew

upon the following studies to build the methodological basis of argumentation discourse analysis: (Candarli, 2018; Gigante, 2017; Kolbel, Jentges, 2017; Lawrence, Sherry, 2021; Mallow et al., 2020; Mansouri et al., 2017; Westby, 2018).

### 3. Discussion

Globalization has created conditions for the development of international tourism. Journalism has become one of the key factors of this process. The discourse about traveling in Europe and Asia and vacations in famous resorts have occupied the information space for the past two decades. However, the Covid-19 pandemic changed the argumentation of tourism discourse by focusing on domestic tourism.

Following I. Erofeeva we identify media text as a space of representing the national view of the world reflected in the linguistic personality of the source. By the national view of the world we mean a system of spiritual values fixed in language systems and conditioned by the mental constructs of a specific national community (Erofeeva, 2015: 73).

Contemporary linguistics uses two approaches to determining the status of tourism discourse in terms of the subject, the purpose of communication and the type of communicator. According to the first approach, tourism discourse is viewed as a subtype of institutional advertising discourse. A broader point of view interprets tourism discourse as an independent type interacting with other types of discourse. In this study, we will adhere to the first approach, since the communicative space of travel magazines is determined by their main advertising and information function, where the information aspect comes to the fore. The purpose of communication in this media field is a dialogue-based socio-cultural impact on a non-specialist reader, the formation of their social identity (Vikulova, Makarova, 2013: 23-32). The main task of travel magazines is to promote science, provide a clear explanation of complex scientific information to a non-professional reader, and build a dialogue between the scientific community and a wide range of readers (Parafonova, 2017: 187).

The members of the Novosibirsk academic school Zagorulko, Garanina, Borovikova and Dolmanov (Zagorulko et al, 2019: 496) adhere to the traditional view of tourism discourse as a type of popular science discourse that mediates between the academic community and the larger public.

Tourism discourse has a rich repertoire of argumentation tools to achieve its impact. In his paper, *A Place as Argument*, A. Velez-Posada demonstrates that the descriptions of geographic locations can become part of argument alongside the account of a person who has visited this place. His study addresses the question of how places are part of the process of argumentation.

The argument from place (*argumentum a loco*) that is presented in classical rhetoric handbooks, particularly in Quintilian, is used as a model of analysis in order to emphasize the situated character of argumentative processes (Velez-Posada, 2020: 13-23). S. De Ascaniis and L. Cantoni analyze online travel reviews about an attraction of the Christian heritage, with the goal of unveiling the arguments that formed the opinion of visitors (Ascaniis, Cantoni, 2017: 179-202).

Argumentation has been studied from the standpoint of the correctness of constructing logical inferences and the use of rhetorical techniques, as well as from the standpoint of the structural organization of units and components of argumentation. A number of works have been devoted to the development of textual characteristics of argumentation, from ancient times to the present. It has been proved that there is a variety of methods of argumentation and each of them has only its inherent ability. Among the factors of persuasive influence, priority is given to rhetorical and psychological techniques. A. Freeley points out that argumentation recognizes emotional aspects (Freeley, 1996: 7).

M. Bazhenova and I. Kulagina, exploring the possibilities of the influence of popular science media text on the formation of the image of the world and its role in the formation of mentality, state that the reality of the world is presented not only as attractive and intriguing, but also as hidden and inaccessible. However, the unattractiveness of these aspects is veiled by vivid photographs and humorous explanations so that the reader's interest in the world of travel does not disappear under the influence of fear or disgust (Bazhenova, Kulagina, 2015: 5-9).

The issue of the effectiveness of argumentation in media text correlates with the problem of optimization of rhetorical techniques. It should be noted that the media text is characterized by the use of neorhetorical techniques. Ch. Perelman's new rhetoric shifted the emphasis from truth to opinion and assessment, from proof to argumentation, the ultimate goal of which is to obtain the consent of the audience (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 1). Perelman characterizes



argumentation as a modification of the current state of affairs - as a change, in particular, of views and assessments.

Within the framework of these ideas, the main goal of new rhetoric is to inspire the readers, presenting the situation or position as attractive to them. The means to achieve this goal are informal reasoning techniques. In the field of cognition and ideology, argumentation is aimed precisely at restructuring consciousness, changing the ideas, concepts and beliefs of people. When influencing decision-making, argumentation is focused on such a change in the views and judgments of people that can induce them to perform actions that have recently seemed unrealistic. Within the framework, the correctness of argumentation may fall prey to its effectiveness.

In the examples below, selected from Issues 1-6 of the *Vokrug Sveta* magazine for 2020, we can see the highly emotive concepts “the most magical holiday,” “fairy tales,” “beautiful towns, nature reserves”, “pristine liana and deciduous forest,” “splendor,” “stunning landscapes,” and the descriptions “secret,” “extremely attractive” combined with references to Russia as in "vacation in Russia", "refreshing directions for traveling in Russia". The authors advocate spending a vacation in Russia by referring to Russia as a land of natural beauty, mystery and cultural richness: "when planning travel, do not lose sight of remote corners of Russia", "Russia has an incredible number of beautiful towns, nature reserves and simply, as they say now, locations." The travel discourse is characterized by brevity, imagery, metaphoricity, reference to historical memory, emotional coloring, and expressiveness. Personal experiences play a great role (Example 10). The authors argue that today, a vacation in Russia is, in fact, not a tribute to circumstances, but a conscious choice of many tourists.

*Example 1.* When summer comes to the city, I want to get out into nature. *Vokrug Sveta* offers 5 refreshing destinations for traveling in Russia (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021)

*Example 2.* The area of the Curonian Spit National Park is more than six and a half thousand hectares. There are six hiking trails in the park: you can find out what a "drunken forest" is, see a real bird watching station and visit the highest sand dunes in Europe, with observation platforms which offer a view of the sea, forests and moving sands. If you prefer a more active holiday, be sure to arm yourself with a scuba diving flashlight and dive into the cool sea in search of sparkling Baltic amber – the main natural treasure of the region (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 3.* It was in the Kislovodsk Park that a health path was first laid – a route for therapeutic, health-improving walking. This is a method of treatment that is especially loved by adherents of ecotourism: it provides for dosed, strictly doctor-prescribed physical activity in the form of walking and climbing the mountains. It is believed that the health path, which has been operating in the park since 1901, improves the activity of the heart muscle and heals the entire vascular system, the respiratory system and the nervous system (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 4.* The Valdai National Park is famous not only for the unique network of rivers and lakes, but also for the indigenous population, which to this day preserves the traditional way of life, crafts - primarily blacksmiths and bells – and beliefs. The city itself is more than five hundred years old, and tourists are attracted here, in addition to its rich history, by the microclimate: two hundred lakes, of which fifty-six occupy an area of more than twenty hectares, as well as ecologically clean berry, fish and mushroom grounds. The latter are the business card of the Valdai National Park (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 5.* The reserve, which is located in the Khasansky district of the Primorsky Territory, was founded in 1916 on the initiative of the forester T. Gorodetsky: he tried to save part of the taiga from uncontrolled felling. Here you will feel as if a time machine took you several millennia ago: a pristine liana and deciduous forest, waterfalls with the purest water, birdsong – all this is amazing. Far Eastern leopards, Amur tigers and sika deer are also found here (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 6.* Created on the banks of the Volga River under the auspices of UNESCO, the Samarskaya Luka National Park is intended to serve as a biosphere reserve in the Samara region. The total area of the park, divided into five forest districts, is almost 135 thousand hectares. The park has its own administrative center – the city of Zhigulevsk. In Samarskaya Luka you can find the golden eagle, mute swan, beaver, Siberian roe deer, various rodents, such as the dormouse

and the root vole, as well as elk. Snakes are found here, but they do not pose a danger to humans (Russian ecotourism. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/299349/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 7.* After a very stressful spring, you just need to unwind and change the scenery. What if the borders to your favorite holiday countries aren't open yet? There can be only one answer, because in Russia there is an incredible number of beautiful towns, nature reserves and simply, as they say now, locations. How to visit Valaam Island, Lake Baikal or the Curonian Spit without emptying your bank account? (Vacation in Russia can be affordable! Life hacks for travelers. <https://www.vokrugsveta.ru/company/news/335690/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 8.* Summer is a short period when the Russian North can be seen in all its splendor. Many have heard of Solovki: a tourist trail has long been trodden there, and yet getting to the archipelago is not as easy as, for example, to Valaam. Meanwhile, the centuries-old history of these places, stunning landscapes, the opportunity to spend an informative vacation and be alone with yourself make the Solovetsky Islands extremely attractive (The harsh charm of Solovki: 15 secrets of the protected archipelago. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/334810/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 9.* When planning your travels, do not lose sight of the remote corners of Russia, where fairy tales come to life, and the most magical holidays become reality (From the Urals to the seas of Tmutarakan: 5 fabulous routes in Russia. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/304989/>, accessed on 21.10.2021).

*Example 10.* Once I came across a filing of *Vokrug Sveta* magazines for 1928, where I came across the story of Scarlet Tundra. Its events unfold exactly in the place where I acquired the land. And I took what I read as a sign: I decided to open a theme park for recreation. I found the descendants of the characters mentioned in the story and organized a survival school. We have ideal conditions for people tired of civilization: tundra, a herd of deer, 30 husky sled dogs and two tamed foxes. And in winter, the bear came, and I got into the top of *Yandex* news as a girl who chased a clubfoot away with fireworks (Kings of the North: An unexpected Murmansk through the eyes of local residents. <http://www.vokrugsveta.ru/article/324837/>, last accessed on 21.10.2021).

#### 4. Results

The study of the Russian popular magazine *Vokrug Sveta* found that its content heavily focuses on tourist discourse.

The results of the study using the methods of content and discourse analysis allow us to conclude that journalists have been tasked with breaking stereotypes related to recreation, tourism and tourists, creating an idea of the tourist attractiveness of Russian regions and revealing the hidden potential of promising destinations. The key message of the argument is that Russia is a great country, with a great variety of cultural sites, with unique opportunities for the development of active and educational tourism.

The aim of the tourist discourse of popular science magazines is to convince the reader that the best kind of tourism is travel and recreation in his country, which contributes to the reader's knowledge of historical and cultural values. By introducing new knowledge into the model of the addressee's world and modifying the existing ones, carefully, with the help of introductory words and euphemisms, influencing the reader's feelings, the author evokes the necessary emotions that would lead to appropriate behavior.

A distinctive feature is the displacement of environmental discourse about environmental pollution from the content. For example, drawing attention to the striking beauty of Lake Baikal, journalists do not provide information about the environmental problems of this lake. Describing the healing nature of Crimea, they do not talk about the high seismological danger of the region, about the unreliability of treatment facilities in the water area of the southern coast of Crimea, about the pollution of the sea in the area of ports, about oil and fuel spills. They the fact that the downside of tourism is the growth of anthropogenic pressure on the region.

In the 2000s, there was no consistency and accounting for interactions of tactical and strategic orientation directly between the objects of the emerging segment of popular science journals. We can talk about a split in this segment, which led to a clear differentiation of popular science magazines that has preserved an ecological discourse, and popular science magazines that have appropriated the glossy format. The absence of restrictions for foreign companies on the ownership of Russian print media, new technologies imported by Western glossy magazines, which demonstrated the advantage of visual content over text, impressions over content, contributed to

the monetization of content. Popular science magazines started to reflect the ideology of globalization, forming an idea of local cultures in the global context of their interaction with each other and, through the regional component, securing cross-cultural ties between countries.

As a result of the active development of the travel segment, popular science magazines have been transformed into lifestyle publications - a new system of socially significant values. Such magazines could be compared to factories producing models of lifestyle. While business interest in popular science magazines has dramatically declined, magazines that have morphed into a glossy publication have retained most of their readership numbers. The content of the “new” popular science magazine includes information about other countries as potential vacation destinations, a healthy lifestyle, and celebrity stories fitted with an abundance of photographs and illustrative graphics, which function as an additional argument in favor of the tourist destination.

The concept of this type of popular science magazines is the orientation towards consumption rather than towards knowledge. The indicators of the competitiveness, efficiency and profitability of such a magazine depend on the audience interested in information about the services of hotels, consumers aimed at enjoying visiting popular tourism sites, shopping, and national cuisines. According to J. Baudrillard, consumption characterizes a society of abundance. This is a deep, intensive process of selection, organization and regular renewal of household items, which includes every member of society (Baudrillard, 2006: 7). The growing multimedia also set its own terms: there is a tendency to use more photos and reduce the volume of texts, and “clip” thinking determines the “primitivism” of the content, which results in the publication of shorter articles (Bushev, 2008: 32).

## 5. Conclusion

At the end of the twentieth century, the mission of Russian popular science magazines was to draw public attention to environmental issues. Argumentation had become the core of the environmental media discourse. The peak of interest in ecology fell on this period: environmental problems in Russia occupied the front pages of newspapers and magazines and featured widely in radio and television. By the mid-2000s, the level of interest in environmental issues had decreased markedly. Environmental issues in popular science magazines gave way to entertainment. Such magazines have been turned into geographic magazines as the case of the *Vokrug Sveta* magazine testifies. Today, environmental discourse in a major segment of popular science magazines has turned from discussing environmental issues to providing information about holiday destinations, a healthy lifestyle, or the life of celebrities. Argumentation is present in the texts as a way of explaining the benefits of a particular type of tourism.

The main goal of popular science magazines is to inspire their readers, presenting the situation or position as attractive to them. The means to achieve this goal are informal reasoning techniques. In the field of cognition and ideology, argumentation is aimed precisely at restructuring consciousness, changing the ideas, concepts and beliefs of people. When influencing decision-making, argumentation is focused on such a change in the views and judgments of people that can induce them to perform actions that have recently seemed unrealistic. Within the framework, the correctness of argumentation may fall prey to its effectiveness. In hushing up inconvenient facts, an author strives to make the argument more convincing.

Globalization has created conditions for the rapid exchange of information and increased tourist flows on an international scale. The discourse about leisure and tourism abroad has been filling the information space for a long time. Until recently, popular science geographic magazines did not pay enough attention to domestic tourism. The economic and epidemiological situation in 2020 changed the travel discourse, switching the attention of the audience from international tourism to domestic tourism around historical places and resorts in Russia, which present values for Russians. Today, with the national borders closed for fear of a coronavirus epidemic, popular science magazines are faced with the task of opening Russia to their readers, getting rid of stereotypes, convincing them to look in a new way at spending a vacation in their own country.

The study of argumentation used in the *Vokrug Sveta* magazine allows journalism students to trace the evolution of the genre of popular science magazines towards travel publications and help them understand the ways journalists use arguments to fit their purposes. The Argumentation in Journalism course develops in master’s students the skills needed for creating media messages that have a persuasive impact.

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## COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown on Education: Proposing an 'e-Pedagogy on the Go' System as an Alternative e-Teaching and Learning Platform During and in the Post-Pandemic Era

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### Abstract

One of the most significant changes in the ecology of information and communication is the internet. It not only enables contact and engagement in real time across time zones, but also successful social growth and crisis management, including the promotion of distance learning, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic and the associated compartmentalisation of education systems. This disruption to education poses a threat to learning in Nigeria, and the consequences of continued closure of schools and academic programmes could have detrimental consequences for students, parents and the country. Students can be encouraged to explore their own interests and actively learn during lockdowns by using internet-enabled ICT as a resource. However, this has not been the case in the Nigerian education system. This work aims to provide a simple, cost-effective and alternative pedagogical system for use during and after the epidemic, especially for open schools and institutions. This study provides an e-learning/e-teaching system based on the use of a computer and android smartphone apps to mitigate the adverse effects of the prolonged lockdown on the Nigerian education system, or what is referred to in this study as 'edu-lockdemic'. The proposed system was developed as a framework based on a comprehensive review of existing literature and is designed to enable heads of institutions monitor school and academic teaching and learning activities in a virtual learning area known as "CT-learning area". Policy recommendations are made in the conclusion.

**Keywords:** alternative pedagogy, COVID-19, e-learning, ICT, internet, online pedagogy, pandemic, Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

On 30 January 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 2019 a matter of public health of global concern. The Federal Ministry of Health reported the first verified case of COVID-19 in Lagos State, Nigeria on 27 February 2020. "The multi-sector coronavirus preparedness team, led by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control [NCDC], has immediately activated its National Emergency Operations Centre [NEOC]," the health minister said in the same letter. Nigeria has seen more than 12,233 cases nationwide in less than four months. The figures are updated daily by the NCDC ([Anumudu, Ibrahim, 2020](#)).

Recently, a number of government directives have been issued to combat sanctions and structural changes across the country to stop the spread of COVID-19. They range from the closure

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of international airports to the closure of all schools across the country and the lockdown declared in several key states – Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Ogun - for several weeks. The Federal Ministry of Education issued a circular on 19 March 2020, authorising the closure of all schools for one month from Monday 23 March 2020, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which affects nearly 46 million students and children across the country (Ejeh et al., 2020; Obiakor, Adeniran, 2020).

While the COVID-19 epidemic has led to a partial or complete “lockdown” in many countries, academic activities can continue because of the lockdown. Many studies (e.g., Ho et al., 2021; Ifijeh, Yusuf, 2020; Zawacki-Richter, 2021) have shown the importance of using electronic media in distance learning programmes. However, the use of electronic media in distance education programmes is not only focused on digital technologies, but also includes physical administration. According to Dreesen et al. (Dreesen et al., 2020) and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020), learning and access to essential school services will be disrupted for a record number of students and pupils in Nigeria during the shutdown, with school lockdowns affecting approximately 46 million students and pupils nationwide, including more than 91 % of primary and secondary school students (Adarkwah, 2021; Dreesen et al., 2020).

As a result of the outbreak, Nigerian education was disrupted in a short period of time and students’ access to schools across the country was restricted. The epidemic COVID-19 poses significant problems for the government, students and parents as it exposes and potentially exacerbates existing deficiencies in the education system (Obiakor, Adeniran, 2020). As the country grapples with these problems, a crucial question arises: is the Nigerian education system designed to adapt quickly to changing circumstances? Given the current global circumstances, the country’s ability to ensure continuous learning will depend primarily on its ability to quickly harness existing technologies, create appropriate infrastructure and mobilise partners to develop alternative education programmes (Owolabi et al., 2013).

Education is the conscious transmission of the knowledge, values and skills acquired by society from one generation to the next through institutions. Consequently, an adequate education system is necessary for the advancement of individuals in society and the economy. The impact of repeated lockdown of schools and academic programmes on student learning can have detrimental consequences for students, parents and the nation in Nigeria. This report analyses the immediate and long-term effects on the Nigerian education system, proposes an online media technology system as a means of e-learning/e-teaching, and makes recommendations on how the government could mitigate the disruption. In addition, this study looks to the future by suggesting how the tragic crisis can be used as an opportunity to address a number of supply-side education issues in the run-up to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria (Owolabi et al., 2013).

Moreover, education is a panacea for liberating people from enslavement and universities serve as the nation’s “brain box” as they play a key role in helping countries move from poor to developed status (Oyeniran et al., 2020). The study presented a system that allows professors and students to participate in academic activities during graduation, while the institute management can monitor the ongoing academic activities using open-source computer and robotic applications.

The COVID-19 pandemic has begun to affect the education system, particularly basic education, and especially for pupils, students and parents of public schools. On the other hand, pupils, trainees and students can use effective resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) to explore things that interest them and actively learn during the lockdown. It is important to maximise the impact of online media, such as e-learning/e-teaching systems that promote continuous learning (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2021). Therefore, this paper presents the ICT learning system as a technology-based teaching tool for schools, universities and colleges across the country to be explored during the COVID-19 insurance process. The proposed system was developed to reduce the adverse effects of educational disruption caused by the 1990 disease outbreak.

The proposed online media-based system would include computer and Android mobile applications that will be cost-effective and easy to use. In addition, this system is expected to enable teachers and lecturers to easily share and interact with syllabi and e-lecture notes for students and pupils in e-classrooms known as ICT learning areas, as well as provide schools and classroom administration with the ability to monitor academic activities.

The Nigerian education system is unable to adapt to the challenge COVID-19 and the country will continue to struggle in this area for the foreseeable future. However, compared to public schools, public school students face a disproportionate socio-economic burden. While several public schools have started distance education programmes and are taking advantage of the many

opportunities for online learning in the international community, the government has not yet announced formal plans to provide distance education, especially for public schools, due to lack of funds and inadequate planning. This means that these students in public schools currently have no formal learning plans and may not know what they are learning at all (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Onyema et al., 2020). By developing and proposing a cost-effective ICT learning system, this study offers a way to end the disruption to education caused by the pandemic.

*COVID-19 Pandemic and Internet Access in Nigeria:* according to the Nigerian National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), as of 24 November 2021, there were 3,479,682 tested samples of COVID-19, 213,677 confirmed cases, 3,906 active cases, 206,797 discharged cases and 2,974 deaths. Since the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines was delivered in Nigeria on 2 March 2021, at least 9,483,387 doses of vaccine have been administered so far, equivalent to about 2.4 % of Nigeria's 200 million population if each person requires two doses (Reuters COVID-19 Tracker, 2021 November 24). "As COVID-19 emerged around the world, many countries (including Nigeria) closed public facilities such as schools, workplaces and international borders to contain the spread of the virus" (Reuters COVID-19 Tracker, 2021 November 24). So, by November 2021, no less than 6 million Nigerians have been vaccinated (NTA Network News at 9, 2021 November 23). Figure 1 shows a diagram of how school closure measures were implemented during the pandemic in Nigeria. At the beginning of 2021, the lockdown was still ongoing. The lockdown of schools and universities was officially lifted on 12 October 2020 after a long lockdown of about six months (Dessy et al., 2021 July 15).



**Fig. 1.** T A chart showing measures school lockdown measures implemented during the pandemic in Nigeria ( Source: Reuters COVID-19 Tracker, 2021 November 24)

About 60 % of Nigerians are offline, according to the Digital World Outlook report cited in Smith (Smith, 2020). Statistics on mobile phones, which can also be used for e-learning/e-teaching, are more optimistic. According to the report, about 169.2 million Nigerians (83 %) have access to mobile phone connections; however, only half of them, or about 84.5 million, live in urban areas. The population that has access tends to be socio-economically better off and live in cities. Most of them are private school students who already have a head start over their peers in public schools. The integration of ICT-enhanced learning will be limited for children from low-income families who have limited access to the Internet and computers. Most of them live in rural areas where indigenous languages predominate over English (Kalas, 2010; Garanina, 2020).

Access to vulnerable populations in Nigeria requires the use of various educational media, from television and radio to mobile SMS platforms, which are more accessible to the poor. With more than 80 % of the adult population having access to radio and mobile phones, most of the children left behind will be able to access instruction delivered through these mediums. But while online platforms enable face-to-face learning, other media for service delivery require a centralised system as well as coordination between the three levels of government and the private sector (owners of the media system). Here, the role of the Ministry of Education will be critical beyond developing traditional policies and regulations. Education officers can help deploy and use these tools in the states, while the federal government coordinates state efforts by filling capacity and funding gaps. The government could benefit from the experience of Sierra Leone, where the Ebola crisis led to the closure of schools for almost nine months (Harrism, 2009; Smith, 2020). To reach the most vulnerable and marginalised children, the government of Sierra Leone has used radio and television to “teach lessons”. Whatever strategy the government chooses, it must ensure that it is cost-effective (at least available at home) and easy to use (children and their parents have some prior knowledge or can easily learn to use it).

Unequal access to ICT-enhanced learning may have a negative impact on further exacerbating disparities in learning outcomes due to social and economic conditions and the gap between urban and rural areas. As school lockdowns are “currently indefinite”, pupils, trainees and students may be left behind, especially pupils with “learning difficulties and those living in fragile and conflict-affected regions have even worse prospects” (Obiakor, Adeniran, 2020: 3). This poses a major challenge to inequality in education in relation to the technological system with the accompanying “income-based digital divide”. How can Nigeria “harness” the technology currently in use to support “marginalised” students during the widespread and protracted lockdown or ‘lockdemic’? If this challenging question is not answered, the lockdown demy could worsen “the gap in the quality of education and unintended socio-economic equality” (Smith, 2020).

*The Role of ICT in Teaching and Learning:* Information and communication technology (ICT) is a type of electronic technology that enables people to shop and retrieve data (Al-Rahmi, 2020; Nkechinyere, 2020). ICT plays such an important role in our daily lives that it is almost impossible to spend a day without using some forms of ICT such as mobile phones, smartphones, laptops and the internet. Technology has made “teaching and learning” in education easier, more accessible and more productive. It helps teachers and administrators track student academic progress. It also allows students to learn in a fun and accessible way. Technological research and educational materials are more accessible, regardless of time and place. To enhance teaching and learning, teachers and students now have access to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Students have become digital natives through the digital revolution. Today, young people want to learn via mobile devices and through social media. As technology is an integral part of their lives, it has become the most convenient way for students to learn. With technology, there are fewer limits to learning and today’s generation of students seem to be quite comfortable with digital skills. Technology not only facilitates student-centred learning, but it also encourages student curiosity, teaching and innovation in learning (Onyema et al., 2020: 124; Garanina, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that the use of ICT in teaching and learning increases student engagement and improves learning outcomes. For example, Francis and Shannon (Francis, Shannon, 2013), Dawson et al. (Dawson et al., 2010), Harandi (Harandi, 2015) and Agbetuyi and Oluwatayo (Agbetuyi and Oluwatayo, 2012) have described ICT as a critical resource as its absence can lead to lack of knowledge and poor decision-making. According to Diane and Steven (Diane, Steven, 2007: 165), there is an evolving relationship between education and technology, and that evolving pedagogical systems “take advantage of newly designed or emerging technologies.”

As Oliveira, Behnagh, Ni, Mohsinah, Burgess and Guo (Oliveira et al., 2019) noted, emerging technological artefacts such as computer simulations, virtual labs, mobile devices, robots, games, painting and digital photography enhance learners’ experiences. Bao (Bao, 2020) and Yakubu and Dasuki (Yakubu, Dasuki, 2019) argue that “emerging technologies have spawned the exponential development of software and AI-powered cloud-based technology aimed at adapting learning methods and designing curricula to match each learner’s ability to progress at their own pace.” Hemant (Hemant, 2018), on the other hand, asserts that technology plays a critical role in making teaching and learning activities more meaningful and is one of the most effective tools for advancing knowledge and skills. As the need for home-based teaching and learning increases due to the COVID-19 pandemic, technology will play a key role in the present and future of teaching



and learning in Nigerian schools and educational institutions. Teachers should also adopt more flexible pedagogical approaches that support students (Onyema et al., 2020).

Nearly 1.5 million Nigerian students and 27 Nigerian federal universities were connected to the internet in 2015 by the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the World Bank's STEP-B project (Samson, 2015). This is a milestone in the Nigerian education system as it demonstrates efforts to introduce students to information and communication technologies and the internet. More than 1,500 (1,522) secondary schools have been equipped, resulting in an estimated 1,458,880 million students being introduced to ICT, according to the ministry. It was also revealed that the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has launched the Third Enterprise Access Project (TIAP), which provides desktop computers, printers and wireless network facilities to selected educational institutions across the country (Samson, 2015).

With the outbreak of COVID-19 (which has devastated and crippled various sectors of the world with devastating and seemingly long-lasting consequences), many African countries, including Nigeria, were forced to close schools and higher institutions as part of containment measures against the spread of the virus. This left educational institutions with no choice but to look forward to the use of ICT for teaching and communicating with students (Onyema et al., 2020; Garanina, 2020). However, this has mainly highlighted the gap between the educational institutions in Nigeria and the countries with much better ICT infrastructure and the educational institutions within the country with better infrastructure and implementation than others such that the majority as well as the students within the university itself who are challenged by the financial situation to resist the power of the internet or network in relation to urban or rural developments. Despite the struggle to apply and use ICT in education, most schools and colleges lack the primary capacity to implement a meaningful e-learning/e-teaching system. Few private universities are able to have a recognisable e-learning/e-teaching system and probably only the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is able to effectively handle distance education and learning (Muhamadbhai, 2020).

To understand why it is necessary to provide scientific support in overcoming the blockage of the education system, or what is referred to in this paper as the 'edu-lockdemic', we need to visualise the challenges facing the adoption of ICT in the Nigerian education system.

*Limitations of ICT-Enhanced Alternative Pedagogy in Nigeria:* The effective use of ICT in Nigerian schools and institutions of higher learning is facing several problems. One of them is the unfortunate lack of well-trained ICT teachers (Adeoye et al., 2013) and the unwillingness of some people to adapt to technological advancement in the education system (Oluwole, 2015). The few ICT facilities in some of these schools are not well managed and not effectively utilised due to lack of ICT trained staff and teachers in Nigerian schools and higher institutions. Another obstacle to the growth and use of ICT in Nigerian education is lack of funding. Due to lack of funding, the most important and survival needs of institutions are often put on hold (Idowu, Esere, 2013). Another major problem faced by most ICT users in Nigeria is inadequate power supply and frequent power outages.

Finally, there is the question of political will. The existing policy is somewhat outdated and discourages the use of ICT in Nigerian education (Martens et al., 2020; Usman, 2016). Despite Samson's claims (Samson, 2015), recent studies show that the integration of computers in the school system is low (Egielewa et al, 2021; Eze et al, 2018; Ibrahim et al, 2017; Olayemi et al, 2021; Peimani et al, 2021). These are just some of the challenges Nigerian schools and tertiary institutions face when it comes to using ICT to advance education in the country.

Educational institutions are taking advantage of benefits such as the ability to create small, simple and quick content, a social factor that provides immediate communication and feedback, which encourages the creation and improvement of digital content, and the development of communication skills that are critical in the process (Jiang et al., 2021). Some organizations try to create a safe study environment by choosing to build their own internal networks, others choose an inclusive approach and use existing media that are already publicly available and try to move the study process into the public space and create study communities there. Students in the digital environment benefit from communication with peers and lecturers who can enable students to reach a higher level of understanding. Online discussions allow students to improve their reading and writing skills. Using the Internet in education requires focusing on students' interests and



needs and improving communication with students not only because of the physical presence in the classroom (Oyeniran et al., 2020).

*Theoretical Underpinning:* understanding and predicting the factors associated with e-learning/e-teaching or ICT-enabled learning are critical to the success of the Nigerian education system as well as the education systems of many countries in the Global South during the current subsequent lockdowns because, apparently, COVID-19 pandemic may not be eradicated soon. The basic objectives of communication-cognitive theories are to interpret and predict behaviour. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most useful theories. According to Agarwal and Prasad (Agarwal, Prasad, 1999) and Davis (Davis, 1989), TAM is a powerful tool developed to measure user acceptance of new technologies. TAM was developed by Davis (Davis, 1989, 1993). The model has proven its worth through a variety of applications and extensions over the years, including web-based information systems such as online banking, electronic tax return systems and e-learning/e-teaching (Yi, Hwang, 2003). Since e-learning/e-teaching is still relatively new, especially in the Nigerian and many other developing countries' context (especially in Africa), it is useful to examine it using the TAM model.

TAM consists of six constructs, namely “external variables, perceived usefulness [PU], perceived ease of use [PEoU], attitude [AT], behavioural intention [BI] and actual use [UB]” (Shyu, Huang, 2011: 493). User behaviour is determined by behavioural intention, which is influenced by attitude and perceived usefulness. Perception of usefulness and ease of use of a particular technology determines attitude (Adams et al., 1992). Depending on the technology, context and the users, external variables influence the perception of usefulness and ease of use. According to the model, “two behavioural beliefs, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, are fundamental factors in predicting user acceptance, and the effects of external variables on intention are mediated by these two beliefs” (Shyu, Huang, 2011: 493). PU is defined as a person's perception that using a new technology will enhance or improve their performance (Davis, 1989, 1993). Based on this definition, PU in this paper is the user's perception that e-teaching, i.e., delivering lessons using the proposed system (on the part of teachers) and e-learning/e-teaching, i.e., receiving lessons using the proposed system (on the part of students) will enable them to continue teaching and learning from home despite the imposed lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consolidating this belief leads to a positive attitude towards e-learning/e-teaching, which increases users' intention to use e-learning/e-teaching sites. PEoU is defined as a person's perception that using a new technology will be effortless (Davis, 1989, 1993). Based on this definition, PEoU in this paper represents the perception that e-learning/e-teaching or ICT-enabled teaching and learning sites are user-friendly. PEoU has been shown to have an effect on PU. “Moreover, both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are influenced by external variables and have a positive effect on attitude” (Shyu, Huang, 2011: 494). Although TAM is applicable to various technologies, it has been criticised for not providing enough information about individual views on new systems. Davis (Davis, 1989: 985) found that external variables enhance the ability of TAM to predict the acceptance of future technologies. In other words, “TAM constructions must be expanded by incorporating additional factors”. These additional factors depend on the target technology, the users and the context (Shyu, Huang, 2011).

## 2. Materials and methods

This study used secondary sources to obtain relevant data for the design of the Internet-enabled alternative pedagogical system. Relevant existing and previous literature was critically reviewed for four weeks. Thematic analysis was used to identify the main arguments and viewpoints related to the design of Internet-based systems through a thorough review of existing literature. The thematic analysis method was chosen to “capture the complexity of meaning within a textual dataset” and to “describe both implicit and explicit ideas” (Dimitriadis, Kamberelis, 2011). Key themes and concepts were coded to identify recurring key phrases and to organise the data. According to Saldana's coding, these are “repetitive patterns of action and consistency in human affairs” (Yerpude, Singhal, 2018).

Moreover, the inductive method is used in thematic analysis. This means that no a priori list of codes or themes is created before data analysis. The meaning of a sentence or paragraph is represented by codes. During the review of the literature, the texts were read several times, resulting in numerous changes to the codes. Because of its simplicity, open coding is a common coding technique in exploratory research (Saldana, 2009). Several hundred pages were reviewed

and coded with many open codes that were assigned to several categories. The term “category” refers to a collection of codes that have the same meaning as different arguments or viewpoints. According to Ryan and Bernard (Ryan, Bernard, 2011), it is crucial to assess recurring themes, similarities and expression of individual participants, as well as linguistic linkages, interpersonal interactions, social tensions and control difficulties when developing categories (Dovile, 2017). For example, the categories classify codes related to internet access, internet penetration, internet of things, information and communication technology use, internet data, Wi-Fi, broadband penetration rates, government policies on education, e-learning/e-teaching, alternative pedagogy, socio-economic factors affecting education, health, public diseases and social well-being, pandemics and social well-being, and COVID-19 and lockdown.

This final analysis and classification allow the study to determine which ideas have the most in common and why they are so highly regarded. From the reviews, six major themes were developed, namely: COVID-19 pandemic and internet access in Nigeria; the role of ICT in teaching and learning; limitations of ICT-enabled alternative pedagogy in Nigeria; theoretical underpinnings; operationalisation of internet-enabled alternative pedagogical system; and advantages and disadvantages of ICT-enabled alternative pedagogical systems.

*Limitations of the Methodology:* the disadvantage of thematic analysis based on a literature review is that it does not provide empirical results and therefore limits the generalisability of conclusions as they are based on subjective rather than objective data (Dimitriadis, Kamberelis, 2011; Saldana, 2009). Future research will require quantitative, qualitative and data-based evidence to draw more acceptable conclusions. When analysing data using a thematic analysis framework, there is a risk of interpretation as the codes are reviewed by a researcher and are influenced by their experience. Some of the thematic codes may have been generated incorrectly.

### 3. Discussion

This research has identified many new internet-based technological interfaces that are used in this type of situation, which more or less resembles a teleconference. Among the most popular are Zoom, Google Classroom, etc. Mobile smartphone applications such as WhatsApp and online blogging are also used to facilitate flexible and effective pedagogy. All these applications and gadgets are ICT. However, for effective teaching and learning in distance education due to the pandemic COVID-19 and the lockdown it has caused, an internet service needs to be made available. Finally, the aforementioned technologies are Internet-enabled.

ICT learning is thus a combination of Android and computer apps for teaching and learning purposes. The Android apps and computer programmes suggested for the learning area are listed below.

1. *Zoom:* Zoom is a video communication platform that provides video calling and internet chat services through a peer-to-peer cloud-based distance learning and social networking software system.

2. *WhatsApp:* WhatsApp is a free mobile app that offers cross-platform messaging and VOIP services. Facebook is the owner of WhatsApp. Users can send text and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share photos, documents, user location and other multimedia content through WhatsApp.

3. *Google Classroom:* this is a free web service developed by Google for schools to facilitate the creation, distribution and classification of paper assignments and the sharing of files between teachers and students.

4. *Blog:* A blog is an online “journal” or information site where content is displayed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent entry appearing first. It is a platform where the author shares his/her opinion on any topic.

The immediate consequences of the epidemic may be dire, but this crisis is a unique turning point, an opportunity to learn to redesign Nigeria’s education system and build its resilience. The need to integrate e-education into the curriculum is becoming more urgent. The current pandemic has shown the need to integrate more technology into the classroom. Technological solutions, such as adaptive learning technologies, can ensure personalised learning with minimal teacher involvement and have the potential to provide better learning experiences at low cost. However, the uptake of these technologies in Nigeria is slow and uneven. The post-pandemic period could be an opportunity to invest in technology in both the private/commercial and public school systems.

To develop this system on a large scale, it is important to strengthen education partnerships between the public and private sectors. Many relevant stakeholders, including the government, its ministries and departments such as the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, the National Telecommunications Commission, internet and telecommunication service providers, education experts and others, will need to work together to drive the necessary innovation. Conscious efforts must also be made to bridge the digital divide by ensuring that the cost of technology is low. In general, the introduction of innovative technology in the classroom can help improve learning outcomes across the board.

The COVID-19 crisis has been added to the list of policies aimed at addressing out-of-school populations, as forced school closures have led to a proliferation of different ways to reach children and youth when they are not in school. However, the prevailing policy response to the problem of most children and youth in Nigeria has focused only on getting them to school. Going forward, some of the interventions introduced during the crisis should be explored for out-of-school populations before the pandemic spread. This approach is similar to the “school meets learner” approach that was used to provide education to girls in the Northeast by offering education to children and youth in situations where they cannot go to school due to cultural and economic conditions. While the goal must remain to get all school-age children into school, finding ways to reach children and youth at home can be part of the process.

The epidemic has pointed to the need to integrate appropriate electronic media technology into learning and to close existing gaps in education. However, without a focused and concerted effort, the impact on education can be lasting and negative. The onus is now on us: do we allow this pandemic to further deepen the education crisis, or do we seize the opportunity to influence change that can meet the challenges of the pandemic now and beyond? The model proposed in this paper is an attempt to provide an answer to this question.

This proposed system, like other ICTs, is likely to have both positive and negative aspects. The following subsections elaborate on some of the likely significant advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons). As noted by Oyeniran et al. (Oyeniran et al., 2020), there are some notable advantages to using the alternative pedagogical system in pandemics:

1. Continuous learning: as there is no barrier on the part of lecturers or students for the prescribed courses in ICT learning areas, this framework enables continuous learning. The cost of setting up individual distance learning platforms is eliminated: Since this framework provides open-source distance learning applications, no educational institution needs to develop its own distance learning application.

2. Effective feedback mechanism: This framework ensures that students receive adequate feedback and that they can interact with their fellow students as well as with the lecturers. This enables them to ask and answer questions that seem difficult or unclear to them. Since the ICT learning spaces are equipped with many different applications, each student can communicate with their professors and fellow students through any platform.

3. Reworked lessons: With multi-platform technology, any student who misses a session can catch up on lessons on other platforms, as course materials are available on other accredited ICT learning platforms and can be used by students at any time.

4. Moderate installation and accessibility costs: Since the ICT learning platform is open source and can be used by anyone free of charge, there are no implementation or maintenance costs. The network operator, on the other hand, charges a data subscription fee for internet access.

5. Learning a new method and curriculum: While all ICT learning platforms in the ICT learning sectors may not be new to some, they provide an opportunity for many others to learn about new learning platforms and content.

Below are some of the critical challenges in using the alternative pedagogical system during the pandemic (Gruzina et al., 2020; Oyeniran et al., 2020):

1. Affordability of learning tools (smartphone): not all students have or can afford smartphones, as some parents are still struggling to fund their children’s education and may not be able to provide them with smartphones at any point during their studies.

2. Unpredictable network problems: Another problem is that network problems can occur in different parts of the country at different times of the day.

3. Internet access (data subscription): The data discount tariff you subscribe to is quite questionable and this could be a major drawback as lecturers and students have to subscribe to it regularly to keep classes online.

4. Power supply instability: The first drawback to address is the current situation in Nigeria where power supply is epileptic. This poses a serious threat to the smooth running of the system and many lecturers and students will be forced to spend a considerable amount of money on generators and fuel.

5. Inadequate technical knowledge: Since not all lecturers or students are familiar with certain platforms, some people will need training, guidance or support to use them effectively.

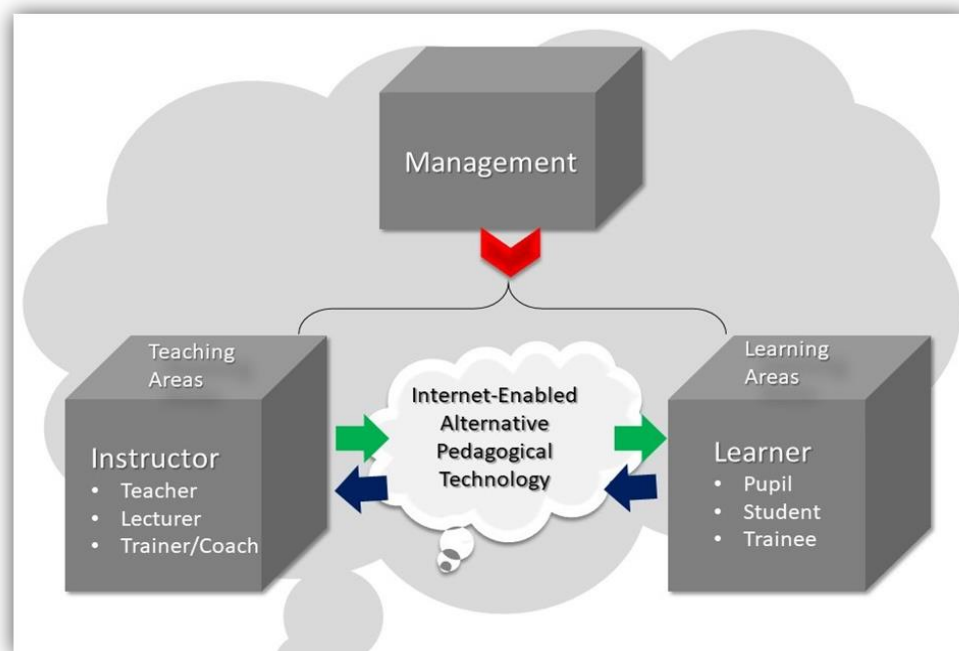
6. Environmental distractions: A number of environmental distractions recognised by society can affect this system. Addictions, housework and family influences are just a few examples.

7. An unexpected shutdown of an ICT learning platform hinders learning: This is the last disadvantage to be discussed. Some technologies and applications have been bought by new people with new conditions or they have been discontinued altogether.

8. Duplicate curriculum on different learning platforms: Since different learning platforms offer comparable services, the materials and curriculum observations will be available on all platforms, so the materials will be repeated on the platforms.

#### 4. Results

*Operationalisation of the Internet-based Alternative Pedagogical System:* The proposed Internet-based alternative pedagogical system is divided into three main dimensions or regions as shown in Figure 2, namely teaching areas, learning areas and e-learning areas. The teaching areas are where the instructor (teacher, lecturer or trainer) delivers his/her instruction to the learners (pupils, students or trainees), while the learning areas are where the learners live and receive instruction from the instructor. Between these two places is the e-learning area, which is essentially an internet-enabled technological interface through which both parties (trainer and learner) are connected. The exchange of lesson messages is an important part of this communication activity. The lessons that the teacher, lecturer or trainer communicates to the pupils, students or trainees are called pedagogical messages in this context.



**Fig. 2.** An illustration of the internet-enabled ICT-pedagogical system. (Source: Authors).

The Internet-enabled ICT learning system was designed based on the two critical constructs of the TAM: PU and PEOU. The perceived usefulness (PU) of the system is expected to contribute to its adoption by all Nigerian schools and institutions and indeed other developing countries in the Global South, especially Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Its prospective benefits are expected to accrue to both private (commercial) and public schools and institutions. However, as the scheme was intended to be used within the school or university during lockdowns in the post-pandemic era, or in the neo-post-pandemic era, teachers in private schools and colleges appear to be the most affected by job losses and leaves of absence, as the management of



commercial (private) schools and colleges are unable to continue paying teachers while they are at home, unlike teachers and lecturers in public schools and institutions who have received their monthly salaries despite the closure.

In addition, the perceived ease of use of the system can be used to determine its PU (PEoU). The simplicity of the system gives an indication of its ease of use. Essentially, the system consists of two virtual pedagogical areas – the teaching area (TA) and the learning area (LA) – which are connected via the Internet and are enabled by internet-enabled teleconferencing technology using a computer (e.g., a smartphone, a laptop, a PC, an iPad, a tablet, etc.) and free open-source software (FOSS) (e.g., Zoom or Google Classroom). The FOSS, installed on a computer with an internet connection or a mobile device, facilitates pedagogical communication between lecturers and students from any location (teaching area and learning area). TA and LA can be located where the participants are, e.g., at home or in a shop.

Multimedia mobile instant messaging programmes such as WhatsApp and Messenger can be used to complement FOSS, as they allow media-intensive communication with photos, video, audio and voice over the internet. For example, the lecturer could instantly share an important e-handout with learners while explaining points on Zoom or Google Classroom. All he has to do is upload the e-copy of the handout on his WhatsApp or Messenger app and share it with the learners. It is assumed that the instructor and learner have exchanged mobile phone numbers, especially if they want to use WhatsApp. Alternatively, the instructor can post the content of the handout on his blog, especially if it is not for immediate use during the online class session. So, the benefit of the system lies in its ease of use and this ease of use shows that it can be used in all categories of schools and institutions. The school, university or institution management can attend the pedagogical sessions as a non-participating observer by assigning a representative to monitor the activity. The presence of management thus serves mainly administrative purposes.

The arrows (refer back to in [Figure 2](#) above) indicate the direction of the flow of pedagogical messages (lessons and learners' responses), which proceed in a two-way protocol – a dialogical process in which each part of the two parties can send and receive pedagogical messages simultaneously, as in real life.

## 5. Conclusion

Even though several countries have been “locked down” because of the COVID-19 problem, academic activity can be maintained. Many studies have shown the value of using online media in distance education programmes; yet distance education programmes depend not only on the use of computer technology but also on physical administrative activities. Therefore, this article presents a framework in which lecturers and students can participate in academic activities using FOSS, Android and computer apps.

Apart from data subscription fees with the respective data network providers, the use of these apps does not incur any additional costs for lecturers, professors, teachers or students. Under the framework, instructors, teachers and lecturers will submit syllabi and lecture notes to the ICT learning areas, and students will have access to the ICT learning areas to participate in the various courses scheduled by lecturers or directed by school or institutional administrators. The ICT learning areas essentially function as a meeting place or lecture hall for students, trainees, professors and lecturers. Students can complete and ‘submit’ assignments in the ICT learning areas, while instructors, teachers and lecturers can supervise students using various technical functions integrated into the areas.

While this is helpful information, the school’s contingency plan is inadequate as it does not guarantee that learning can continue despite the problem. This closure of the school, occasioned by COVID-19, may have been the catalyst for identifying certain critical inadequacies across the sector. Given the rising number of infectious diseases worldwide and the conflict in the Northeast, the COVID-19 pandemic is certainly not the latest crisis to threaten the continuity of education in Nigeria. Therefore, the government must develop a comprehensive contingency plan that includes not only measures to keep schools safe, but also ways to ensure that students and teachers continue to learn and receive support in times of crisis. The government should also provide significant support for essential social services and other services directly or indirectly related to learning at home, such as electricity costs and internet/Wi-Fi.

*Limitations of the Study:* The study used secondary sources to generate data on the basis of which the proposed internet-based alternative pedagogical system was conceived and designed.



Thus, no empirical data (results/evidence) was generated from the study. Therefore, caution should be exercised when deciding to adopt the proposed system, as the system may or may not be suitable for certain contexts. However, as the system was developed after a thorough review of the literature and concepts related to the main research problems, it is expected that the simplicity of the system may encourage policy makers to commission the development of prototypes and testing in smaller, specific Nigerian contexts before recommending wider use and application at national and continental levels. Future research should use mixed methods, including quantitative, qualitative and data-driven methods, to generate empirical data to guide the development of such alternative teaching and learning systems that are internet-enabled and can be used in future pandemics and/or lockdowns.

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## Media Crowdsourcing and Media Crowdfunding in the Digital Environment and Media Education Practices

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### Abstract

The article analyzes the possibilities of using specialized digital platforms for both content and financial participation of the addressee in the implementation of media projects and for media education practices are investigated. The successful experience of crowdfunding media in the modern world is associated with digital platforms named *Planeta*, *Boom Starter*, *The Power of World*, and active crowdsourcing is carried out on the digital Service of journalistic inquiries named *Pressfeed*. During the pandemic, these platforms became objects of research by the authors of the article and educational formats for media students and seminars for regional journalists.

Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing in Russia as a collective cooperation of people and civic activity are most effective today in the media sphere. Through such civil complicity, a media community is formed. At the same time, digital platforms make it possible for people without experience in journalistic and expert activities to get involved in the creation of media content, to try their hand at performing tasks from journalists.

As a result of the study, key factors that should be taken into account in educational models of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing have been identified. Among them there are: 1) addressing the focus audience of media projects; 2) rewards for participation, including virtual participation, corresponding to the audience's requests; 3) types of motivations of the media accomplice audience: the desire to express a civic position, to be involved in something socially significant, to increase their expertise and make public their personal history. The article describes all these factors with their illustration by examples of media projects and the own expert practice of one of the authors of the article.

**Keywords:** media, media education, crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, digital platforms, civil society, community.

### 1. Introduction

Media is one of the most affected industries during the pandemic. At first sight, the importance of media has increased and the media consumption of the population has grown during forced stay at home, but this primarily concerned news resources and TV channels. The paper press, due to the inability to distribute its circulations and as a result of the economic downturn, lost not only revenues from sales and subscriptions, but also advertising contracts. Funding through advertising and various kinds of collaborations has decreased significantly in the press of various types. According to the Ministry of Digital Development, in the first quarter of 2021, the advertising market sank by 10 %, the Alliance of Independent Regional Publishers indicates a drop in the advertising market on the ground of at least 20 %. Thus, it was the local press and

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budget-independent media that suffered the most. This caused the acceleration of the transition of media projects to digital formats, which actively began a decade before the pandemic. At the same time, both traditional and digital media have become more active in appealing to the civic engagement of the target audience, seeking its diverse support and resorting to digital crowdfunding and crowdsourcing.

Media education should not stand aside from these processes, since it itself was carried out through digital formats during the pandemic, which prompted teachers to include trainings on digital platforms in educational trajectories.

Students and young journalists today actively use crowdsourcing and crowdfunding practices, moreover, about a third of media students (according to the observations of the authors of the article over many years of practice) become freelancers or creators of their own short-term projects like digital blogging. Today, the audience is increasingly actively providing content and financial support to media in online ways: through media sites themselves, through Yandex-wallets of editorial offices, through participation in various online events.

## 2. Materials and methods

The decline in the role of the state in a digital society inevitably leads to a change in the functioning of the media, as well as to an increase in the importance of communities emerging around media projects. The authors proceed from the fact that the digital involvement of the audience in financing and content participation gives the effect of a media community necessary for media independent of the authorities and highly specialized media.

The research objective of the article is to identify the factors and characterize the most successful communicative practices of Russian crowdfunding and crowdsourcing carried out through digital platforms and their applicability in educational processes. The authors of the article also present the results of their own experiment of expert work on the platform of the Journalistic Inquiry Service named *Pressfeed*.

The authors of the article use the methods of content analysis of these platforms, expert interviews with their organizers and authors of successful media projects, as well as their own experiment on the platform *pressfeed.ru* / conducted a study of factors and models of digital media crowdfunding and crowdsourcing.

Expert interviews were conducted at the first stage of the study. The authors of successfully implemented using platforms acted as experts *Planeta.ru* and the power of the word of diverse crowdfunding media projects, such as the film *Bears of Kamchatka* (I. Zhuravleva, 2,746,550 rubles were collected, 1,500 people transferred the money); *We will Survive*: a book of author's photographs by a journalist of centenarian people (M. Mordasov, freelancer, collected more than 219,000 rubles), a documentary film *Children of Narym* (Y. Korneva, a journalist of Tomsk TV2), a website about culture and society *Colta.ru*. Recharge (L. Goralik, collected 1,104,305 rubles, 276 % of the planned), as well as the manager of the crowdfunding platform *Planeta.ru* N. Ignatenko. These cases were also chosen for demonstration and discussion by students in the classroom at the university on the recommendation of the platforms themselves as diverse and successful.

At the second stage, an experiment was carried out. The author of the article is T.L. Kaminskaya, having registered on the Journalistic Inquiry Service platform named *Pressfeed* as an expert, for six months she wrote expert comments to leading media. The result of the presentation and discussion of the experience at seminars with students and regional journalists of Veliky Novgorod was the registration and work of media and experts from among the regional, including students.

The statistical data provided in the article about the service *Pressfeed.ru* were provided to the authors upon written request by the platform.

## 3. Discussion

Our research, on the one hand, is based on scientific publications related to the practice of collective implementation of socially significant projects, and, on the other hand, on the results demonstrated by researchers in media education in the new conditions of society ([Pantserev, 2021](#)).

Thus, O.Y. Patlasov, speaking about crowdfunding in general and offering an overview of special digital platforms for it, calls it "a chance to study the audience closely, find out its needs and

assess the viability of his idea." "Unlike standard market mechanisms", he notes, "people's financing allows you to create a 100 percent payback project without spending additional funds on advertising, marketing research, market analysis and fortune-telling on coffee grounds" (Patlasov, 2015: 210).

Just five years ago, scientists analyzing the situation with public financing of projects and initiatives more often mentioned offline ways of raising funds, only casually mentioning digital collection models as a possibility of the future. So, I.E. Korneeva, speaking about collecting donations for NGOs and their projects, calls such methods as piggy banks, charity auctions and dinners. Indeed, digital specialized Russian crowdfunding and crowdsourcing platforms have emerged quite recently. However, this happened before the pandemic and as noted, is connected with completely different social trends (Korneeva, 2016). O. Basheva describes voluntary activity through crowdsourcing, which is carried out by the state, transferring part of the functions to volunteers (Basheva, Ermolaeva, 2020). Specialist in network technologies of mass media E.M. Pak even before the pandemic, Pak justified the idea that "crowdsourcing is understood not only as a hierarchical model that concentrates the attention of the general public around itself to achieve a goal, but as a new information technology tool that helps organize a network "crowd" to solve social, public and other problems" (Pak, 2014: 154). At the same time, she also noted that it was "media projects and portals of professional communities that will be one of the starting points for the development of crowdsourcing" (Pak, 2014: 157).

As for the media, the optimal models of their existence in society are discussed all over the world, and there is no unity of opinion. J. Bateman conducts research on various approaches to the definition of digital media and shows how multi-valued digital reality is (Bateman, 2021). He also focuses on the importance of digital technologies. Some researchers when reviewing all media financing methods, single out crowdfunding as one of the main income for the media (Kind et al., 2009). It is very important to note that in the USA, the subscription model in some cases is transformed into a club model – for a certain amount, the reader receives certain preferences, for example, the right to visit the editorial office and communicate with journalists, to be in internal working chats, to receive exclusive products with media trademarks. The same principle underlies crowdfunding with its range of rewards.

Media crowdfunding and crowdsourcing as new communicative media practices have been understood up to now mainly by foreign researchers or in English (Ulin, 2010; Yuzvovich et al., 2016). Mainly foreign cases are also considered as examples of civil participation of the audience in the media projects of the Russian Federation. For example, E.A. Osipovskaya, calling crowdsourcing one of the innovative techniques for involving the audience in the activities of the media, among others, notes voting, polling, additional buttons on websites. At the same time, crowdsourcing is considered by her on the developments of crowdsourcing models of The Guardian editorial office (2009), the project *Off the Bus* (translated from English – overboard, 2007) of the American edition of *The Huffington Post*, the Ask program, which is also based on the principle of collective voluntary cooperation (*The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and the *Mozilla Foundation*, which studied the news commenting system for its improvement for both users and the media themselves) (Osipovskaya, 2017).

Over the past 10 years, a number of scientific publications by foreign authors have appeared devoted to the study of crowdfunding in the media environment. The greatest attention is paid to crowdfunding for innovative projects (Piller, Roberts, 2016), in which special digital platforms (*Kickstarter*, *Indiegogo*, *Seedrs*, etc.) are used to find additional support. The growth of activity in the media space opens up new opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses (Hibbert, 2013; Ordanini et al., 2011), and it is not only about attracting investments, but also about finding in-demand ideas and solutions. It should be noted that institutional opportunities for the use of media in the fundraising process are expanding: legislative changes correspond to current trends associated with the growth of the use of social networks in crowdsourcing and crowdfunding processes (Feigin, Levine, 2014).

Also, the attention of researchers is attracted by the process of forming various business models of digital media, depending on their priority tasks, a wide range of opportunities for the use of crowdsourcing for the development of entrepreneurial activity (Brown et al., 2018). An urgent topic for research is the search for optimal strategies for organizing successful crowdfunding in the media space, in particular, using social networks (Marco et al., 2017). In this context, the idea of joint work of participants proposed by I. Everett on the principle of a beehive deserves attention

(Everett, 2015). G. Clapperton notes that the "culture of social networks" also applies to social investments, and in this case co-financing of projects carries an important emotional component, which means involving participants in the activities of a caring, approved project or enterprise (Clapperton, 2012). In the new reality of the media industry, crowdfunding acts as a new model of project financing, which has significant potential for development (Szopa et al., 2017).

As for foreign authors, we note that social networks in current research are considered by them both as a source of capital and as a source of innovation for the development of projects of various directions (Boulianne, 2019; Muninger et al., 2019; Vuong, Wallace, 2011).

It is worth noting the works devoted to the study of digital technologies in the field of education and the use of media resources for educational purposes (Francia, 2021; Smyrnova-Trybulska, Zegzula, 2021). Media education in this case is interpreted as the development of competencies for the use of technologies that ensure effective work with information in new conditions (for example, in a pandemic situation)

Russian journalism theorists associate the development of crowdfunding in Russia primarily with crisis phenomena in the economy (Teplyashina, 2016). Before the pandemic, crowdsourcing technologies were considered mainly as some additional elements of media interactivity, which included "ad sections, meme contests and witty statements, reposting blog entries of famous media personalities or random participants in events, posting videos from a mobile phone, polls, voting, etc."; at the same time, it was noted that crowdsourcing "most often has a fragmentary nature, indicating a lack of understanding of the essence of the phenomenon and its economic potential" (Vitvinchuk, 2016: 15).

As for interaction with target audiences in the new digital formats of Russian media, observations related to the addressee factor in the modern media situation are relevant for our research. It is civic journalism that is increasingly involving the audience in its activities today and increasing the importance of the audience factor in the implementation of the social function of the media (Kaminskaya, 2020). One of the effects of this involvement is the creation of a community around the media. In addition, the researchers note that the factor of "new media" and their remote work changes the approach to media education. So, K. Pantserev notes that "Special attention is paid to technologies which are based on artificial intelligence (AI). And the capabilities of such technologies are growing at unprecedented speed» (Pantserev, 2021: 507). His article deals with the need for new solutions to preserve the target audience of media and the development of new competencies by students in the global digital world. These works reflect the Russian view on the actual problem of the use of new digital technologies in education and the use of media resources to improve the efficiency of students' learning of educational programs (Bond, Bedenlier, 2019).

T. Vladimirova analyses systemic factors of optimization of the Russian media space in the process of intellectualization of society. The criteria of media personality as a set of information relations between the participants of this process, providing optimal intellectual interaction between economic, political, scientific, educational, artistic and other social realities, are investigated (Vladimirova et al., 2020). Today, a large number of studies are devoted to various activities in digital formats: sociologists and psychologists measure people's adaptability to remote interaction, explore their new competencies and social trajectories, the stress level of life in digital formats and its economic effect. At the same time, the pandemic has updated research on the willingness of Russians to help others with the help of digital technologies. So I.V. Mersiyanova and A.S. Bryukhno, based on the data of the All-Russian opinion poll, revealed a high level of readiness to register on a specialized website that allows developing volunteer initiatives (Bryukhno, Mersiyanova, 2020).

In the newest studies of the interaction of media with the audience and their ways of survival during a pandemic, such a resource as the medical community plays a huge role. For example, E.Y. Kolomiytseva, noting the strengthening of social forms of media financing during the pandemic, emphasizes: "users, consumers of information themselves decided who to provide financial support to: whether by subscription, donation, crowdfunding, etc., and did it the more willingly, for example, the more effective, in their opinion, a specific journalistic product was, the more effectively it changes something in the surrounding reality. There is a so-called social trust" (Kolomiytseva, 2021: 151). Social trust is possible if the media becomes a kind of social space. M.V. Livanova, using the example of small-town publications, shows the mechanism of the "club format of media activity" when "The editorial office assumes the function of the center of local social relations of the territory for building and maintaining a community (Livanova, 2020: 69).

Thus, the role of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing platforms has been noted from various points of view in modern media practice, and the need to include them in the process of media education is becoming more and more obvious.

#### 4. Results

The successful experience of initiative media projects is primarily associated with such digital platforms as the very first in Russia and the largest *Planeta.ru*, which has the project category "Literature and Journalism"; Boom Starter is the second largest Russian crowd platform attracting investment in creative projects. And finally, launched in 2020, the first specialized crowd platform for journalists and media, *The Power of the Word*.

Examples of successful crowdfunding cases on the new platform are the magazine *World of Fiction* collected (more than 8 million rubles, 2020) for the work of the editorial office and the issue of the magazine during 2021. As a reward, users could subscribe, forming a circulation of the publication for a year ahead.

In 2020, a team of journalists from the *TV2 News Agency* raised funds for an expedition to remote areas of the Tomsk region, where there were orphanages for children of exiles and repressed. As a result of the trip, a longrid was published and a documentary was released, which was watched by over 665 thousand people.

*The Power of the Word*, as the first and only specialized media crowdfunding platform in Russia, has directed its efforts to raise funds for four types of civic-oriented projects, namely:

- investigative journalism;
- journalistic landings in hard-to-reach and remote places for filming;
- media collaboration projects of several editorial offices to cover socially significant topics in the regions;
- support for journalists (mainly for court costs) who are out of work and in a difficult life situation.

This platform is still in its infancy, and according to its management, it is not ready to work with amounts of more than 100 thousand.

As for foreign crowdfunding platforms for Russian journalists, they are more extensive in terms of resource capabilities, but only one of the experts noted that he plans to carry out crowdfunding on foreign platforms as well. Among the foreign ones, the most famous are Patreon, Kickstarter, Indiegogo, however, it seems that it is more difficult for Russian media to act on them due to the lack of a starting target audience – readers and subscribers.

All the authors of media projects said that they had guessed to use crowdfunding in the last 2 years. First of all, experts emphasized the difference between crowdfunding and other ways of raising money and noted the social significance of the procedure itself:

- It is necessary to immediately make it feel that you do not put pressure on pity and do not stand with an outstretched hand, you are from another category;
- You give people the opportunity to touch socially significant goals;
- Crowdfunding platforms provide reliable processes for transferring money from hand to hand. Bypassing intermediaries, for example, in the person of the authorities;
- Crowdfunding involves testing an idea for social significance and, in fact, is a pre-order of the society.

Among the disadvantages were the need to pay interest to the platform and the inability to collect less than a certain amount (usually 50 % of the stated amount). With regard to the collected amounts, the general opinion is that 50 % of the collected funds or more is a success.

The authors associate their positive experience of crowdfunding with the following aspects of using platforms: a high-quality video message, a description of the project aimed at the target audience, a well-thought-out financial goal and collection period, as well as interesting rewards for transferring money.

The rewards, according to experts, should include material (subscription to a publication or a CD with a film), but no longer material (lunch with a team of journalists, "big Himalayan thank you" – in the case of a film about bears, online courses on media literacy and the like). Crowdfunding rewards are also called lots, in general they can be divided into 4 types: symbolic, electronic, material (the manuscript of the author's poem, a picture, etc.) and event:

- symbolic lot, this is the lot "just want to support";



As for the video message, the consensus of the experts was obvious: – A high-quality video doubles the chances of the project's success;

- a video with an appeal to the target audience expands the possibilities of promoting the project in social media and after its completion.

The timing of the video message was indicated to be optimal for no more than two minutes, the need for a clear definition of the target audience, good sound quality, a change of plans and the presence of sincerity and motivation for action in it was emphasized:

- It is necessary to indicate in two or three phrases for each item which project is being proposed, who is doing it (and why they can be trusted), what has already been done and what remains to be done, how much is missing: the amount and explanation and give step-by-step instructions on how to transfer money;

– In fact, we are opening an online store, in connection with this, certain vocabulary and marketing approaches are involved, journalists are not used to this; at the time of crowdfunding, we are less media than a store, we have to think about how to "sell" an idea, and most media have no such experience. And here the most useful thing is to find a volunteer with online sales experience, you can also read about online stores;

- A high-quality video approximately doubles the project's chances of success. In addition, it expands the possibility of promoting the project after its implementation.

The effectiveness of using the first persons of the project team and opinion leaders in the video was emphasized:

- You can ask the whole team of your important connections – someone can turn to a famous rapper, and someone – to a well-known media, from this you need to make a mix, often strange;

- Quotes from the video can then be used in the texts of press releases and posts in social networks.

The experience of media crowdfunding has shown the special importance of promoting fundraising: the need to promote the project on social networks and other digital platforms during crowdfunding was noted by all speakers, Among the information guides for promotion are:

- the very fact of crowdfunding;
- individual lots of it (each lot is an information guide of a press release, as an "event for itself");
- a weekly report in the form of news about the progress of fundraising for the project and constant gratitude to the enumerators (and with a request to disseminate information about the project).

News about the project is automatically sent to the mail of people who have already supported the project. In fact, the author forms a community of people around his project, it is not by chance that experts suggest calling this process community funding ([Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2019](#)). One of the most significant points of fundraising is the remuneration of its participants.

Communication with experts allowed us to identify the following types of audiences for media crowdfunding:

- Inner circle, people loyal to the author of the project;
- Loyal, but not personally familiar to the author of the project;
- Completely unfamiliar.

The latter, in addition to the opportunity to get involved as a participant in the implementation of a socially significant idea, can be motivated by a "personal story". So, Y. Korneva, who shot a documentary about the place where the children of the repressed lived during the Stalinist repressions (the film *Narym's Children*), said that with the help of digital platforms it is possible not only to raise funds for filming. Journalists find guides, expedition participants, things necessary for the expedition and even find the main character of the film (for example, a film about exiles in Narym was actively supported by people whose parents were exiled to the territory of the alleged filming). At the same time, as for even symbolic rewards (for example, in the form of credits after the film), often with the support of such socially significant and educational projects, sponsors refuse them and wish to remain unknown. However, the mention in the credits (for example, *YouTube* allows you to make titles of any scale) is important for some, because belonging to the project is one of the ways to publicly declare your civic position.

As experts noted, it is important to indicate the social significance of the project and why it will definitely succeed in the appeal on the platform:



- People like to be participants in something outstanding.

There are also subtleties regarding fundraising:

- it is better to collect not the entire amount, but for specific aspects of the project (for example, for camera traps and an expedition for the film operator);

- the main thing is to "get away from zero" on the site, you can even ask your friends to transfer the minimum amount, strangers, as a rule, do not want to be the first.

Interestingly, what Planeta.ru Recently, it has been expanding opportunities specifically for media projects, increasing their own production support and opening new thematic categories. During the pandemic, the platform for the first time opened not only project fundraising, but also allowed the media to raise funds for their current needs. The recently appeared category "Ecology" is another niche for a media video course about nature, animals and the corners of the planet untouched by civilization.

In general, the practice of media crowdfunding over the past two years has been successful. This is evidenced by the statistics for 2020, courtesy of the owners Planeta.ru to the authors of the article: fees in the category "Literature and Journalism") 43.7 million (from January 1 to December 20, 2020), 136 out of 437 projects are successful (30 %). The share of successful media projects from the total number of projects launched on the platform is 27.5 % (first place).

The fact that this practice will scale is evidenced by the fact that in the fall of 2021, the Alliance of Independent Regional Publishers (ANRI) opens a full-time crowdfunding school for journalists.

The success of crowdfunding for media projects in Russia is explained, in our opinion, by several reasons, in particular, a decrease in the number of media independent of the authorities and an increase in its audience. Analysts also note that "Media projects have both advantages and disadvantages when creating a page. The advantages are that the crowd project looks very similar to the material on the Internet resource ... It may be much easier for a person from the media to come up with a bright, engaging initiative title than for someone else: after all, this is his professional skill" (Kudinov, 2021). Perhaps it is precisely with the ability to "submit" a project and organize its informational promotion that the success of media projects is connected.

The most famous crowdsourcing platform today is the American development *Help a Reporter Out* (HARO), created in 2008 and serving today, according to the owners, more than 100 thousand subscribers, including 30 thousand media representatives.

There is an analog of such a platform in Russia named *Pressfeed*, developed by journalist K. Bocharsky, editor of the *Prospects* section of the *Secret of the Firm* magazine of the *Kommersant* Publishing House, who admitted in an interview that the launch of the American platform "blew up the journalism and PR industry" and prompted him to take action: "It was only in 2014 that I returned to the project again. In July, he began development, and in December he already launched it. After the sale of the *Secret of the Firm* to Rambler he said: "I no longer started looking for a job as a journalist and devoted myself entirely to *Pressfeed*. The journalist completed programming courses and in 2016 "rolled out the project to the market."

Today the Service *Pressfeed.ru* helps media, newsmakers and experts to find each other. With its help, journalists collect expert opinions of various specialists in order to refer to them in their publications. There, editors are also looking for authors who are ready to write full-fledged columns and speakers for TV and radio appearances. Although the service positions itself primarily as a PR opportunity, it provides an opportunity to express an independent, sometimes non-trivial opinion, its civic position and voice this position through leading media. Both sides benefit from such cooperation. The media receives exclusive content and insights. Newsmaker – wide coverage of the target audience and the opportunity to express their expert and civic position.

The experiment of working on the research site showed the effectiveness of the platform. Every working day at 10:00 and 15:00 (depending on the time stated during registration), the service sends to the experts a selection of journalists' requests, while not allowing them to communicate directly with the journalist, thereby protecting him from spam, intrusive and unsolicited communication.

The service also provides a number of additional amenities, for example, automatic termination of receiving responses after the deadline specified by the author. This cuts off the "long tail" of latecomers, which also makes the mailbox cleaner and eliminates low-value communication.

An important function is robotically informing authors about the acceptance or rejection of their expert comments and adding links to publications on the service. An interactive notification is also sent to the mail about these actions.

The reporter and the source on the site have their own personal accounts. Request and response feeds are displayed there, statuses and additional information are visible. Reporters sort responses to "accepted" and "rejected", these statuses are visible to the source, which also makes the work more visual and transparent. In addition, sources see on the "main panel" the number of accepted responses for each relevant request and, assessing the "competition", they can decide whether they should offer their comment or not. It is clear that a comment is the work, often of several people, very busy. And no one wants to do this work in vain.

One of the biggest difficulties in the current work of a journalist is to get a reasoned independent opinion often on sudden problems of society from an expert, and the technical process of editorial offices requires doing this as quickly as possible. As our research has shown, the subject of requests depends on the political and economic conjuncture, as well as on a kind of media model. So, during our experiment, several editorial offices in one week requested comments on the topic of using feminines in speech such as "blogger", "editor", and one of the authors of the article managed to publish two different comments in two leading media resources.

Every week, journalists make a lot of inquiries on topics such as retail, real estate, construction, finance, auto, transport and logistics, law, IT and telecom, personnel and management, which corresponds to the most powerful industry and thematic areas in the Russian media. In fact, the flow of requests is a reflection of which topics are most actively covered by the media.

Responding to a request about the statistics of the authors of the article, the platform reported the following: "We have about 100 thousand users, we are growing one and a half times a year. The service is used by more than half of media resources in the Russian Federation. We publish 60-70 new requests per day, their number reaches 1500 per month. Journalists, on average, accept 4 out of 10 comments sent. It is enough for an expert to log on to the platform a couple of times a week and respond to 2-3 requests in order to get mentions in 100+ publications within a year". Regarding the professions that journalists most often involve in cooperation, the following data is provided: "For the period from October 2020 to April 2021, journalists searched 2164 times for financiers who could comment on current market events registered on the service. They consulted top managers 1777 times. The opinion of doctors was interested in the media 1434 times.

In addition, the top 10 most media professions included lawyers (1370 requests), real estate specialists (1266 requests), retail (1004 requests), IT (1001 requests), marketers (938 requests), psychologists (811 requests) and political scientists (790 requests)."

The platform formulates its mission as follows: "to rid the market of ineffective PR communication by making the requests of editorial offices clear and open for companies. Protect journalists from PR spam and give them the opportunity to receive invoices and comments for their notes on request and on time."

The author of the study, having registered on the website, received a good result of the demand for comments from journalists (the results are 78 % responses for 6 months of 2021). As for using the platform directly as a training platform, it is possible in two ways: students perform "tasks" for the media in the "Freelance" tab, in which you can find tasks from writing a press release and editing articles for corporate publications or public publications to collecting information on topics of interest to users.

As for regional media, media education at the level of training of regional editorial offices increases their presence on the platform and opens up new opportunities for finding federal experts and creators of high-quality content by volunteers. After the seminar held in Veliky Novgorod, among the registered users were *Your News*, *Novgorod Portal*, *Steamship Online*, *Newsroom* and *TT Finance* (all represent the media of the region). At the moment, the portal is mainly used by federal media or media of cities with millions of people and their regional versions.

Thus, content crowdsourcing, carried out through a digital platform, is a new effective tool for experts, media and media education trainers.

## 5. Conclusion

The creation and support of independent media projects became possible in Russia through the active development of special digital platforms and are associated with an increase in the status of the audience in the media sphere. Crowdsourcing and crowdfunding is an actual media practice

of our time, actively involving an increasing number of digital natives. Digital platforms of this kind are an undoubted resource of media education both in terms of training for students and in the training of active journalists. Of course, the digital platforms studied by the authors are also not pure benefactors – they are intermediaries connecting the audience and the expert community with journalists, having their own financial interest. However, financial and textual activity of media addressees is a serious resource for supporting independent media and those aimed at a narrow target audience and its specific interests.

In this case, the media offers the audience that supports it some preferences and status names, not least related to the implementation of the civic mission of the press.

It is necessary to encourage the involvement of students in digital media platforms: whether it is their attempt to raise funds for their own startup or content participation in existing media, involvement in media projects as an investigation volunteer, a guide to a remote area for film crews, and so on.

The creation of high-quality content while minimizing costs due to the "wisdom of the crowd" and the potential of its civic activism are changing the system of relations in society that lie on the "power- audience-media" axis. The conviction of the authors of the article that media crowdfunding and media outsourcing are a prospect for civil activism in Russia is also confirmed by the crowdsourcing efforts of the authorities (in particular, the ASI initiatives).

A possible research perspective of the topic should include the study of the audience involved in financial and expert support of the media, as well as monitoring the social and economic effects of digital crowdsourcing and crowdfunding platforms in Russia.

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## Diasporic Identities and their Representation through Cinema: An Analysis of Diasporic Film through South Asian Cinemas

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### Abstract

Diaspora signifies process of diffusion set of a person who migrated to a different region or country apart from their native which because of employment, industrialization, modern lifestyle and choice of self for high standard living. Foreign Migrations (popularly termed as ‘*diasporas*’ get shaped through intercontinental exodus immigrating approach and it can happen voluntary or by forced. To address these issues of migrating cultures, their struggle for self-identity; the medium of ‘Cinema’ is well versed and very monolithic in representation. The present study adopts the ‘Social identity theory’, which is certainly defined in predicting the norms of the audiences how they perceived the notion of values depicted in cinema. Social identity theory in this paper will propose that an event or occurrences can alter the perception as a metaphorical approach. The present study will analyse these films like *The Namesake* (Indian Film), *East is East* (UK), *West is West* (UK), *New York* (Indian film), *My Name is Khan* (Indian film) by evaluation method. The particularistic form of case study method will also use to construct the metaphor with semiology. Cinema is unique and it is the only one medium which is self-explanatory; this present study will try to understand the struggle of diasporic identity, clashes of culture, battle of individualism which is narrated and depicted in south Asian cinema. This study has mainly focused about the Cinema in India and Pakistan as a key parameter in defining the attributes of self-struggle and battle of identity.

**Keywords:** diaspora, representation, cinema, migration, metaphor, identity, particularistic form, South Asia.

### 1. Introduction

Word diaspora is associated with displacement of Jewish community from their homeland. History says that Jewish people were dispersed from their “homeland” due to attack from Babylonian king and Assyrian King. The term “*diaspora*” is a Greek word means scattered or dispersed. This term become most popularly used during 17<sup>th</sup> century in English language to indicate Jewish displacement. Soon “*diaspora*” is significantly used to indicate displaced population of any community living outside their homeland ([Diaspora..., 2021](#)).

What are transnational movies?

Movies that transcend boundary of any particular and exhibit multicultural aesthetic and narrative strategies in making the plot. The idea alludes people to create linkage between people and nations and its institution thereby creating an environment of collaboration in monetary,

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information, commodity on cross boundary basis. It is considered that transnational movies are part of broader collaborative projects of nations along with Hollywood domination in world film market, the objective is to create surge in film circulation on basis of available technological platform (Transnational..., 2021).

In their issue "Transnational Cinemas" (Higbee, Lim, 2010) used the term "critical transnationalism" as an opposition to traditional terminology without any definition to it. It has been general trend to associate the term "transnationalism" with diasporic cinema or postcolonial cinema in the Western countries while theorizing transnationalism. The Western scholars consider this concept in connection of relationship that film and filmmaker to mainstream cinema and with host country.

#### *Objective of the study*

Following are the broad objectives of the study:

- To study and understand the essence of South Asian diasporic cinema and its attributes,
- To evaluate the genre, theory (social identity) in respect of diasporic attribution.

## **2. Materials and methods**

Recent research is done on *Desi films: Articulating images of South Asian identity in a global communication environment*. In this paper researcher wants to examine how Indian diasporic film acts as vehicle of cultural articulation and debate. Researcher provides theoretical foundation for hegemony or resistance to the notion of immigrant's identity and ethnicity articulation by them in interstitial zone. She also discussed the source of hegemony from Indian and Western Media. Finally, researcher discussed the creation of hybrid genre and how it is popularly reflected in Indian diasporic film thereby exploring a new genre (Sharma, 2011).

Recent research is done by M.G. Durham in 2007 on *Constructing the new ethnicities: media, sexuality, and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls* on 2007. Researcher shows how adolescent stages of immigrant girls are affected by issues of race, culture and nation that intersect with analysis on gender and sex. In this paper researcher tried to analyze the role of media in their sexual identity construction. Intensive interview method was used for focused group (Durham, 2007).

*Concepts of transnational cinema: towards a critical transnationalism in film studies* is the recent research work done by (Higbee, Lim 2010). Researcher focuses on mapping the various concepts of transnational films in last ten years to fifteen years. Also tried to understand the state of deployment, related issues and problems with it. The study was done to identify critically transnationalism in film studies and understand clearly the difference between local and global, national and transnational. Researcher identified that "transnational cinema" should not be "descriptive" or "prescriptive" as cross-border issues are resolved with power. Researcher proposes critical and discursive stance to the concept of transnational film. Case study method was used to analyse transnational film by studying cases of diasporic film, exilic films and post-colonial films of East Asia and China (Higbee, Lim, 2010).

In 2001 H. Naficy in his research *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* tried to focus on filmmaking of post colonial, third world and other displaced individual in the west. The study was done to find out how the personal experience of diasporic people is translated to cinema. Case study is done on diasporic, postcolonial, exiled movie. Comparative study is done with Hollywood movie to identify line of difference. Experience of displacement or expatriation differs from person to person but their film exhibit similarity in style, aesthetic, memory driven narratives and also emphasizes political agency for their concern with their identity. This particular genre of movie is named *Accented Movie* by the researcher when compared with Hollywood movie (Naficy, 2001).

C. Klein in 2004 published his research work titled *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: A Diasporic Reading*, where he tried to study how Ang Lee in his movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* created aesthetic form which is shaped by his relation and ties with Chinese homeland and same is the situation for Chinese diasporic people. Study was done to analyse a diasporic film in the light of film makers perspective to create an artistic form which is influenced by his diasporic identity in American hostland. Case study was done with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* directed by Ang Lee where he represented diasporic identity of Tiwan in USA. Study revealed that Ang Lee's attempt to create old china appeal by using Mandarin language in the movie makes younger diasporic audience less interested who are not used to that language (Klein, 2004).

J. Desai, published in 2004 his research work as book titled *Beyond Bollywood: The cultural politics of South Asian diasporic film*. Researcher tried to study the south Asian diasporic scenario in cultural sphere. It entails on how trans-nationalism affect diasporic cultural product. Researcher tried to analyse Bollywood movie specially on diasporic life to analysis its influence on western as well as diasporic audience. Case study of few successful diasporic Hindi language film of 1990s decade was taken to understand diasporic cultural impact on audience. Study revealed that Indian movies in Hindi language dominated largely South Asian diasporic audience (Desai, 2004).

P. Werbner, in 2004 published a research article titled *Theorising complex diasporas: purity and hybridity in the South Asian public sphere in Britain*. Researcher examines the creation of South Asian diasporic public sphere in England through films. Researcher also focuses on “cultural hybridity, inter-generational conflict, family politics, excess of consumption” etc. On other hand there is diasporic public sphere of Muslim population dominated by Muslim leaders in Britain. These are the two prominent diaspora (Werbner, 2004).

Research Gap-It is evident that research is done on diasporic identity of mainly Hindi movies of Bollywood. There is also research work on influence of these movies on diasporic immigrant audience. But there is hardly any research work on representation of diasporic identity through South Asian films with special focus on Indian and Pakistani diasporic movies.

None of the previous research describe much how transnational cinema can practically be possible when English is mostly used as preferred language for these movies. Researchers did not address this area much. Also funding of these films is big question mark if language is not-English.

Theoretical Framework-The present study adopts the ‘*Social identity theory*’ which is certainly defined in predicting the definite intergroup behaviors on the basis of perceived group status differences, the perceived legitimacy and stability of those status differences, and the perceived ability to move from one group to another (Islam, 2013).

Social identity theory in this paper will propose that an event or occurrences can alter individual behaviors if it can modify their self-identity or part of their self-concept that derives from the knowledge of, and emotional attachment to the group (Islam, 2013).

This contrast with junctures where the term “*social identity theory*” is generally refers to theorizing about human social selves.

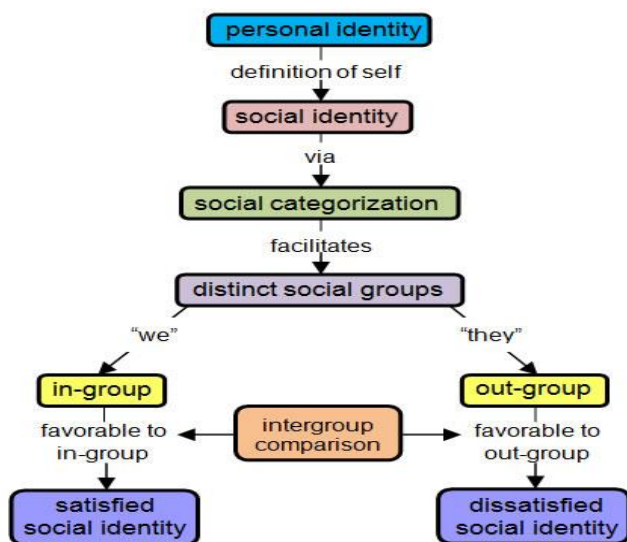


Fig. 1. Social Identity Structure (source: Redmond, Alderton, 2016)

Conceptual Framework – *Accented Movie* genre theory is first developed by H. Naficy in 2001 where this genre is categorized a film genre based on their diasporic identity in Western country. People who were displaced in post colonial period, diasporic or maybe in exile has different perspective to the concept of diaspora and their way of viewing cultural identity differ from person to person. Even the generations differ in their idea of diaspora. Language plays an important role in this diasporic film, which is mostly in English to reach to diasporic audience of modern generation. It has thin line of difference from Hollywood production (Naficy, 2001).

Theory of *Transnationalism in film studies* is mostly debated by researchers like (Higbee, Lim, 2010) in their research work. The theory identifies the line of difference between regional,

national and global film. The idea of transnationalism in film is categorized further into diasporic, post colonial, exile movie based on theme and storyline (Higbee, Lim, 2010).

#### Research Questions

Based on the review of related literature, the research has formed the following research questions:

RQ 1. How the South Asian Cinema has treated the concept of diasporic cinema and its core essence?

RQ 2. How diasporic film deal with different genre/particular genre?

RQ 3. What are the elements and attributes taken up by the diasporic cinema to embedded the segregated audience?

RQ 4. How social identity theory junctures with South Asian diasporic cinema?

#### Research Methodology

The present study has been analyzed these films:

- *The Namesake* (Indian Film), *East is East* (UK),
- *West is West* (UK), *New York* (Indian film),
- *My Name is Khan* (Indian film)
- *Children of War* (Indian film) by evaluation method.

The Evaluation Methodology is a tool to help one better understand the steps needed to do a quality evaluation (Baehr, 2004).

The particularistic form of case study method will be used to construct the metaphor with semiology.

### 3. Discussion

Even though diasporic movies are now considered as an international genre it fails to address the fact that cultural exchange is ‘*never a politically neutral exchange*’, instead it implies ‘*a dynamic relationship between a dominant host*’ culture and a minority culture.’ Despite a lack of a singular theme, diasporic movies continue to be an important part of film culture and are also a strong political tool. For a deeper understanding of the current turmoil among British Muslims, or even just some sense of what lies behind Pakistan's current troubles, will leave disappointed. This, no doubt, is deliberate: a corrective to the poisonous atmosphere of witch-hunt and Islamophobia that dominates some sections of British society.

The taken cases of the Diasporic cinema (in this present research) focuses more on cultural aspects rather than ‘*nation*’ due to this, there no linguistic and cultural boundaries. However, there are similarities in terms of genres, themes, execution and targeted audience. *Ethnicity, race, culture, identity, colonialism and capitalism* are some of the themes associated with it.

J. Desai has published another important research article on 2006 titled *Bollywood abroad: South Asian diasporic cosmopolitanism and Indian cinema*. Here he examines appeal of diasporic cosmopolitan culture on Bollywood and diasporic movie. Transnational migration took place during 1960s and 70s in USA from South Asia. This created a cosmopolitan environment in their host country. Thus, creating cosmopolitan ambience for diasporic audience. The study aimed at understanding South Asian Cosmopolitanism through analysis of films. The study analyses the way film is used to “*produce and articulate transnational cosmopolitan subjects*”. Content analysis of Bollywood movies and diasporic movies is done from perspective of cultural cosmopolitanism appeal. The researcher concluded that South Asian American has particular pattern of consumption of Bollywood movies and cosmopolitan diasporic film (Desai, 2006).

In 2005, R. Kaur published a book on *Cruising on the Vilayeti bandwagon: diasporic representations and reception of popular Indian movies Bollyworld*. After 1990s globalization has changed the gesture of transnational Indian films. Researcher tried to investigate current scenario of Bollywood movies with special reference to diasporic representation in such films and how it is received by diasporic audience in 1990s. Researcher has critically examined the types of narrative and characters represented in Bollywood diasporic movie. She also examined a sample transnational audience in London for reception and review of Bollywood movie. Researcher could conclude that in overall there was “*qualitatively different level of engagement*”. Researcher further concluded that there is presence of “*reflexive spectatorship*” which has “*triple orientation*” of reception: a) they have relation with Hindi films, b) reception in relation to being Indian/Asian in West where Hindi films signify “*cultural repository of alterity*”. c) “*in relation to larger repertoire of filmic reference*” that made Hindi films comparable to other movies traditionally (Kaur, 2005).



C.P. Shimizu in his study argued that there is a transition shift as a compartmentalize from for NGO (Non-Government Organisations to independent media industry (university also been included) for 'Asia American cinema' which has begun in 1980 till date (Shimizu, 2017). They further suggested that to make the term 'Asian American Cinema' pertinent in today's context, attempts should be made to take all minor groups not limited or specific to one but to entails a larger group in a broader sense (Shimizu, 2017).

T.M. Bordun in his study of *the end of extreme cinema studies* has defined thrilling cinema in an international level with a less focussed narrative in order to practice and usage the term "unforeseen (story) disagreements" can be the reason of highlighted "ruthless vehemence" and "graphic erotic metaphors" (Bordun, 2017). Determination of audiences are at the key point in order to consume and access the unyielding exposure to graphic dismay which is vital area to ponder upon (Bordun, 2017).

On their study of understanding the critical trends in transnational cinema, the author states that the terms like 'remake, coproduction, cross contamination of genres' for the disposition of cinemas across China, India, Korea and United Arab Emirates (Yang et al., 2020).

On his research *Impossible Homecoming: Cinematic Returns of Korean Diaspora in Post-Cold War East Asia* (Kim, 2019) how contemporary Korean diaspora films remain presented and combined to integrated with South Korean cinema with the narrative discourse flows to convey the construction of national culture in aspects of motherland and in turn, hand also signifies that the order of discover new-fangled procedures of transcontinental practices through cinematic thoughts and to have a wider array of spectatorial involvement.

On his study on *Exploring Armenian Diasporic Cinema from the Third Space*, the author focusses on examining diverse filmic depictions of Armenian diasporic topics of Armenian "homeland" (Paalman, 2019). The concept of filmic depictions has appeared owing to the postcolonial and poststructuralist considerations of distinctiveness and diasporas which have then commanded to comparable conceptualizations within Armenian diasporic erudite discourse (Paalman, 2019).

S.T. Flanigan has published a review article on *Crowdfunding and Diaspora Philanthropy: An integration of literature and major concepts* in 2017. The researcher has tried to review different relevant literature on crowdfunding and diaspora philanthropy and thereby analysed different "overlapping characteristics", limitations and strength of these practises. Thus, focused on potential or ability of crowdfunding towards diaspora philanthropy with special focus on challenges faced in particular context of global South (Flanigan, 2017).

B. Ellerson has published a research article on *African Women of the Screen as Cultural Producers: An Overview by Country* in 2018. The researcher tried to show the experience of African woman as cultural producer during the age of screen culture, moving image and audio-visual media. The researcher has done survey country-wise to find how African woman acted as cultural worker and strive for the cause or out of sense of responsibility in a dangerous situation so that African stories are told and images are seen. For this purpose, to achieve African woman has acted their role as producer, distributor, exhibited, discussed, became film critique, archived and documented it, also preserved it (Ellerson, 2018).

W.-S. Hee has published a research article on *Accented Style: On Namewee's Sinophone Malaysian Film and Rap Songs* in 2019. The researcher tried to analyse representation of sino-Malay relationship in different works of Name wee. It was found that these works of Namewee refused to stick to traditional ethnic framework. Researcher found that accented style of Namewee's work give rise to multi-mediated, multicultural aspects of sinophone theory. The sinofication of theory of authenticity is criticised by researcher and he identified the national identity playing important role to resist racist aspects and highlight Malay version of mythology of indigeneity (Hee, 2019).

D. Valančiūnas published a research article on "Haunting memories: Sri Lankan civil war, trauma and diaspora in literature and film" in 2021. The researcher tried to analyse the literary and cinematographic representation of Sri Lankan civil war. The literary work of American author V.V. Ganeshanathan's novel *Love marriage* was analysed and French filmmakers screen work *Dheepan* is also analysed. The researcher tried to find how different form of cultural production like novel and film developed by two different cultured people on same event expressed the traumatic incident of civil war of Sri Lankan in diasporic space. The result revealed that their work's highlighting of trauma narratives which focus on "haunting memories" of civil war, which



further reflect transnational and transhistorical aspect of trauma possessed by diasporic people even though they are born in different time at different place (Valančiūnas, 2021).

A. Yue published research article on *the diaspora advantage of Pauline Chan-1956* from multicultural filmmaker to cultural broker in 2018. The researcher tried to analyse screen career of Australia's highest profile Chinese film maker Pauline Chan in the light of new approach of "diaspora advantage". The theory is marked by mobility than culturalism thereby benefit brought by diaspora group's skills that has allowed transnational actor to flourish beyond limit and accelerating growth path of country of origin and settlement. The researcher further documented the transition of Chan from "multicultural film maker to cultural intermediary" therefore increasing her diasporic advantage in film market in Australia and China and opened up new business route outside the limit of policy (Yue, 2018).

They portray the cultural and social conditions of the people and often interact with the culture and society of the country where they live. They address issues of the paradoxes of exile, belonging to different cultures and communities which often face xenophobic hate, the clash of identities, etc. In academia, diasporic cinema had become an important part of film studies.

#### 4. Results

##### *East is East*

This is a comedy genre and a British film of 1971 by D. O'Donnell. The family faces a constant battle to inculcate in his six children traditional Pakistani Muslim values as they have migrated with acculturation with new social milieu. This movie depicts on the hesitance to carry of their birth place identity which the children of protagonists are unwilling to live with. They just want to discard the style of appearance (apparels and customs related to their native country) which satirically subjugates the change of adoption of cultural practices by the younger generation of today.

##### *West is West*

*West Is West* being a 2010 British comedy-drama film directed by A. DeEmmony. A sequel to the 1999 comedy film *East Is East*, it was written by A. Khan-Din and produced by L. Udwin for Assassin Films and BBC Films. It managed to combine an effervescent cheerfulness with simple but effective points about how ethnic identity changes across successive generations of immigrants. No doubt with one eye on current political debate, this belated sequel looks to develop the theme and provide context to the arguments about immigration.

##### *The Namesake*

Mira Nair directed this movie on 2006 which falls in drama genre of English language. The story portrays the skirmishes of the immigrants of India (from the story plot revolves around the 'Bengali' cultural identity and scuffles been shifted as a first-generation settler in foreign country. The story is quite fascinating to see the shift of cultural practices with mother tongue usages in family quite difficult and moronic for American born kids especially after the main protagonist's death. It later on appreciates the ritual practices of 'Bengali' and gives a world view of 'Indian Kolkata' submerged ethnocultural identities as a whole.

##### *Children of War*

*Children of War*, also known as *The Bastard Child*, is a 2014 Hindi drama film directed by M. Devrat. The film released on 16 May 2014 in India. Based on real events in Bangladesh, 1971. The film is about how rape and religion were used as war weaponry. The film deals with the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, focusing on the genocide and when 400,000 women were raped and 3 million people were killed. As the film progresses towards its climax, the three stories begin to intertwine with one another.

##### *My Name is Khan*

*My Name Is Khan* is a 2010 Indian Hindi-language drama film directed by K. Johar. The film generated a great deal of publicity for itself due to three main reasons: first, the multiple political controversies surrounding the film and its lead actor; second, Khan's presence in the film and third, the reunion of the "golden pair" of Khan and Kajol. The story of an Indian Muslim man who suffers from the Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism that impacts social interaction abilities. He is arrested mistakenly as a suspected terrorist in post-9/11 Los Angeles.

**Table 1.** Diasporic identities and their representation through cinema

Films	Social Categorization	Social Identification	Social Comparison	In-group Favoritism	Out-group Derogation
<i>The Namesake</i>	The film captures the journey of two generations of the Bengali family in America.	India is a style of upbringing and attitude that transcends territory.	Despite of Americanisms, long journey self-discovery still beckoning them.	India is an idea that lives in the heart and the mind, rather than a land-locked territory.	Ostensibly are thoroughbred Americans
<i>East is East</i>	<i>East is East</i> is a tragi-comedy in an Anglo-Pak setting.	The immigrant's identity crisis.	Racism and violence in a light-hearted yet sensitive way.	A father who wants his children brought up in a conservative Muslim way	He faces a constant battle to inculcate in his six children traditional Pakistani Muslim values.
<i>Children of War</i>	Depiction of endless suffering, helplessness, genocide and language hatred, at heart	To recount Bangladesh's painful journey to freedom.	Story of separation, survival, longing and utmost resilience, with the backdrop of war.	The film is tense and atmospheric.	A war, which lasted for nine months, led to innumerable brutal killings, rape, loss of hope and innocence.
<i>West is West</i>	Culture-clash comedy drama set in the period shown in 1976	The film that focused on the travails of a Pakistani-British family trying to cope with the cultural divide.	The man who struggles between his twin identities: Pakistani Brit and Pakistani farmer	East may be East, West may be West, but people are the same, despite their superficial differences.	Manage to communicate despite their language barriers.
<i>My Name is Khan</i>	Lead golden pair of actors	Truly fictional but the true	As people face real hard racism and called over as terrorists just because they are Muslims.	Multiple political controversies	Story of every Muslims living in non-Islamic countries.

## 5. Conclusion

The Indian Diaspora finally finds its voice: elegant, articulate and very real with true reflection of contemporary society. Here, the sample movies taken for this present research, there is no hysterical clash-of-culture cacophony about how the Patels, Ganguli's and the Punjabis leave India, only to create Little India's all over the world. The researcher has found that there is no

hullabaloo about the *Angrezi-born-confused-desi* dilemmas that the second generation *NRI* kids succumb to: an overdose of drugs, sex and the dark side of the moon. Instead, there is a gentle probing, a mild introspection on cross cultural conflicts coupled with a quiet celebration of the idea of India, minus all chauvinism.

Dysphoric movies exist in all nations. Even though diasporic movies are now considered as an international genre it fails to address the fact that cultural exchange is ‘never a politically neutral exchange’, instead it implies ‘a dynamic relationship between a dominant ‘host’ culture and a minority culture.’ Despite a lack of a singular theme, diasporic movies continue to be an important part of film culture and are also a strong political tool.

The future study prospects may emphasize the cross-cultural barriers, communication decipher factors etc. The present research has taken selected films with purposive sampling technique, the result would have differed if it would have adopted other sampling techniques. The present research is a qualitative study in nature. Five selected films were taken into consideration more search can be done for other language film.

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## Media Manipulation in the Modern French and Swiss Press

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### Abstract

Applying the anti-manipulation media education model that we have developed, we analyzed 70 articles on Russian topics in French and Swiss newspapers over the period 2018-2021. The findings show that only few of them feature objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Thus, many of articles in the French-language press contain, to one degree or another, signs of manipulation, bias and propaganda techniques. It is only in the case of the coverage of the Russian political opposition's activities that the article might have a positive key. In particular, it turns out that the most common manipulative techniques used by French-speaking journalists in their articles on the Russian topic are: half-truth/leaving out some information, plain folks, appeal to authority, selection/framing, loaded language aimed at emotional impact rather than relying on the facts' logic.

**Keywords:** media manipulation, media, press, France, Russia, fake news, analysis, media studies, media literacy, propaganda, ideology.

### 1. Introduction

The topic of media manipulation has become more than relevant in recent years. The drastic development of the Internet, in particular social networks, has added additional opportunities for the dissemination of fake news and other false information. Notably, traditional media go along with these trends as well. The modern press, as a rule, comes out in two versions - on paper and the Internet, and, as our study of the French language press has shown, it often resorts to manipulative methods of various kinds, pursuing certain political and economic goals.

### 2. Materials and methods

In the course of our research, we analyzed a number of scientific studies related to media manipulation and 70 articles from French-language newspapers that deal with the Russian topic.

### 3. Discussion

The problems of propaganda, misinformation, media manipulations, and fake news have been repeatedly addressed in scientific research (Bakir, McStay, 2018; Balmas, 2012; Bean, 2017; Berghel, 2017; Bertin et al, 2018; Bharali, Goswami, 2018; Bradshaw, Howard, 2018; Conroy et al., 2015; Dentith, 2017; Derakhshan Wardle, 2017; Farkas, Schou, 2018; Figueira, Oliveira, 2017; Goering, Thomas, 2018; Janze, Risius, 2017; Marwick, 2018; Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; Quandt et al, 2019; Ruchansky et al., 2017; Vargo et al., 2018 and others).

One should agree that "around the world, disinformation is spreading and becoming a more complex phenomenon based on emerging techniques of deception. Disinformation undermines

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human rights and many elements of good quality democracy; but counter-disinformation measures can also have a prejudicial impact on human rights and democracy. COVID-19 compounds both these dynamics and has unleashed more intense waves of disinformation, allied to human rights and democracy setbacks. Effective responses to disinformation are needed at multiple levels, including formal laws and regulations, corporate measures and civil society action" (Colomina et al., 2021).

In the study encompassing the year 2020, S. Bradshaw, H. Bailey and P.N. Howard identify three key trends of disinformation activity:

"1. Cyber troop activity continues to increase around the world. This year, we found evidence of 81 countries using social media to spread computational propaganda and disinformation about politics. This has increased from last years' report, in which we identified 70 countries with cyber troop activity.

2. Over the last year, social media firms have taken important steps to combat the misuse of their platforms by cyber troops. Public announcements by Facebook and Twitter between January 2019 and November 2020 reveal that more than 317,000 accounts and pages have been removed by the platforms. Nonetheless, almost US \$10 million has still been spent on political advertisements by cyber troops operating around the world.

3. Private firms increasingly provide manipulation campaigns. In our 2020 report, we found firms operating in forty-eight countries, deploying computational propaganda on behalf of a political actor. Since 2018 there have been more than 65 firms offering computational propaganda as a service. In total, we have found almost US \$60 million was spent on hiring these firms since 2009" (Bradshaw et al., 2021).

These disturbing trends emphasize the relevance of teaching and learning how to identify, counter media misinformation, and develop effective technologies for their analysis, especially for educational institutions.

#### 4. Results

Having applied the model of anti-manipulation media educational activity developed by us (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332), we rely on 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 this media text? Who will benefit if people accept this message? Who will lose? Whose point of view does the media text present? Does it appeal to logic or emotion? With what effect? Which values and priorities are conveyed as a result? (Wilson, 2019).

Based on this model and problematic issues, we analyzed 70 articles on "Russian topic" in French-speaking French and Swiss newspapers for the period 2018-2021. The analysis shows that only few (5) of them contained objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Thus, most of the articles in the Francophone press contained, to one degree or another, bias and propaganda clichés. It is only in the case of the coverage of the Russian political opposition's activities that the article has a positive key.

For example, consider an article titled "Russia: Sputnik V, Launched Like a Rocket Vaccine, Causes Distrust", published in the newspaper *Libération* (Jacques, 2021).

*Media text genre:* article on current events (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for credibility (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible mastermind 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?*

As sources of information, the article uses the opinions of an anonymous Russian nurse, a doctor and a representative of the Alliance of Doctors trade union close to the Russian opposition: "in fact, the Sputnik V vaccine, intended for certain age groups and the most vulnerable professions, is actually available for everyone. It comes in five-dose vials", – explains a nurse at a Moscow clinic, "and as soon as the bottle is opened, it should be used as soon as possible or thrown away". The young nurse went so far as to suggest that I, a non-priority foreigner, be vaccinated to prevent the loss of already opened doses, which indicates that those who wish are not fighting for places. ... The doses are not enough in relation to the population of the country, and too many in relation to the number of applicants, – said a representative of the Alliance of Doctors trade union close to the Russian opposition. – There are very few people who want to be vaccinated. Sometimes

you open a dose of vaccine, but only one or two people come in and the rest of the solution is thrown away unused. ... "Last week", says Nikolai, a doctor from a provincial town, "they came to us and asked who wants to be vaccinated. Naturally, there were not many people willing, only two or three people. I don't want that myself" (Jacques, 2021).

*Can you verify the source?*

It is impossible to verify the sources of information indicated in the *Libération* article, as they are presented in the text anonymously.

*Does the message refer to logic or emotion?*

This article is primarily addressed to the emotional sphere of readers, arguing that in addition to this vaccine, Russian society in general is very apprehensive about its national medication, and especially of the pharmaceutical industry. When there is a choice between imported pills, and their Russian counterparts, the population prefers foreign ones. This is even being used as a marketing argument by many private medical offices: the same will undoubtedly be the case when Western vaccines currently unavailable, will become extremely expensive in private clinics when allowed (Jacques, 2021).

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main objective of the article is to discredit Russian medicine in general and the *Sputnik V* vaccine, in particular, since, according to the French journalist, even among Russian doctors who are most susceptible to coronavirus infection and have priority for obtaining a vaccine, there is widespread mistrust. It makes the reader suspect that there is a reason behind the unwillingness to get vaccinated of people living in the country that is proud of the fact that it was the first one in the world to certify its national vaccine.

This was facilitated by the lack of quarantine and strict sanitary measures, as well as the underestimated mortality statistics until recently, which do not create a sense of emergency among the population. But, above all, despite all the triumph that accompanied the announcement of *Sputnik V*, there is great mistrust of this vaccine. ... The original sin of the *Sputnik V* vaccine continues to haunt it: after the euphoria of its official recognition this summer, it quickly became clear that it was made prematurely, and the third phase of clinical trials has not even begun (Jacques, 2021).

*Is there any information missing?*

The article only marginally mentions that *Sputnik V* turned out to be quite effective for vaccinated Russians. And there is no information at all about the opponents of vaccination in France and other Western European countries, although in fact, there are quite a few of them (see, for example, a publication on this topic by the France-Press news agency (France-Press, 2021).

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article clearly represents the opinion of the opponents of the Russian vaccine and lobbies the interests of manufacturers of Western antiviral vaccines.

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

If readers take the stand of the article's author, the manufacturers of Western antiviral vaccines will benefit, as indirectly the article supports the political decision not to certify the Russian vaccine in Europe.

*Assessment of the media text's credibility:* the facts are carefully mixed with biased selection, relying on the "authority" of anonymous experts and "plain folks" technique.

*Conclusion:* the media text contains a mixture of factual information and manipulation techniques.

Similar manipulative techniques can be found in the article "Covid-19: the controversial fate of the Russian *Sputnik V* vaccine" published in the newspaper *Le Monde* (Mandraud, Ayache, 2021).

*Media text genre:* article on current events (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible masterminds 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 information is the opinion of two journalists of the newspaper *Le Monde*, who claim that the Russian vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, which was touted by the head of the Kremlin as the best in the world, has to fight for recognition. The *Sputnik V* vaccine – a name that refers to the first Soviet satellite launched into space and the letter V for a symbol of victory – has so far been adopted by only a handful of developing countries attracted by its cost – less than \$ 10

(about euro 8.30) per dose; defending requires two doses, as is the case with its Western competitors, while maintaining close ties with the Kremlin. ... The *Sputnik V* vaccine, developed by the National Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology ... under real conditions suffers from the speed of its development. Its approval by the Russian authorities even before the scientific data was published and after limited testing undermined its credibility. Everything had to be done quickly, since Vladimir Putin first of all saw in this a powerful geopolitical tool for competing with the West. As a result, the spread of the *Sputnik V* vaccine primarily follows the influence curve of the Kremlin networks (Mandraud, Ayache, 2021).

*Can you verify the source?*

The article provides a number of real facts that are easy to verify (V. Putin's support for the Russian vaccine, its cost, the lack of recognition of *Sputnik V* by the leading Western countries).

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

The article mostly refers to the emotions of the audience, although it contains a number of well-known facts.

*What is the message of a media text?*

The political, ideological standpoint of the authors of the article is to discredit the actions of the Russian authorities (accusations of haste in the development of a vaccine, in the use of the vaccine as a geopolitical instrument of influence on the "third world countries", etc.). This stance undoubtedly meets the political and economic interests of the governments of leading Western countries, the interests of Western manufacturers of antiviral vaccines.

*Is there any information missing?*

The article does not say anything about the shortcomings of Western vaccines, nor about their testing period, as well as about the certain groups of people protests (including France) against vaccination, although there are many of them (Euronews, 2021; France-Presse, 2021; VOA news, 2021 and many other authoritative media sources).

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article clearly represents the opinion of opponents of the Russian anti-virus vaccine and lobbies the interests of manufacturers of Western antiviral vaccines.

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

Obviously, if readers support the position of the authors of the article, the manufacturers of Western antiviral vaccines will benefit. In addition, the article will add to the flow of excuses not to certify the Russian vaccine in the West.

*Assessment of the level of reliability of the media text:* the facts are intertwined with biased ones, framing, plain folks and scapegoat techniques are used.

*Conclusion:* media text contains a mixture of factual information and manipulation techniques.

An article in *Libération* with the eloquent title "Russia: the authorities are to blame for the Covid outbreak" (Markovic, 2021) is also devoted to the topic of a pandemic and vaccination.

*Media text genre:* article on current events (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible masterminds 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 information is the biased opinion of a journalist from the *Libération* newspaper, who persuades the readers that facing the rapidly growing numbers of infection and deaths from Covid-19, the Russian authorities have announced a number of measures. But this is too little and too late for a country with a very low level of vaccination ... "Measures announced in a dispersed manner over several days generally produce the effect of half measures ... This method is symptomatic of the manner in which the Russian government manages a pandemic: minimal and without a coherent strategy... A strategy like this could make sense if it were accompanied by mass vaccinations, but the people in the homeland of *Sputnik V*, proud to be the first in the world to officially register a vaccine against coronavirus, continue to avoid vaccinations. Only 35 % of the population received at least one dose of vaccine ... The responsibility is on the Russian propagandists. For 20 years they have been spreading conspiracy messages, discrediting any form of public involvement in political life, thereby creating conditions for the current vaccination fiasco. Discrediting Western vaccines was only reflected on the image of Russian vaccines. Explaining the failures of *Sputnik V*, which has not yet been approved by WHO or the European Union, by a

conspiracy of pharmaceutical companies, certainly Western and therefore Russophobic, could only reinforce the idea that vaccines are not so much a tool for saving lives as a geopolitical tool against which better to stay aloof. With enthusiasm broadcasting conspiracy theories about the coronavirus created by the American armed forces, one can only open the door for strengthening conspiracy theory to such an extent that a quarter of Russians today believe that the statistics of deaths from Covid are untrue, while they are not underestimated, but overestimated" (Markovic, 2021)

*Can you verify the source?*

A number of facts presented in the article are true (the relatively low degree of vaccination of the Russian population at the time of publication of the article in the second half of October 2021; non-recognition of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine by the WHO or the European Union; inconsistency of some measures) and are easily verified by official data. However, these real facts are manipulatively mixed in the article with political attacks against the course of the Russian government, while completely ignoring Western sources claiming the artificial origin of Covid-19, created with American money in a biological laboratory in Wuhan (see: Kessler, 2021; Lerner, Hvistendahl, 2021 and many others), etc.

*Does the message refer to logic or emotion?*

The article is primarily addressed to the emotional sphere of the audience, with the expectation that it lacks critical thinking and the skills of comparative analysis of facts and trends.

*What is the media text aimed at?*

The political, ideological pose of the author of the article is to discredit the actions of the Russian authorities (standard accusations of haste in the development of a vaccine, in the use of a vaccine as a geopolitical instrument of influence, in the absence of an effective plan for antiviral actions). This position undoubtedly meets the political and economic interests of the governments of leading Western countries, the interests of Western manufacturers of antiviral vaccines.

*Is there any information missing?*

This article does not say a word about the similar difficulties that the leading Western countries have experienced and are still facing when implementing anti-Covid measures, and there is no information about the statistics of Covid in the USA, Great Britain, France and Germany and other countries.

Nevertheless, according to BBC data as of the end of October 2021 (BBC News, 2021):

- in the United States, the total number of infected with Covid-19 reached 45.7 million, of which 0.7 million died, that is, the mortality rate was 226.1 per 100 thousand inhabitants;
- in the UK, the total number of infected with Covid-19 reached 9.1 million, of which 0.14 million died, that is, the death rate was 210.4 per 100 thousand inhabitants;
- in Russia, the total number of infected with Covid-19 reached 8.4 million, of which 0.2 million died, that is, the mortality rate was 162.2 per 100 thousand inhabitants;
- in France, the total number of infected Covid-19 reached 7.2 million, of which 0.12 million died, that is, the death rate was 175.4 per 100 thousand inhabitants;
- in Italy, the total number of infected Covid-19 reached 4.8 million, of which 0.13 million died, that is, the death rate was 219.1 per 100 thousand inhabitants;
- in Germany, the total number of infected with Covid-19 reached 4.6 million, of which 0.09 million died, that is, the death rate was 115.2 per 100 thousand inhabitants.

Thus, despite the high incidence of Covid-19 in Russia, in terms of mortality per 100 thousand inhabitants, as of the end of October 2021 the United States and Great Britain, France and Italy were ahead of Russia.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article clearly represents the views of opponents of Russian politics and the Russian antioxidant vaccine and lobbies for the interests of Western anti-Russian politicians.

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

Obviously, if readers support the position of the authors of the article, then anti-Russian Western politicians and manufacturers of Western antiviral vaccines will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of frankness of the media text:* biased selection, and anti-Russian propaganda are part of the submerged message of the media text.

*Conclusion:* the media text contains a mixture of real information and manipulation techniques.



An article in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* titled "Moscow will never concede Crimea but fears sanctions" (Barluet, 2021) is devoted to an acute political problem, due to which, since 2014, Western countries have imposed a number of sanctions on Russia.

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

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible commissioner 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 journalist of the *Le Figaro* newspaper mentions a number of experts who express different points of view on the legal status of Crimea. For example, "the most serious consequence of the Crimean Platform will be putting the Crimean issue back on to the international agenda, says political analyst Alexander Bedritsky. Although this topic is not very relevant, its resumption in the news could have the effect of consolidating and extending the sanctions policy, which was decided after the events of 2014. "From the point of view of the stated goals of the platform, such as the de-occupation of Crimea, this event is absolutely fruitless," another expert confirms, associate professor of the Department of Religious Studies of the Taurida Academy of the Crimean Federal University, political scientist Nikolai Kuzmin. "But various countries can use the "Crimean Platform" and participate in it as a subject of political bargaining with Russia", the expert adds (Barluet, 2021).

*Can you verify the source?*

Due to the fact that the article mentions the specific names of the experts (and their positions, places of work), it is possible to contact them in case one would want to, so that they could confirm the correctness of the citation of their opinions in *Le Figaro*. The author of the article draws the conclusion that although "Russia will never cede Crimea and will hold on to this position like cement for the foundation. It even serves as the basis for consensus in society" (Barluet, 2021), Russia still fears new Western sanctions. The article does not provide any real arguments in favor of such concerns.

*Does the message refer to logic or emotion?*

The article appeals to logic rather than emotion.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main objective of the article is to convince the audience that "international mobilization around Crimea worries Moscow, since this topic is at the heart of the national narrative promoted by Vladimir Putin. A narrative praising a great country that has raised its head and maintains its international status despite the hardships embodied in the image of the West" (Barluet, 2021), and Russia ultimately fears Western sanctions.

*Is there any information missing?*

This article in *Le Figaro* is a vivid example of maintaining the facade of balanced information, when the views of Russian officials, pro-Russian experts, and not just the opposition are brought to the readers of the newspaper. However, the article is missing the key information provided already in its title - any factual evidence of the Russian government fearing new Western sanctions related to Crimea.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article was written not from the point of view of anti-Russian "political hawks", but rather reflects the point of view of more moderate Western politicians who do not sympathize with Russia, but also do not reject the possibility of having a dialogue with it.

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

It can be assumed that as a result of the article's impact, political and social actors that neither have sympathy for Russia, nor belong to its aggressive opponents, will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of frankness of the media text:* the estimated level of reliability of the media text is quite high, but still it contains some manipulative methods of selection and unsubstantiated conclusions.

*Conclusion:* the media text contains a significant part of reliable information and well-grounded expert opinions, but at the same time contains elements of media manipulation.

The Crimean topic is also touched upon in the article "From Crimea with Love: A Trip to Vladimir Putin's Landmark Land", published in the newspaper *Le Monde* (Vitkine, 2021).

*Media text genre:* article on current events (in Russia), news text.



*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible commissioners 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 French journalist in his article cites the conflicting opinions of several people, including those who support the reunification of Crimea with Russia: "Having driven over the bridge, we find ourselves in Kerch. From the point of view of Ukraine and international law, we have just illegally entered the territory of Ukraine. But, according to the director of city museums, Lyudmila Umrikhina, we are entering "the oldest city in Russia". ... Lyudmila Umrikhina reminds us with ardor and repeats, like a mantra, that "Crimea has always been Russian". As if in support of her words, on the outskirts of the city, there is a military base in plain sight, and air defense systems ... Before our departure, Anna Kolin Lebedeva, a French expert on the post-Soviet space, warned us: "Crimea became Russian primarily due to its principles of operation, its inclusion in political schemes and distribution channels of money. As in other regions, the people in charge are given complete freedom of action to enrich themselves, and in return they guarantee control over the region". ... In the opinion of 49-year-old Alexander Gorny, "a dream" is the confidence to participate in a fabulous collective adventure. On the day Crimeans voted to reunite with Russia in a hasty referendum in March 2014 following armed intervention, the Moscow businessman drank two bottles of cognac. To celebrate the "rectification of historical injustice" that arose from the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954" (Vitkine, 2021).

*Are the journalist's sources reliable?*

If the interlocutor of the journalist has indicated not only the surname, but also his/her position, verification of the source's opinions is possible.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

Quotes of the interviewed people are emotionally colored, overall, the article in the newspaper *Le Monde* has a dominant emotional connotation.

*What is the media text aimed at?*

The main objective of the article is to convince the audience that although "it has been seven years since the fate of Crimea turned the other way, which led to a shift in relations between Moscow and the West. "Annexed" for some, "reunited" with the motherland for others, the peninsula that belonged to Ukraine joined Russia in March 2014. The positions remained motionless, but the reality of this territory with grandiose landscapes is inexorably changing, and so does the life of Crimeans" (Vitkine, 2021), but changes are moving towards supporting the Russian population and infringing on the rights of the Crimean Tatar minority (Vitkine, 2021),

*Is there any information missing?*

The article lacks any facts of infringement of the rights of the Crimean Tatars.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article reflects the point of view of Western politicians who do not sympathize with Russia, but do not resort to outright confrontation.

*Who will benefit if readers accept this message? Who will lose?*

It can be assumed that as a result of the article's impact, political and social actors that neither have sympathy for Russia, nor belong to its aggressive opponents, will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of trustworthiness of the media text:* the article gives readers an opinion that Crimea remains a controversial issue, the author cites viewpoints of several parties.

*Conclusion:* the media text contains a number of real facts, interspersed with unsupported allegation that the rights of the Tatar population are being infringed on in Crimea.

An article published in *Le Temps* newspaper titled "American-style murder in a Russian school" is dedicated to the tragic fact of a mass shooting committed by an 18-year-old student at the Polytechnic College in Kerch (Grynszpan, 2018).

*Media text genre:* article on current events in the world (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible commissioners 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 for the journalist from *Le Temps* was the real facts, widely covered by the Russian media.

*Can you verify the source?*

The facts can be verified through numerous television reports and other media reports from major news agencies.

*Does the message refer to logic or emotion?*

The article is largely addressed to the emotions of the reader.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

The main task of the text is: 1) to convince readers that Russia is "adopting" the worst American experience, where for many decades the so-called "school shooters" have killed dozens of innocent people; 2) remind once again that "the Crimean peninsula was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014" (Grynszpan, 2018). Noteworthy, in the title of the article, the author uses the adjective "Russian".

*Is there any information missing?*

The article does not provide any grounding for the allegation of the "annexation" of Crimea by Russia.

*Whose point of view does the article give?*

This article reflects the point of view of Western politicians opposed to Russia.

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

It can be assumed that as a result of the impact on the audience of this article, forces that are far from sympathy for Russia will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of trustworthiness of the media text:* the article is trustworthy as far as the tragic event coverage, however there is bias by word choice and omission of facts in the reference to the 2014 Crimea history.

*Conclusion:* the article contains a description of the real fact that happened in Kerch, but the reference to this specific location (Crimea) is then used by the journalist for political purposes of anti-Russian propaganda.

An article published in *Le Temps* entitled "Vladimir Putin's Red Line" (Grynszpan, 2021) is a commentary on the speech of the President of Russia, which he delivered in April 2021.

*Media text genre:* article on current events in the world (in Russia), news text.

*Analysis of the media text for reliability (identifying the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identifying possible masterminds 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 is V. Putin's speech: "The President's Message to the Federal Assembly" on April 21, 2021 (Putin, 2021), the text of which was published in the Russian press.

*Can you verify the source?*

The source of information can be checked on the official website kremlin.ru (Putin, 2021).

*Does the message refer to logic or emotion?*

*Le Temps's* comments on the President's speech are largely emotional.

*What is the main purpose of a media text?*

One of the objectives of the *Le Temps* article is to minimize the significance of the Russian President's speech: "During his annual address to the Russian political elite, Vladimir Putin took a revengeful pose. However, in the context of tighter than ever relations with Ukraine and the West, he did not announce any innovative foreign policy decisions" (Grynszpan, 2021). But the main objective of the article is to emphasize the aggressiveness of Russian political intentions with a quote, using the following phrases of V. Putin: "But I hope that no one will think about crossing the "red line" with regard to Russia. We ourselves will determine in each specific case where it will be drawn... Russia's response will be asymmetrical, swift and tough" (Putin, 2021). Grynszpan comments that "here the head of state recalled his methods. Asymmetry implies unpredictability; speed is contrasted with the slowness of democracies where decisions are negotiable; finally, rigidity is the characteristic with which he intends to act. Although he did not specify where the red line is, the most obvious and relevant of them is certainly the hypothetical accession of Ukraine to NATO" (Grynszpan, 2021). Remarkably, the article's author omits the following phrase in Russian President's speech (which should be right there where ellipsis is, before the words "Russia's response..."): "We really want to maintain good relations with all those engaged in international communication, including, by the way, those with whom we have not been getting along lately, to put it mildly. We really do not want to burn bridges" (Putin, 2021).

The other points of V. Putin's speech in an article published in *Le Temps* are merely mentioned, and are coloured with irony: "Nine-tenths of the president's speech were devoted to domestic issues ... Vladimir Putin described a perfectly governed country where the state will pay a one-time additional allowance to large or single-parent families" (Grynszpan, 2021).

*Is there any information missing?*

The article contains no information about NATO's actual actions against Russia and about many other political aspects related to the topic of NATO, Ukraine and Russia.

*Whose point of view does the message present?*

This article clearly reflects the point of view of Western politicians negatively biased against Russia.

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

It can be assumed that this article might reinforce anti-Russian political moods.

*Assessment of the level of trustworthiness of the media text:* the article does not strive to be objective, often the phrases of actual text of the Russian President's speech are used out of context.

*Conclusion:* the article contains biased and manipulative comments on the President's Address to the Federal Assembly.

The article "Russia: Can the Regime Survive Without Putin?", published in the newspaper *Le Figaro*, is an interview of political expert Hadrien Desuin with a journalist Victor Rouart.

*Media text genre:* interview about the political situation in Russia.

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

*What is the source of the information? Are there any supporting evidence?*

The only source of information in the article is the political expert Hadrien Desuin, his opinions are left by the journalist practically without comment.

*Can you verify the source?*

There is probably an opportunity to address Hadrien Desuin himself to confirm his opinion given in this interview.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotion?*

To a large extent, the text in *Le Figaro* is directed to the emotions of the audience.

*What is the purpose of a media text?*

The main objective of the article is to convince readers of *Le Figaro* that "the Russian people do support their president's policy, but less and less" (Desuin, 2021).

*Is there any information missing?*

Through stern selection, this interview mainly selected information negatively biased against Russian politics: "Since European countries have more or less aligned their position with that of the United States, the latter will have to follow Joe Biden in his crusade for the democratization of Russia. ... The United States are urging Ukraine to resume the reconquest of Donbass and, to a certain extent, to raise the issue of Crimea again. The US military will not engage in intense frontline conflict against the Russian military. Given Russia's nuclear deterrent forces, the consequences would be too risky. Thus, the Ukrainian game of the U.S. is an indirect strategy that involves logistical and financial support" (Desuin, 2021).

*Whose point of view does the message feature?*

This interview reflects the point of view of anti-Russian political forces, which, however, admit that in Russia "a palace coup remains unlikely, and the return of Navalny and his videos ... was nothing more than a storm in a teacup" (Desuin, 2021).

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

It can be assumed that as a result of the impact on the audience of this article, anti-Russian political circles will benefit.

*Assessment of the level of trustworthiness of the media text:* the article contains an opinion of a political commentator, so it is by definition cannot be fully objective.

*Conclusion:* the media text contains clearly visible manipulative features: selection, ellipsis, "plain folks".

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical model of the anti-manipulation media literacy activities that we have developed (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332), we have analyzed 70 articles on Russian topics in

French and Swiss newspapers over the period 2018-2021 with the help of guiding questions. The findings show that only few of them contain objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Thus, most of articles in the French-language press contain to various degree signs of manipulation and propaganda clichés. It is only in the case of the coverage of the Russian political opposition's activities that the article has a positive key. In particular, the most common manipulative techniques used by French-speaking journalists in their articles on the Russian topic are: half-truth/leaving out some information, plain folks, appeal to authority, selection/framing, bias by word choice, loaded language aimed at emotional impact rather than relying on the facts' logic, bias through selection and omission. In general, the articles under study are aimed to support a particular perspective on Russia and its policy, and to reinforce the EU political actors' attitude towards the Russian Federation in masses. The survey carried out by Ifop (French social polls institute) in December 2018 provides the following information: "An overwhelming majority of French people (81 %) consider the situation of public freedoms in Russia unsatisfactory" (Dabi, Dubrulle, 2018), an opinion, which the vast majority of the French people could only gain through media coverage.

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## Media Space as a Regulator of the Global Transformation of Communicative Interaction

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### Abstract

The subject of this research is the changes that occur in the modern communicative interaction under the influence of media space. The purpose of this work is to detect and interpret these signs of changes. The implementation of this goal involves the semantic and communicative analysis of the modern communicative space as an open dynamic self-organizing system. The use of these methods has yielded a number of significant results. In particular, it made it possible to identify the differential features of modern communication in the broad sense of the word, as a field on which various types of receivers and sources of information interact. Differential features include: a change in traditional forms of information transmission, the formation of a new type of age stratification in the dissemination of information, an increase in the total amount of noise, a general increase in information flows, the transfer of more social actions to the digital sphere, and deformation of traditional rating scales. It can be argued that the result of combining various communicative trends is the expansion of the number of receivers of information of a new type. They are focused on the free choice of the sphere of application of their attention, reject the discourse of power and create conditions for the emergence of a communicative environment of a democratic type. The high level of heuristic power possessed by the proposed set of fundamental changes is manifested in the fact that it allows one to explain the changes occurring in the communicative interaction.

**Keywords:** information flows, communication channels, media, digital resources, network environment, communicative space, noise.

### 1. Introduction

The communicative space is constantly changing. This axiomatic statement does not negate the fact that the nature, intensity and effectiveness of changes in dissimilar time periods differ significantly in diverse societies. An indirect consequence of the differences is focusing research efforts on certain aspects of the phenomenon's existence. The article is devoted to a problem that is equally relevant for all branches of humanitarian knowledge, because an adequate assessment of society, examined in any aspects, is directly related to a clear idea of how its members interact with each other and what resources they use for this. A fact of priority of this or another resource affects the specifics of the dissemination of information, the nature of its broadcast and perception.

### 2. Materials and methods

The study was carried out at the intersection of several scientific disciplines: information theory, communication theory, linguistics and axiology. This predetermined the choice of

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interdisciplinary methods for research. First of all, they were semantic and communicative analyses which allow revealing the meaning and mechanisms of ongoing changes. These methods take into account pragmatic characteristics of changes and their interaction with a participant of communicative processes. The analysis materials are network reality, displayed and structured as a public Internet, addressed to the ordinary user of information resources and services.

### 3. Discussion

Media space is commonly defined as a space generated by electronic means of communication; a complex system which has a number of interconnected structural elements subject to the general laws of development of the whole (Hallin, 2020). Therefore, various disciplinary contexts actualize only certain semantic aspects of this phenomenon. Given this fact, scientists identify different possible directions of analysis of the media space. This article proposes the classification of these directions based on the functions performed by the media space.

Initially, the media space was created exclusively as a data bank, which defined its cumulative function as the first and initial one. The vast majority of aesthetically significant objects created by mankind have now been digitized: from books to films and architectural structures. This type of research includes, for example, the study of smart libraries working with the incorporation of smart technologies, smart users and smart services (Gul, Bano, 2019). It was proven that technologies narrowed the gap between library services and rapidly changing human needs. Another example is the investigation of the influence of foreign television cartoon programs on social behavior of children (Njiiri et al., 2018). It showed that children's new television viewing habits let media effects take toll on their lives both in the short and in the long term. Currently, various types of artistic objects are being created within the media space for network use, which are also subjected to scientific scrutinizing. One of them is fan fiction (fanfic), researched by J. Fathallah. The scientist stated as this online practice is the fastest growing form of writing in the world, digital read-write platforms should account for its social and legal context (Fathallah, 2018).

The study of the epistemological function of the media space can be called the next direction of research, which manifests itself in the fact that the information accumulated in the network is being used as a basis for creating new information, as a source of scientific knowledge in various fields. This became possible with the advent of analytical type programs and the first search engines. Among this kind of research, one should note the work examining the publication practices in the field of communication and media studies in Scopus-indexed journals. The researcher found that the publisher's location highly influences the content of a journal in the sense that "authors from dependent countries are underrepresented in the most prestigious journals ... and tend to look for alternative ways to produce noticeable publications" (Demeter, 2018: 1001). Other papers are on reviewing articles published in the 19th and 20th century aimed at identifying teachers and learner's characteristics such as affective, cognitive and social factors that impact learning and teaching environment in media studies (Kabha, 2019) and on digital literacy and the need to improve curricula for its teaching as an interdisciplinary subject (Polizzi, 2020).

The suggestive function is manifested in the fact that the resources of the media space are likely to have a hidden effect on their users. That is, when filled with information, a person relaxes and weakens his psychological defense, as a result of which he becomes the most vulnerable. Such an impact is aimed at forming a certain attitude in the recipient's psyche. This is evident in ads of all types, especially in humorous video genres such as skits, pranks, or humorous vlogs and gaming videos. The effectiveness of such advertising depends, among other things, on the precise determination of the moment the brand is shown in a particular video (Vermeulen et al., 2019). A.P. Stepnov and L.A. Stepnova offer their own methodology for identifying the focus of information materials on the formation of meanings that promote extremism, non-traditional sexual relations among minors, drugs, suicide, pornography (Stepnov, Stepnova, 2014). Recognizing the effectiveness of the fight against the manipulation of people's minds in the media space, both on the basis of technological algorithms and on qualitative analytics, A Levitskaya and A. Fedorov still consider the best mass media education of the audience which contributes to the development of its analytical thinking (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020).

The resources of the media space began to be used to mislead opponents of various types (people, their groups, states), which, in turn, became the direction of research into its conspiratorial or disorientation function. It consists in the fact that media space is used not only to transmit and store information, but also to hide it from a certain group. It may reflect purposeful

aspirations to create to some extent untrue or false ideas about a segment of the world or the world as a whole. This is achieved in two main ways: due to various kinds of distortions of information and its replacement with misinformation. This type of work includes the study of J. Moffitt, C. King and K.M. Carley, who investigated COVID-19 origin conspiracy theory tweets. They found that such tweets were supported by news sites with low fact-checking scores and amplified by bots (Moffitt et al., 2021). D.O. Timoshkin examined the practices presented in Russian-speaking “migrant” groups on the VKontakte social network. The services of many of these groups can be openly fraudulent and involve huge risks, since the administration of the groups is more interested in their own profit than in helping the migrant (Timoshkin, 2019: 62). With the help of media space, a person has the opportunity to determine the point of his location with a high degree of accuracy. However, geolocation data can also be used to commit criminal acts against both an individual citizen and the whole society as a whole (Mansoori, Welch, 2020). Speaking in general about the media space, one should note that there are other crimes, which are also related to the extraction, theft and distortion of information. Cybercriminals and cybercriminals are becoming more and more active participants in social processes in the media space (Palmieri et al., 2021).

With the help of media space, people carry out interpersonal communication in its various forms, establish, consolidate and interrupt interpersonal contacts through mail services and social networks. Studies of the communicative function of media space occupy an important place in the overall structure of media studies. Thus, the next work is of particular interest as it analyzes friendly contacts between same- and cross-gender bullies and same- and cross-gender victims using multiplex longitudinal social network (Hooijsma et al., 2020). It concludes that multidimensional similarity increased the likelihood of friendships for same-gender bullies targeting the same victims, but not for same-gender victims sharing bullies. According to N. Marchal, political discussions transferred in the digital context are characterized by growing hostility between ideologically opposed users and interaction between them is interrupted if one user speaks negatively about the political group of another (Marchal, 2021). Furthermore, media space becomes an organizer of real communicative interaction. This is most clearly manifested in the example of network games. Any such game creates and unites certain social groups, sets the types of interaction between them, determines the nature of their behavior, dictates the features of actions (Bell, 2021). That is, a virtual object deforms reality. Implicitly, this process takes place around any streaming platform and within any social network, such as streaming entertainment services Netflix and Spotify which “encourage global, intercultural connection and affinity” (Elkins, 2019).

The importance of studies of the noted issues cannot but grow in view of the rapid increase in the volume of media space. But it should be added that all the listed functions of the media space are not only essentially interconnected, but also always intersect in their specific manifestations, overlap each other in the process of implementation so that, in principle, none of the studies implements any one function in isolation.

#### 4. Results

The change in the general structure of the communicative space was caused both by the very fact of the appearance of a virtual sphere in it, and by the fact that by its presence it triggered the emergence of meaningfully new oppositions in the former space. Thanks to this, the modern communicative space has acquired new peculiarities associated with a number of characteristics, namely, the ways of disseminating and using information, forms of interaction with it and the nature of its perception. The following features can be considered the most noteworthy.

(1) More and more people are turning digital. In absolute terms, the number of people who constantly turn to the digital sphere is steadily growing. This is characterized by a mass of indicators of various types: the number of users of mobile devices, the Internet, social networks, the number of accounts created, and time spent on the Internet.

According to the Global Digital report of *We Are Social* and *Hootsuite*, the total number of mobile connections in the world has reached 8.02 billion. In January 2021, 4.66 billion of the world's population used the Internet, and its penetration rate was 59.5 %. There are now 4.20 billion social media users in the world. On average, over 1.3 million new accounts were created every day during 2020, which equates to approximately 15.5 new users per second. An ordinary user of social networks spends 2 hours 25 minutes every day on these platforms, which corresponds to about one day a week minus time for sleep (We are..., 2021).



Nevertheless, A.V. Smirnov's research showed that, despite the impressive growth of some indicators, the digitalization of Russian society is fragmented. His analysis revealed that from 2003 to 2018, the share of those using the Internet increased from 10 % to 73 % of the country's population. At the same time, the rates of Internet use for shopping increased 27 times (from 1 % to 33 %), 14 times – for communication (from 10 % to 73 %), 11 times – for increasing the cultural level and receiving news (from 6 % up to 62 % and from 6 % to 64 %, respectively), 10 times – for entertainment (from 6 % to 58 %). However, the proportion of the population using the Internet for work and, in particular, for training is growing rather slowly (6 and 3 times, respectively) (Smirnov, 2021: 140). The peak of mastering the practice of using the Internet falls at the age from 19 to 22 years, then the frequency decreases, by 45 years – by half, by 60 years – four times. (Smirnov, 2021: 141). It should be noted that young people use the Internet much more often to listen to music and check information on social networks. On the other hand, representatives of this age group are less likely to study information and reviews about goods or services, perform banking operations, read news and analytics (Media..., 2021).

Mass survey results provided by S.G. Davydov, allowed the scientist to cluster Russians by the level of digital competencies. High self-esteem was shown by 32 % of the respondents, whose average age is 36 years; above average 30 % of respondents, whose average age is 45 years. 18 % of respondents with an average age of 54 rated their digital competencies below average. The lowest self-esteem of their digital competencies belongs to 21 % of people with an average age of 64. Consequently, the level of self-esteem of their competencies decreases with age, while working citizens rate their competencies higher than non-working ones, and the share of women in the cluster with low self-esteem is 62 % (Davydov, 2021: 412). In the younger age groups of respondents, satisfaction with the existing competencies is higher than in the older ones. For Russians aged 18 to 24, the total share of those who answered “enough” is 82 %, while for the age group 60 and older it is 48 % (Davydov, 2021: 413).

Thus, in a digital society, social interactions are not only simplified, but information openness is also increased, and the costs of peripherality are reduced. The widespread use of digital technologies contributes to economic growth and an improvement in the quality of life of the population. Accordingly, the production and sales of computers and software, the number of users of resources and search engines, services and various kinds of services, the turnover of money and the degree of influence of the Network on decisions made by people are constantly growing.

(2) The demand for various types of information translators fundamentally changes among people of different ages. In any society, there is always an age differentiation in the dissemination of information, implying access to one kind of information and the prohibition of another. It is regulated at the state level by labeling sources according to age availability. The position in a social group also presupposes different degrees of admission to this or that information. At the family level, it manifests itself in a system of prohibitions: it's too early for you to know about this, you will grow up and you will learn. This system has existed for thousands of years and continues to this day. But the Internet, by the very fact of its presence, really and potentially destroys this system. Any information, in principle, becomes available to a person of any age.

The consequence of the destruction was that the younger generation is focused almost exclusively on the Internet while the middle and older generations retain their orientation towards traditional media. That is, generations are differentiated not by the type of access to information, but by the type of source or information channel.

For example, according to the Deloitte Research Center, the distribution of devices that Russians used to watch TV was as follows: 81 % – TV, 80 % – smartphone, 71 % – laptop, 69 % – computer. At the same time, the TV set usage index among respondents aged 50-54 was 95 %, which is the highest indicator relative to other ages. The lowest TV set usage index is observed among the representatives of the age groups 14-19 and 20-24 years old (78 % and 84 %, respectively) (Media..., 2021).

As for the specifics of the consumption of information content, it should be added that the trust of Russian residents in classical sources of information – television and/or official Internet sites – is gradually decreasing. Thus, the share of Russians who are oriented towards television is 23 % today, and the share of citizens who trust news and official sites is 32 %. At the same time, the popularity of such a source of information as social networks and blogs approached the figure of 25 %. It is noteworthy that respondents between the ages of 14 and 29 are the only age group that tends to rely primarily on social networks and blogs (33 %) (Media..., 2021).

A group of scientists from the Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University studied the motivational factors of using various types of media by young people. They concluded that the need for socialization and self-actualization is in the first place, it is followed by entertainment, informational, educational and instrumental needs. Traditional motives for obtaining information are not so relevant. Young respondents are more likely to turn to media to communicate with peers, find entertaining content, and express themselves in the process of creating their own content for digital platforms. The leading place in the structure of media consumption is occupied by online media, and traditional media either do not generate interest at all, or are consumed only in the background (Dunas et al., 2020: 19). The study of students' news consumption behaviour in the United Kingdom and Turkey proved practically the same: traditional media have almost been replaced by online media as "the modality of traditional media does not easily fit in with youth's daily routine of studies, work and commute" (Yanardagoglu, 2020).

(3) Information interaction is constantly being modernized and intensified. An elementary classification of indicators of changes in the information environment is their division into qualitative and quantitative. The first is, first of all, the form that information takes when transmitted from one person to another. In this case, we are talking about the methods of information communication, as well as the previous methods of imprinting information with the possibility of its subsequent transmission by means of a certain medium. The revolutionary events in the field of communication were the emergence of graphics and writing, then radio communication and telephone communication. From the moment the Web became public, companies that offer various types of services on it have fought for users offering them more services and improving their quality.

This primarily concerns global search engines, which are powerful financial, technological and scientific conglomerates. They are constantly improving mechanisms for finding information and filtering out noise. But besides this their primary purpose, they offer their users more and more services. For example, the world's largest and most influential search engine, Google, currently offers over 30 services, including YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps, Google Alerts and Google Hangouts. Special literature is published that acquaints its readers with new Google services and ways to master them (Avraam, Athanasopoulos, 2020; Bronnikova, Zaytseva, 2021; Ricourt, Florez, 2021).

Second, there is an expansion of communication interaction due to the inclusion of communication with smart devices, the so-called "talking machines" that respond to a person through voice interfaces. Among them, smart speakers should be singled out separately, since their use is fundamentally different from the use of voice assistants available on smartphones through mobile applications. A.M. Korbut identified the following communicative features of communication with artificial intelligence as an interaction partner: prosodic modification (increasing the volume, slowing down speech, intonation underlining); semantic modification (replacement of words and shortening the length of phrases); phonetic modification (it is better to speak loudly, slowly, with long pauses) (Korbut, 2021: 208). Another thing which is worth mentioning is that these devices also collect audio data, so it is essential for the users to avoid disclosing sensitive information or revealing private talks to smart speakers because of their privacy concerns (Xu et al., 2022: 192).

Mastering any new technological form somehow leads to its interiorization and, as a result, users often perceive their gadgets as a kind of extension of their personal space or even an extension of their personality (Dunas et al., 2020: 19). This partly explains the fact that the share of "novelty hunters" is steadily growing: 9 % of the population is the share of respondents who try to buy a technical novelty as soon as it enters the market, and 21 % is the share of respondents who buy equipment before the majority of users have it (Media..., 2021).

In contrast to the analysis of the qualitative aspect of information relations, the consideration of information interaction in a quantitative aspect determines its accessibility to members of society and the intensity at the level of specifically taken subjects of communication. This approach makes it possible to calculate the amount of information received on average by a person for a certain unit of time. For example, the British newspaper *The Guardian* published data in January 2000, according to which "a weekday edition of a newspaper contains as much information as the average person in the 17th century would be exposed to in their entire lifetime. The average British working day consists of 171 messages, 46 phone-calls, 22 emails, 15 internal memos and 19 items of external post" (Guardian, 2000). From 2010 to 2020, the number of materials that make up the

resource base in the Factiva system, which represents more than 90 % of the Internet content in 25 languages, increased from 59.1 to 102.7 million materials per year (Sharikov, 2021).

(4) The level of informational noise increases significantly. Information noise is a basic concept of the theory of information and communication, which is traditionally understood as any reasons and factors that entail distortion of the message, complicate its understanding or make it difficult for the recipient to perceive the transmitted information. There are currently three main ways of understanding it.

Anything that interferes with the adequate perception of information is considered information noise. This includes all types of speech interference and all types of text complication. For example, S.P. Petrunina refers slips of the tongue and mistakes of hearing in oral spontaneous communication to the unintentional manifestations of information noise (Petrunina, 2006). The deliberate creation of speech-like noise can be used, in particular, to protect voice information in the general complex of measures to ensure information security of organizations (hiding the fact of negotiations, their subject and content) (Horev, Tsarev, 2017). A full list of these obstacles has not been compiled, because it turns out to depend on the level of linguistic competence and the characteristics of a particular person's perception. For example, one person perceives a mosquito squeak as noise, while for the other even the roar of a mountain waterfall is not noise.

Information noise is thought to be an unmotivated duplication of information already available in one or another storage or consciousness. This information is usually referred to as zero information. Note that in this aspect most of the information accumulated by a person refers to noise. The main sources of such information noise include the media, which cover as much information as possible to attract and retain the audience's attention. In addition, the media space is replete with annoying advertising messages that are repeated many times at short intervals.

Information noise is also supposed to be a purely psychological factor – a set of information that tires a person. With this understanding, useful and harmful, true and false information can be called noise in such an amount that causes overload and fatigue in a person. With an unfavorable combination of objective reasons (a large amount of data supplied in a short period of time) and subjective factors (personal characteristics of the consuming subject), information noise can cause information overload. In turn, violation of the measure often leads to the fact that an increase in the amount of information received does not give the expected results, but, on the contrary, causes the opposite effect. In the scientific literature, such terms as information overeating, information obesity (infobesity), information intoxication (infoxication) and information burnout (media bulimia) have appeared.

Information overloads can cause various forms of mental illness in people, weaken people's ability to think, and reduce their creative potential. Mkrtycheva K.B. and Melikova T.A. conducted a study aimed at identifying the impact of information on student youth. It showed that more than 90 % of the respondents admit that regardless of their desire, every day they receive from 30 % to 80 % of information that is useless to them. As a result, on average 79 % of survey participants feel oversaturated with information, and 61 % feel annoyed and tired from the amount of information they receive (Mkrtycheva, Melikova, 2020: 142).

In this case, it is not important for us how the essence of information noise is determined. It is important that in any definition it always accompanies information and its volumes grow with the increase in the amount of information.

(5) An increasing number of social actions are transferred to the digital sphere, their set and proportion is constantly growing, respectively, the functionality of the digital sphere is expanding. With the help of Internet resources, people participate in many daily activities, for example, follow the news; argue about politics, sports, music and cinema; maintain social connections with friends and family; make purchases; meet and look for work.

As a result, a fundamentally new phenomenon arises, called an “artificial sociality”, which is “the empirical fact of the participation of artificial intelligence agents in social interactions as active mediators or participants in these interactions” (Rezaev, Tregubova, 2018: 43). The authors explain that an artificial intelligence agent is a device which activity mediates and records the manifestations of artificial intelligence. As an example of such a device, they cite the Google search engine, the effectiveness of which is ensured by the fact that many people use it to find information. Google's algorithms accumulate information about users' network transitions and, on their basis, “learn” what to display in a search query.

The sphere of socialization of a person in the digital space is communication, translated into the language of algorithms for writing and images, conditioned by the norms and rules of communication learned by a person in the processes of information exchange. Digitalization changes the cultural memory of an individual, since the infospace does not guarantee the authenticity of the historical context; increases the level of abstractness of the social interaction and expands the freedom of communicative one. Entering into a special relationship with the information world on the everyday basis forms a new consciousness, new habits and behavior.

S.V. Davedenko examines the notion of a “digital simulacrum” which implies a pseudo-sign that replaces reality with the help of special software. She proposes the concept of a “digital centric personality” that is a person identified with his or her professional-activity status (streamer, blogger, tik tok user, gamer, etc.). The attribute “digital centric” means that the person pertains to a “digital simulacrum” but at the same time preserves some anthropic, human values as opposed to those of an artificial intelligence. In other words, such a person represents a kind of synthesis of an anthropic personality with artificial intelligence (Davedenko, 2021: 94).

The coronavirus epidemic forced teachers and students to quickly switch to distance learning through various media technologies. Like any other form of knowledge acquisition, online education has its advantages and disadvantages. But, it is one thing when an educational institution is initially focused on the development of distance learning, and another thing when only external circumstances have pushed an educational institution towards it. According to J. Gregorc and A. H. Resnik’s research of different types of distance learning, students did not participate effectively or actively when the cameras were off, despite the fact that they noted that the camera being turned on made them uncomfortable and cited non-camera methods as their favourite (Gregorc, Resnik, 2022: 273). Nevertheless, the transfer of education to the digital sphere helped not only to quickly get out of a difficult situation, but also to accumulate the experience necessary to increase the share of this social action in virtual reality.

The medical community is another contributor to social action in the digital space. Medical institutions create professional accounts to inform the population, promote medical services and simply communicate with a mass audience on topics related to medicine and health. How it happened previously in the family of indigenous peoples, see the work of A.V. Akhmetova (Akhmetova, 2021).

(6) The rating scales and the types of their transmission vary significantly. The position of a person in society is like coordinates, the expression of which is fixed by a set of different rating scales: rich – poor, boss – subordinate, famous – unknown, respected – disrespected, educated – uneducated, influential – powerless, law-abiding – criminal and etc.

All these rating scales are established by society through various channels: social institutions, public opinion, characteristics of the organism and financial flows. First of all, it is social institutions, through the systems of education, certification, promotion, rewards and punishments, various types of competitions, awards and titles that determine the coordinates of a person's position. According to I.V. Kondakov, the transformation of Pushkin – at the end of his life and against his will – into a chamber junker, a courtier of a very low rank, is an act that simultaneously humiliates the artist and secures him to the state as an animated property (Kondakov, 2021: 289). The Higher Attestation Commission, which establishes degrees and titles, has the right to deprive of them for ten years from the date of their assignment. According to the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation V. Falkov, from 2014 to 2020, over 360 Russian scientists were deprived of their Candidate or Doctor of Science degrees (TASS, 2020).

This was the case before the advent of the public web. So, in principle, it remains in a significant part now. But we are watching how the network shakes this system, changes and adjusts to its interests. The network can offer a real person the opportunity to ignore all existing social scales and build others in their place. For example, a person who in reality occupies extremely low positions on traditional scales can choose a network niche for himself where he will be the undisputed leader: in arguments on the forum, in any game, in collecting a certain type of information, and so on. The net allows deforming the scales. Or, a person who does not have the appropriate professional status may become one of the leading specialists in the subject. This is the case with the creators of thematic sites and all kinds of sofa analysts. It is extremely difficult to check or challenge this status in the civilized world under the law on the protection of personal information. Today, there is already an active change of authority among adolescents, who have replaced teachers and parents with bloggers who dictate their spiritual and material guidelines.



The results of a survey of student youth, conducted by M.V. Zhizhina, showed that ideas about a blogger's personality are characterized by unambiguity and concepts with a positive semantic connotation. A blogger is assessed as a media, creative person with charisma, sociability, courage and a developed ability for self-presentation, which inspires and really helps in the form of useful advice and recommendations (Zhizhina, 2019: 44).

The network through the system of views, likes, number of subscribers, page quality creates new rating scales. People recognize their importance and seek to adapt to them. For this reason, paid services for boosting votes and subscribers are much in demand. A real event begins to be assessed by the reaction to it on the web; moreover, it is recognized as such only after publication on the web. The analogue of this in the pre-network world was the circulation of the publication, but the publication and the fact are different objects. A person's place on the web is a fundamentally new rating scale that may not coincide with any of the traditional ones and even oppose them. At the same time, the network itself should not be demonized: it is necessary to remember that it is, at its core, also a social institution.

## 5. Conclusion

Two leading trends in the transformation of the modern communication space are the displacement of traditional media and an increase in the number of a new type of information receiver interested in the selection of information and capable of comparing different types of sources. The discourse of power was and remains one of the determining factors of the communicative space of Russia. But it is significantly squeezed out by other discourses: art, culture, sports, esotericism, and extreme. This leads to the fact that new generations have a choice between objects that are fundamentally different in the way of organization and semantics. Making this choice, they reject those media reflexes that bear the stamp of the discourse of power and accept those that do not have this stamp. In the long term, this will lead to irreversible consequences for Russia, since it destroys the basis for the effective use of the discourse of power. It can be assumed that similar trends are observed in Europe and America. At least, an indirect confirmation of this is the fact that the space turnover of show business is focused specifically on young people. The new generation prefers to consume not what is presented to it as a finished product, but to be in a free search for information. This reduces the authority of the information and, ultimately, can lead to a change in a number of communicative stereotypes.

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## Analysis of Media Manipulation Influences as a Way to Develop Media Competence of Future Teachers (on COVID-19 Media Texts)

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the role of manipulative influences in modern mass communications on the problems of Covid-19 and vaccination against it based on the latest media materials for 2021-2022. It is stated that recently there has been a sharp increase in disinformation about Covid-19 in the media space, which was called by World Health Organization “infodemic”. To navigate in the flow of modern complex information a certain level of media competence is required.

Special attention is paid to the analysis of media manipulation influences as a way to develop media competence of future teachers. The problematic question of this article is: How the analysis of media texts about COVID-19 helps to solve the current problems of media education of future teachers.

Practical research is based on theoretical model of media competencies’ development of future teachers worked out by A. Fedorov and A. Levitskaya which includes 3 components (diagnostic; content-target; efficiency) and markers of the effectiveness of media educational activities (motivational, contact, informational, technological, evaluative, creative, practical and operational). The results suggest that media education may help to confine misinformation and fakes circulation and thus to prevent serious socio-economic consequences.

The following approaches were chosen as research methodological guidelines: basic general scientific approaches (systems theory, structural theory, functional theory); paradigmatic approaches based on generally accepted observations and theories that reveal various aspects of the determination of the social development; instrumental approaches that have an effective algorithm for solving the problems which was set up in this research (polysubjective, or dialogic, comparative and hermeneutic).

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

### 1. Introduction

The article is devoted to the analysis of the role of manipulative influences in modern mass communications on the problems of Covid-19 and vaccination against it based on the latest media materials for 2021-2022.

Human beings tend to be afraid of something vague, unknown, new, unexplored or understudied. Covid-19 is one of those new phenomena. This disease is called a SARS-CoV-2 novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19), the effect of which is still poorly understood. In a short period of time this new virus caused a pandemic, affecting millions of people in various countries around the

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world. It challenges not only medics, scientists, politics, economists but also a wide range of common public, who doesn't have enough knowledge to judge upon the topic, but still produce a lot of comments especially in digital press. Sometimes these are just erroneous assertions, and sometimes they are malicious falsifications, especially dangerous for people's health in a pandemic.

To combat various kinds of fakes and disinformation, in many countries special departments and Internet sites are being created in order to verify facts, investigate the sources of rumors, false opinions and establish the truth. However, the results of the work of such structures cannot always be thoughtlessly trusted. Under the pretext of telling the truth, some of them propagate their own ideas about what freedom of the media is and their own point of view, that is biased and far from impartial. To navigate in the flow of modern complex information, a certain level of media competence is required.

The problem is that, in general, the modern Russian audience does not have a high or even enough level of media competence to be able to recognize fakes about the coronavirus infection and draw reasonable, not harmful to health conclusions.

We are particularly concerned about the lack of critical, thoughtful thinking among school and university graduates and, in particular, future teachers. After all, modern teachers are required not only to understand and correctly interpret media texts, but also to carry out media education of schoolchildren in the context of the development of the information society.

The relevance of this problem is proved by UNESCO documents. In the UNESCO booklet devoted to the World Freedom Day 2008 we may read: "News consumers need the necessary skills to produce and circulate information and engage with the media, and also to critically analyze and synthesize the information they receive. These elements, along with media professionals adhering to the highest ethical and professional standards designed by practitioners, serve as the fundamental infrastructure on which empowerment can prevail ... In all facets of community life, the media play a central role as the conduit for information and potentially as a catalyst for activism and change" (UNESCO..., 2008: 7-9).

A lot of authors refer to the *World Health Organization (WHO)* which has emphasized the equal importance of confining the circulation of misinformation in order to prevent serious socio-economic consequences during the Covid-19 pandemic (Das, Ahmed, 2021; Tangcharoensathien et al., 2020; Vraga et al. 2020). *WHO* called misinformation shared on social media about Covid-19 an "infodemic", which requires paying special attention to the development of audience's media competencies.

Obviously, media education enables people to exercise their right to freedom of speech and information. In this sense, media education not only promotes personal development, but also increases social participation, prepares for democratic citizenship and political understanding. That's why it is necessary to develop media education as a part of the concept of lifelong learning.

Today, the dependence of the audience on the infosphere has increased dramatically. Thus, we need to understand the challenges of the infodemic context in which we exist if we want to address the negative impact of misinformation and fakes in a reliable and effective way. Having in mind all these we pay special attention in our research to the analysis of media manipulation influences as a way to develop media competence of future teachers. The problematic question of this article is as follows: How the analysis of media texts about COVID-19 helps to solve the current problems of media education of future teachers. We believe that the results of our study will help to theoretically substantiate ways to improve the anti-manipulative media competence of students of the pedagogical profile.

## 2. Materials and methods

Our research is based on the analysis of recently published materials (2020–2022) in different foreign and Russian journals connected with the issues of media manipulation influences in COVID-19 media texts and the ways helping to develop audience's media competence. We also analyze latest news media texts, TV programs and some examples from the process of media education at the university classes with future teachers. Methods of theoretical analysis, synthesis and comparative enquiry are used. The following approaches were chosen as research methodological guidelines: basic general scientific approaches (systems theory, structural theory, functional theory); paradigmatic approaches based on generally accepted observations and theories that reveal various aspects of the determination of the social development; instrumental

approaches that have an effective algorithm for solving the problems which was set up in this research (polysubjective, or dialogic, comparative and hermeneutic).

### 3. Discussion

Recently, during the COVID-19 health crisis, the flow of disinformation and fake news sharing dramatically increased. In this connection there have been appeared a large number of publications related to the problem of media manipulation (Arin et al., 2021; Barreto et al., 2021; Benoit, Montesi, 2021; Mauldin, 2021; Theocharis et al., 2021) and finding ways to improve the anti-manipulative media competence of the audience (Abdel-Raheem, Alkhamash, 2021; Billig, 2021; Brennen et al., 2021; Janssen et al., 2021; Linden et al., 2020; Moorhouse, Kohnke, 2021; Rodrigues, Xu, 2020; Shulman et al., 2021).

At the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020 the team of scientists from the Reuters Institute published the results of their research about the main types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation. They stressed that “misinformation about the pandemic presents a serious risk to public health and public action” (Brennen et al., 2020). They analyzed the 225 pieces of misinformation, rated false or misleading by independent professional fact-checkers and coded it for the type of misinformation, the source for it, the specific claims it contained, and what seemed to be the motivation behind it. According to Professor Nielsen “addressing the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 will take a sustained and coordinated effort by independent fact-checkers, independent news media, platform companies, and public authorities to help the public understand and navigate the pandemic” (Brennen et al., 2020). Agreeing with these statement in general, we can add that it is necessary to accentuate the significance of media education which may help to address the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 and support audience to analyze, deconstruct and understand it from critical position.

Some authors connect the issue of media manipulation influences upon consumers with political ideology and with media coverage of the threat of COVID-19. For example, such US researchers as D.P. Calvillo, B.J. Ross, R.J.B. Garcia, T.J. Smelter, and A.M. Rutchick suggest that the relationship between political ideology and threat perceptions may depend on issue framing by political leadership and media. The authors claim that once a threat of COVID-19 “becomes politicized, the polarization induced by the current political environment may shape the way it is perceived. In the case of COVID-19, conservatives with higher levels of presidential approval were less knowledgeable about the virus, less accurate in discerning real from fake news, and in turn saw it as less of a threat. These polarized perceptions may well inhibit collective action and threat responses that require significant levels of community-level coordination” (Calvillo et al., 2020: 1125).

It is also important to note that Reuters Institute study also shows distrust of news and information about COVID-19 from political sources by people in eight countries (Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Spain, the UK, and the US). This research displays that “the handling (and coverage) of the crisis has become more explicitly political, but trust in news has declined less than trust in governments” (Nielsen et al., 2021). The research findings also prove that those who follow the news are also less likely to believe in vaccine misinformation.

By exploring the ideological constructs of citizens towards acceptance or rejection of disinformation during the heightened time of a COVID-19 global health crisis R. Das and W. Ahmed argue that government, public, private and social media agencies have received the biggest wakeup call for the necessity to take tighter actions in the wake of COVID-19 infodemic (Das, Ahmed, 2021). They suggest to develop and apply sophisticated identification and analytical tools based on advanced NLP-based machine learning techniques, that is, reinforcement learning (RL). In addition to machine and deep learning algorithms, the authors offer to use trained human interventions in understanding the narratives and trajectory of misinformation in developing preventative measures and policies (Das, Ahmed, 2021). Thus, it turns out that media education becomes one of the leading sources for overcoming the negative impact of COVID-19 misinformation on information recipients.

The issues of cause and origin of the fake news on COVID-19 and vaccines that were circulating on catholic networks are in the center of the research interest done by A. Sarukhan (Scientific writer/senior Communications Officer at Barcelona Institute for Global Health). At the end of the project research she came to the conclusion that some fake news originate from the misinterpretation of scientific results, some – from a lack of scientific literacy among society, and others – from doubts – often valid – regarding the safety, efficacy or impact of vaccines that caused

mistrust due to the unprecedented speed at which they were developed. Her research findings are as follows - misleading information is a universal problem that needs to be tackled with good communication and a better education ([Sarukhan, 2021](#)).

The need to increase public health presence on social media and the urgent need to remain diligent in educating community members about COVID-19 myths – is the call of scientists from the United States who assessed COVID-19 knowledge among university students. The authors declare that their “findings support communities need continued education and reinforcement of COVID-19 known facts to address the abundance of misinformation available online and on social media sites” ([Chesser et al., 2020: 543](#)).

According to Vraga and her co-authors scientific literacy helps people distinguish between good and bad information on Covid-19 and could reduce the amount of misinformation shared ([Vraga et al., 2020: 476-477](#)). The authors emphasize that the actual situation is an ideal time to encourage and facilitate information users to participate in more active curation of social media feeds correction. They recommend encouraging users to correct Covid-19 misinformation they see on social media as an extension of their news literacy knowledge and skills in order to protect themselves and others from misinformation.

Intervention strategies which nudge people to be skeptical of the information they come across on social media are suggested by researchers O.D. Apuke and B. Omar. In order to help policy makers in curbing the spread of fake news they proposed a conceptual framework combining two theories; affordance theory and the cognitive load theory to test how information sharing, status seeking, self-expression, online information trust, information overload and news-find-me perception predict fake news sharing on COVID-19 ([Apuke, Omar, 2021](#)).

Several studies to date have viewed COVID-19 misinformation through a visual lens. In the works of J.S. Brennen, F. Simon, R.K. Nielsen special accent is made on the diverse roles of visuals employed in the service of COVID-19 misinformation. The authors argue that visuals not only serve to illustrate and help frame misleading understandings about the virus, but also work to establish the authority and facticity for false claims. Focusing explicitly on the visual content in coronavirus misinformation, its function, and its characteristics they provide the analyses of manipulative techniques with the help of which manipulative visuals are produced ([Brennen et al., 2020](#)).

We cannot but agree with the authors who state that “the scale of the crisis and the abundance of misleading information demand that scientists, health information professionals and journalists take serious steps to help the general public to identify and recognise fake news stories. There is a need to train people, especially the young, about the nature of social media and how to use it effectively and safely if we are to win the war against fake news” ([Naeem et al, 2020](#)).

In connection with the issue of our research the up-to-date information under analysis is of great interest, because it helps to uncover the tools of manipulations about coronavirus pandemic, and the ways to respond to it in the process of future teacher’s education. So we think that our focus on media education may help shape students’ media literacy and develop their ability to distinguish potentially dangerous and misleading information or narratives which is spreading with great speed and in large numbers especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4. Results**

We build our practice research on the basis of theoretical model of media competencies’ development of future teachers in the process of analyzing media manipulation effects worked out by A. Fedorov and A. Levitskaya. This model includes several components:

1) diagnostic (ascertaining) component: definition of the levels of development of the audience’s media competence with an emphasis on the ability to analyze media manipulations; questioning, testing, analysis of the audience's creative work, observation;

2) content-target component: theoretical component (a unit for history and theory of media culture, for the development of media educational motivation) and practical component (units of creative and analytical activities based on media material);

3) efficiency component (a unit of final questionnaires, testing and creative works of the audience and a unit of the final identification of the levels of development of the audience's media competence with an emphasis on the ability to analyze media manipulations) ([Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 325](#)).

We implement the model in order to help students to identify misinformation, to get ready to fight against fake news dissemination, as well as to expand scientific dissemination of information on topics involving the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implementation of this model deals with setting up and working out several tasks, designed to form and develop following markers of the effectiveness of media educational activities: motivational, contact, informational, technological, evaluative, creative, practical and operational (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 328). To form these markers we developed and conducted a series of practical seminars. Our practice study took place between September 2021 and February 2022 with the second year students of Rostov State University of Economics, Russian Federation. Working with university students has given us the opportunity to put into practice several methods of media education to help combat fake news as it grows.

In order to develop students' abilities to analyze media manipulations we used different methods and techniques. In class students discussed different examples of Covid-19 misinformation, myths or fake news and vaccines disinformation. In the form of a dialogue they commented on information they came across, classified news media information, tried to identify common types of misinformation relating to COVID-19, examined and characterized the potential harm it can cause.

The analysis of publications about vaccine hesitancy, pro – or anti-vaccination messages against the COVID-19 makes also possible to develop such students' media competence features as perceptual, evaluative, creative, practical and operational ones. Studying the above mentioned news stories students usually pay attention to the negative character of the discourse on the issue of vaccination. They note that very often the reasoning of vaccine opponents is rude, deleterious; their comments are ignorant and offensive. The students pay attention to the fact that sometimes it is very difficult even for scientists to argue and dismantle Covid-19 myths and vaccines disinformation.

Many examples used by students illustrate such situations. And one of them is the Gordon's Doc-tock show. In several broadcasts a number of invited experts have failed to argue with one vaccine denier. An example is from the release of the program dated December 16, 2021. During the show, the guest anti-vaxer was removed from the studio because of extreme aggressiveness and unfriendliness. The show host (A. Gordon) regretted his decision to invite “anti-vaxer” for a discussion, since people of such kind consider themselves crusaders on a holy mission against conspiracy involving the government, big pharma and the mainstream media. As a rule, students agree that it is unacceptable to invite such participants and give them the opportunity to promote through the broadcast their malicious and anti-scientific points of view, which may put public health at risk.

In the process of analyzing media manipulative influences it is also possible to discuss the work results of special departments and Internet sites created in order to verify facts, investigate the sources of rumors, false opinions and establish the truth.

Here is only one example of the class discussion about one of the largest internet news portal named DELFI – “Lie Detector”. This portal was created in Lithuania, as they say, an independent and open fact-checking department. Journalists from different fields of activity claim that they united in order to find out the real facts. They declare that they seek to carefully analyze the public statements of politicians and experts to make sure that they are consistent with the facts.

There are many interesting publications about “anti-vaxers”, conspiracists, QAnons and COVID-19 fakes. At the same time, the authors and employees of this department have a clearly biased attitude towards Russia and its media. Lithuania's journalists uncompromisingly argue that just Russia is the main source of false and unverified information about Covid-19. At this site we may read the following version about negative impact of Russia on the spread of Covid-19 disinformation: “Pro-Kremlin media have been spreading conspiracy theories about the coronavirus since the beginning of the outbreak: in the first case, a comment on the topic, which we registered on January 22, claims that the coronavirus was “most likely developed in NATO biological laboratories”. In doing so, they claim that “DELFI's Lie Detector” met the organization's extremely high standards by pledging to continue the tradition of honest and quality journalism” (<https://www.delfi.lt/ru/detektor-lzhi/?page>).

This is an example of a clear manipulative media influence on the audience, for the understanding of which a sufficient level of media competence must be formed among the



students, which presupposes the development of analytical thinking, creative, practical, operational and other markers of media literacy.

Thus, we believe that such kinds of university class discussions, debates and interchange of views on latest news media texts, digital press, TV programs, Internet sites regarding Covid-19 are concrete steps to form students' media literacy, their abilities to see the pandemic crisis in a broad framework, and thus to diminish the spread of misinformation on Covid-19.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion of our research, it is necessary to summarize several important points. Our content analysis of the latest publications has shown that the consumption of publications related to the coronavirus has dramatically increased both in social media outlets and in traditional media. The COVID-19 with renewed vigor has launched/aggravated the processes of disinformation in the media space. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the work on media education of population in general and the formation of media literacy of future teachers in particular.

We are convinced that engaging students in the analysis of media manipulative influences related to COVID-19 problems is one of the means to develop their media competence and therefore is a way to help people navigate the pandemic.

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## Usage of Media Products by Teachers: Pedagogical Potential, Expertise and Implementation

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### Abstract

The purpose of the article is to reveal the pedagogical potential of media products, the existing practice of its implementation by teachers and the procedures of pedagogical expertise. To achieve the goal, the following methods were used: generalization of Russian and foreign studies, a survey of teachers, pedagogical analysis of feature films, classification of tasks and functions that media products can perform in the teacher's activity, design of criteria for selecting media products by the teacher, procedures for their pedagogical expertise. According to the results of the study, the following conclusions were made. The pedagogical potential of media products is revealed in the complex of tasks solved by the teacher with their help (didactic, educational, self-developing) and the functions performed by them in relation to the teacher and to the students. For the full use of the pedagogical potential of media products, the teacher needs to conduct his or her pedagogical expertise. Such an examination includes, firstly, the selection of media products based on the following criteria. Secondly, the choice of the method of their pedagogical application. Thirdly, the analysis of the content of the media product from the standpoint of solving the educational, didactic or self-developing task the teacher faces.

**Keywords:** media products, teacher, pedagogical potential, realization, assessment, video, media.

### 1. Introduction

Modern teachers quite often turn to media products as a didactic and educational tool. Another aspect is to obtain methodological information. As an example, the use of educational videos at their lessons, the illustration of educational material with video clips from movies, cartoons, watching and discussing movies, educational cartoons, the organization of interactive educational games, quests using media products, the creation of media products by students in small groups or individually, the use of videos by a teacher in preparation for lessons and educational events, describing various pedagogical forms, methods, techniques, technologies, representing fragments of lessons, educational activities, the experience of colleagues, etc.

At the same time, teachers do not always fully use the potential of media products in solving various pedagogical tasks. For example, the illustrative function of media resources is best known to educators and is often used, while heuristic and analytical functions are rarely used. In the selection of media products, teachers, as a rule, are guided by their own experience, the advice of

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colleagues, the list of Internet sources. Such application has a high risk of destructive influence on the effectiveness of pedagogical activity and professional development of the teacher. For example, the fascination with methodological videos can reduce the teacher's interest in reading scientific pedagogical and psychological literature, simplify or distort the understanding of pedagogical reality. The constant use of animation and entertainment videos during lessons enhances the clip – like thinking of modern children, reduces their ability to dive deeply into the study of any question or problem, the ability to comprehend meaning, contributes to the refusal to perform tasks without an element of entertainment that requires strong-willed efforts. A number of modern films give ready-made answers to the problems, do not leave opportunities for reflection and formation of your own position, have a manipulative effect, impose certain values and behavioral models, which complicates the development of critical thinking, the formation of students' worldview.

In this regard, it is relevant to clarify the pedagogical potential of media products and the conditions for its full implementation by the teacher.

The prerequisite for such clarification is our completed research. The educational potential of cinematography is most fully revealed in pedagogical research (Baranov, Penzin, 2005; Penzin, 1987; Zhmyrova, Monastyrsky, 2012). In Soviet pedagogy in the 20–30 years of the twentieth century, such a direction as film pedagogy was formed and continues to develop (Kolokolnikova, 2021; Kondaurova, Zhubanova, 2021). Within the framework of this direction, various pedagogical forms, methods, technologies of using media products in education are being developed: visualization of educational information with the help of comics (Koleva, 2020), technology of video cases (Plotnikova, 2019), school film club (Dorofeeva, 2021), film meetings (Kislyakov et al., 2021), film game (Krasnikova, Karachevtceva, 2019), film therapy (Bystritsky, 2007), artistic method (Sitnikova, 2020), the festival of educational cinema as a way of broadcasting pedagogical experience (Shcherbakov et al., 2021). In the studies carried out, separate directions of the teacher's use of media products for solving didactic, educational tasks are identified (Baranov, Penzin, 2005; Dorofeeva, 2021; Kondaurova, Zhubanova, 2021; Konkina et al., 2021), tasks related to improving pedagogical skills (Kislyakov et al., 2021; Sitnikova, 2020), the issues of teacher selection of media products, constructive and destructive (in particular, manipulative) influence of media products on students (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2021) are touched upon. However, a holistic view of the pedagogical potential of media products and the conditions for its productive implementation by a teacher has not developed in pedagogy at present.

The purpose of this article is to reveal the pedagogical potential of media products, the existing practice of its implementation by teachers and the conditions for productive implementation.

## 2. Materials and methods

To achieve this goal, we applied the following methods:

- generalization of domestic and foreign studies on the pedagogical potential of media products;
- a survey of teachers on certain areas of use of media products;
- pedagogical analysis of the content of feature films, their possibilities in solving actual pedagogical tasks;
- classification of goals, objectives and functions of media products in relation to the teacher and students;
- designing procedures for the teacher to examine the pedagogical potential of media products.

## 3. Discussion

Summarizing the available research we can conclude that the pedagogical potential of media products lies in the possibility of a teacher solving three groups of tasks with their help: educational; didactic; self-developing (related to professional and personal formation, development, adaptation, improvement of pedagogical skills).

The capacity of media products, in particular, cinematography as a means of education have been known for a long time and were actively used, in particular, in Soviet pedagogy (Penzin, 1987). Within the framework of film pedagogy, patterns are revealed, forms and methods of educating children and youth with screen arts are developed (Scolari et al., 2020). Film pedagogy served as the basis for the development of new research areas – media education (Fedorov,



Levitskaya, 2019; Kolokolnikova, 2021; Kondrashova, 2014; Maksimova, 2006), media upbringing (Maksimova, 2007), digital didactics (Blinov et al., 2021; Boelens et al., 2017; Mizanbekov et al., 2019). Scientific research has revealed the capacities of cinema art in aesthetic education (Penzin, 1987), in the formation of spiritual and moral values in children and youth (Zheltova, 2021), in the development of tolerance (Zhmyrova, Monastyrsky, 2012). Cinema also plays a significant role in the educational policy of modern Russia. In particular, in paragraph 5 of the List of Instructions of the President of the Russian Federation following the meeting of the Council for Culture and Art of October 27, 2020, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation is instructed to "jointly with the Ministry of Culture to consider the issue of studying the heritage of Russian cinema in the framework of the implementation of basic general education programs" (tass.ru/obschestvo/10542505). Currently, the range of media products has expanded significantly and is not limited to films. The issue of media education is viewed at a broader angle to assist the formation of media literacy and screen culture of students (Hämäläinen et al., 2017). If in Soviet Russia the content of films was controlled by the state. The orders to create educational cinema and animation was purposefully set from above. At present a wave of media products of various genres and type of content hits children. Media content may often have an anti-educational effect, showing examples of aggression, cruelty, cynicism. In such conditions, it is important for a teacher not only to recommend his or her students the high-culture media products for viewing, but also to organize joint discussions of films and videos popular among young people. An effective form of work can be a school film club (media club). To achieve an educational effect, it is important to work with each student's personal understanding of the film, with personal meanings extracted after watching it.

The didactic capacity of media products consists of, first of all, the visualization of educational information (DeWaard, 2020; Pettersson, 2018). In addition, they give the teacher the opportunity to use the didactic achievements of colleagues at the lessons (video tutorials, open online courses, videos with a presentation of author's techniques). They can serve as a source material for students to perform various exercises, tasks, projects. In the case of correct selection media products by the teacher (orientated to the zone of the closest development of students, matching the level of difficulty to the student's capabilities, research and (or) creative orientation) and the use of its diverse functions (illustrative, motivational, heuristic, analytical, axiological and others), media products can act as a means to develop thinking (Bermejo-Berros, 2021), creative abilities of students, increase educational motivation (Gülbahar et al., 2017). The involvement of schoolchildren in the joint creation of didactic media products with the teacher has a high potential: educational films, videos, animations, video cases, games (Jafarova, Mikhailova, 2017).

Media products have high capabilities in solving the tasks of professional formation, professional and personal growth of a teacher, and improving pedagogical skills (Vuojärvi et al., 2021). The role of cinema art in the formation of a teacher's ideological position, the general culture of his personality, building his or her positive attitude to the teaching profession (Sitnikova, 2020), communicative skills (Kolokolnikova, Mosintsev, 2021), improving psychological competence (Bystritsky, 2007), preparing them to work in inclusive classrooms (Ertanova, Mikhailova, 2011), forming professional competencies in the development of advanced training programs, horizontal training and exchange of pedagogical experience (Kislyakov et al., 2021), popularizing the scientific psychological and pedagogical knowledge among teachers (Ilyasov, Selivanova, 2018).

Each of the three above-mentioned groups is specified in a set of tasks:

*Didactic tasks:*

- visualization of educational material, illustration of theoretical knowledge with bright, memorable images;
- increasing the educational motivation of students, interest in the material being studied;
- development of thinking, creative abilities of students through the implementation of educational tasks, research cases and involvement of students in the creation of media products.

*Educational tasks:*

- development of the emotional sphere, the ability to experience diverse emotions and feelings;
- development of a sense of beauty, the ability to understand art;
- spiritual and moral education, the development of tolerance, the ability to empathize;

– assimilation by students of social and moral norms and values, behavioral models based on them on the example of the heroes of films and videos.

*Self-developing tasks:*

- mastering the values and lifestyle of the teacher by the educator;
- adaptation of a novice teacher to the teaching profession; whereas a mature teacher to changes in social and pedagogical reality, the social status of a teacher;
- overcoming professional difficulties;
- improving the general, pedagogical, inclusive culture;
- improving psychological competence;
- analysis of one's own actions through comparison with the heroes of films;
- sharing the pedagogical experience of colleagues.

For the full realization of the pedagogical potential of media products, it is important that the teacher uses diverse functions of media products in solving these tasks, which it can perform both in relation to students and the teacher himself or herself. In scientific research, certain functions of cinema art in education are revealed: illustrative (Arora et al., 2021; Konkina, Shavrygina, 2017), axiological (Zheltova, 2021), therapeutic (Bystritsky, 2007), including prevention of emotional burnout of teachers (Timoshenko, 2021), rehabilitation and correctional (Karpova et al., 2011), energy (Prikot, 2021), entertainment (Kondaurova, Zhubanova, 2021). A. S. Robotova designates hermeneutical and heuristic functions, noting that in an artistic and figurative reflection, pedagogical ideas appear to the teacher as developing and updating, help acquire new meanings, attaining a non-dogmatic character (Robotova, 2008). We have generalized and supplemented these functions, systematized them with respect to the teacher and students (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Functions of media products

Functions of media products	Function Details	
	Teachers	Students
Illustrative	Illustration of scientific pedagogical and psychological knowledge in vivid, memorable images	Illustration of educational information in vivid, memorable images, visualization of content
Motivational	Increase in professional motivation by presenting positive results of the activities of teachers – heroes of films, videos	Increase in educational motivation by including elements of entertainment, referring to familiar media products
Axiological	Affirmation of humanistic values of pedagogical activity. Formation of a value attitude to pedagogical activity.	Formation of an emotional and value attitude to educational information
Hermeneutical	Detection of personal meanings of pedagogical activity. Understanding of pedagogical phenomena and facts, motives of students' behavior. Extraction of personal meanings of scientific pedagogical and psychological knowledge.	Extraction of personal meanings of educational information. Understanding the cultural meanings of educational information. Mastering the skills of cultural interpretation of educational text
Therapeutic	Prevention of emotional burnout	Overcoming psychological problems that reduce educational motivation
Correctional	Prevention, detection and correction of pedagogical errors, misconceptions, correction of individual style of pedagogical activity, pedagogical interaction, pedagogical communication with students	Psychological and pedagogical correction of students' personality
Adaptation	Professional adaptation to pedagogical activity.	Adaptation to new conditions of educational activity.

	Adaptation to new conditions of pedagogical activity.	Adaptation to learning difficulties.
Heuristic	Finding new ways and means of pedagogical influence	Extraction of new meanings from educational information, educational texts
Energy	Energy transformation of the teacher's consciousness	Energy transformation of students' consciousness

#### 4. Results

To identify the pedagogical potential of media products, we conducted a pedagogical analysis of the content of domestic and foreign films used at school.

The analysis showed that many films feature images of teachers: both positive (Nestor Petrovich in the film *Big School–Break*, who managed to cope with a "difficult" group by humanistic methods, Brad in the film *Front of the Class*, who managed to become a master teacher despite Tourette's syndrome, Ron Clark in the film *The Story of Ron Clark*, who managed to turn a "difficult" lagging class into a successful one, into a leader in passing the final test), and negative (Dr. Bykov (TV series *Interns*) – the image of a sadistic teacher; the former racketeer Thomas (the TV series *Physical Education Teacher*) is a random person who got a job as a physical education teacher for a bribe; the director of a prestigious American school Frank (the film *Bad Education*) is a plunderer of school funds. There are also ambiguous characters that encourage reflection: Elena Sergeevna in the film *Dear Elena Sergeevna*, Alla Nikolaevna in the film *Schoolmarm* and others.

A wide range of films help the teacher to better understand the characteristics of a particular child and find an individual style to interact with him/her. For example, students with dyslexia and the ways to interact with them are presented in the films *Night School*, *Taare Zameen Par*. Features of the behavior of children with autism spectrum disorders are illustrated in such films as *Rain Man*, *My Name Is Khan*, *Adam*, *Temple Grandin*, *Nell*, *House of Cards*, *Life*, *Animated*, *Infinitely Polar Bear*. The features of gifted and talented children are shown in the films *Gifted*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Jester*, *When I Will Become a Giant*, *Certificate of Maturity*, *Schedule for the Day After Tomorrow*, *Little Man Tate*, *Vitus*, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, *The Queen's Gambit*, *Taare Zameen Par*, *Billy Elliot*, *Akeelah and the Bee*, *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet*.

A number of films vividly highlight current problems that need to be prevented or solved by the teacher. For example, the problems of the influence of the market economy on education are humorously presented in the short film *Alternative Math*. The problem of bullying, bullying of a student by peers was first shown in the film *Scarecrow*.

Many films problematize pedagogical reality, bringing the teacher into a dialogue with the film director, encouraging the value-based understanding of the film, encouraging acceptance of humanistic ideals and values of education. So, the film *Gifted* (2007, M. Webb) prompts you to think: what is more important in the education of a gifted child – communication with peers and a full-fledged childhood or the exploitation of giftedness and the pursuit of success? The plot of the film speaks in favor of the first – humanistic value.

Individual films perform a heuristic function, helping the teacher to find and apply new methods of establishing discipline in "difficult" student groups. Thus, the heroes of the film *Freedom Writers* are high school students from the criminal district of Los Angeles, most of whom have deviant behaviors and do not want to study. The main character of the film, a young teacher Miss Gruwell, manages to "awaken" and show the audience the good in these students – the desire for a decent future, for knowledge, for further education. The film *Les Choristes* shows that the "action – reaction" technique, promoted by the director of a boarding school for "difficult" teenagers, does not work, while involving the same teenagers in an interesting joint business (in this case, singing, which music teacher, Clement Mathieu, loves) is effective and allows a talented student Pierre Morange to enter the conservatory.

A wide range of films can contribute to the formation of an inclusive culture among teachers: *Corrections Class* (2014, I.I. Tverdovsky), *Wonder* (2017, S. Chboski), *Taare Zameen Par* (2007, Aamir Khan), *Gifted* (2017, M. Webb), *Night School* (2018, Malcolm D. Lee), *Freedom Writers* (2007, Richard La Gravenes), *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012, W. Anderson), *Front of the Class* (2008, Peter Werner), *Les Choristes* (2004, K. Barratier). Thus, the positive image of a wheelchair student Lena Chekhova is presented in the film *Corrections Class*. After a long period of home schooling,

the girl enrolls to a correctional class, whose students have become embittered, much as a result of incorrect strategies of their upbringing at school. Despite the lack of ramps and the boorish attitude of teachers and peers, Lena was not embittered. On the contrary, she helps her peers, finds her love.

Thus, the authors of a number of feature films address the problems of the modern school and the school of the past and offer not only new facts, situations and images, but also a typology of pedagogical phenomena reflecting a particular fragment of pedagogical reality in its variability, dialectic, conflict, which is their pedagogical potential.

To study how fully and effectively the pedagogical potential of media products is used by teachers, we conducted a survey. 41 teachers of the Gymnasium "Business School" of Sochi and secondary school No. 10 took part in the survey. Of those surveyed, 63 % are aged 25–45 years, 37 % are over 45 years old. 95 % of respondents are teachers with more than 10 years of experience, 5 % – with 5–10 years of experience. 48 % are classroom masters, 52 % are not. Among the respondents are teachers of a foreign language, primary school, Russian language and literature, social studies, mathematics and other subjects.

A survey of teachers showed that only a quarter of them actively use media products.

24 % of respondents noted: "Watching a feature film or reading an art book, I often discover a way of pedagogical actions (an idea), which I then apply in my pedagogical activity." 24 % of teachers often use films to facilitate students' understanding of educational material.

In working with gifted children, only 15.4 % of teachers turn to pedagogical understanding of literary works and films about gifted children. At the same time, teachers prefer Soviet films of the 1950s–80s. The most popular films are *Scarecrow* (76.9 % of respondents watched it), *Schedule for the Day After Tomorrow* (35.9 %), *Certificate of Maturity* (28.2 %), *When I Will Become a Giant* (25.6 %). At the same time, foreign films that raise topical issues of the teacher's work with gifted children, such as *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (USA, 1998), *Gifted* (USA, 2017), *Taare Zameen Par* (India, 2007), *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet* (France, Australia, Canada, 2013); *Billy Elliot* (Great Britain, France, 2000), *Little Man Tate* (USA, 1991), *Vitus* (Switzerland, 2006), are unknown for most teachers.

For the full use of the pedagogical potential of media products, the teacher needs to carry out his/her pedagogical expertise. Such expertise includes, firstly, the selection of media products based on the following criteria:

- high cultural level – director's work, musical score, visuals, etc.;
- semantic saturation – the ability to extract a variety of personal meanings of the actions of the teacher and students, their problematization. For example, in the film *Gifted* the problem is posed: "what is more correct for a teacher to work with a gifted child: to listen to his heart or to preserve their reputation?", "which education is more useful for a gifted child – inclusive or exclusive (in a special school)?", etc.;
- developmental orientation – focus on the zone of the closest development of students, on the personal and professional growth of the teacher;
- affirmation of humanistic norms and values in building relationships between teachers and students;
- adequacy of solved pedagogical tasks (didactic, educational, self-developing).

Secondly, the teacher's examination of the pedagogical potential of media products includes the choice of the method of their pedagogical application:

– The use of a media product as an additional means of implementing traditional pedagogical practice. For example, illustration of educational material on history with excerpts from historical films (Marcus et al., 2018). This model is most often implemented in solving didactic problems. The most common practice is when a training video, multimedia presentation illustrate the content of a traditional lesson.

– The use of media products as a new pedagogical practice. For example, instead of traditional experience in chemistry or physics, students with the help of a corresponding media product participate in conducting virtual experiments.

– Creation by students under the guidance (with the participation) of a teacher of their own media product, which is then used in the educational process, begins to perform teaching or educating functions. This can be an educational video, your own short film, an advertising video (social advertising), your own video tour, etc.



Thirdly, the examination of the pedagogical potential of a media product includes an analysis of its content from the standpoint of solving the educational, didactic or self-developing task facing the teacher. Questions for such an analysis are compiled taking into account a specific professional or pedagogical situation:

*Situations of mastering the values and lifestyle of a teacher:*

– to determine what values are realized in their actions by teachers – characters of the film? What lifestyle do they follow? Would it be correct to say that the teaching profession has become their way of life? If so, how does it affect relationships with others, other non-professional spheres of life?

– correlate the values of the film's characters with normative pedagogical, legal, and moral values;

– compare with your own values and lifestyle;

– decide whether it is necessary to change something in your lifestyle, attitude to teaching.

*Situations of adaptation to changes in social and pedagogical reality:*

– determine what changes in the social and pedagogical situation, modern teachers and students are reflected in the film?

– did the teacher – character of the film manage to adapt to such changes? How did he/she do it?

– if the teacher failed, how did it affect the quality of his/her work, communication with children, psychological health?

– to assess to what extent do I accept the changes reflected in the film? If I don't accept it, then why?

– outline an action plan to accept the changes that have occurred, adapt to them.

*Situations of making a professional choice:*

– to find a film in which the character makes a choice that is currently exciting for the teacher (the choice of an individual style of pedagogical activity, a strategy for interacting with a "difficult" student, one or another pedagogical means);

– to determine the motives and criteria of the pedagogical choice made by the characters of the film;

– to determine what values the teacher relied on when making such a choice?

– evaluate the choice of the character of the film from the standpoint of his/her values, your own values;

– make your own choice.

*Situations of uncertainty of targets and (or) means of pedagogical activity:*

– describe a new pedagogical tool used by the teacher – character of the film;

– assess whether this remedy has worked? Why?

– determine whether this tool is based on any scientific ideas, pedagogical or psychological theories?

– answer the question: will I be able to use this tool in my work with students?

*Situations of assessing the pedagogical expediency of certain actions:*

– to determine the pedagogical purpose of the actions of the teacher – character of the film;

– evaluate the pedagogical productivity of actions (have there been any positive changes in the students, what did they express themselves in?);

– evaluate the actions of the teacher – character of the film from moral (human) and pedagogical positions. Do the assessments overlap?

– to determine whether the pedagogical actions performed by the character of the film were pedagogically expedient?

– to answer the question: would I behave in the same way?

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of the existing practice of using media products by teachers has shown that a small part of teachers (about a quarter) use their pedagogical potential. At the same time, full range of possible functions of media products is not implemented.

The analysis of pedagogical theory and educational practice made it possible to determine the conditions for the teacher to fully realize the pedagogical potential of media products:

– the implementation of three groups of tasks with the help of media products: didactic, educational, self-developing;

- realization of diverse functions of media products: illustrative, motivational, axiological, hermeneutic, analytical, therapeutic, energetic, correctional, adaptive, heuristic;
- selection of media products based on the following criteria: high cultural level, semantic saturation, developmental orientation, affirmation of humanistic norms and values, adequacy of solved pedagogical tasks;
- the use of various ways of using media products: as an additional means of implementing traditional pedagogical practice, as a new pedagogical practice, as the creation and use of a joint media product with students in the educational process;
- analysis of the content of media products from the standpoint of their capabilities in solving the tasks facing the teacher and compliance with scientific and pedagogical theories.

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## Cherkessk – Moscow – Hollywood – and Moscow Again...

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### Abstract

Indar Dzhendubaev was born on September 8, 1983 in Cherkessk. While still in high school, he was fascinated by movies and drawing comics, but after an unsuccessful attempt to enter the Moscow State University of Design and Technology, he became a student in the psychology department of the Moscow Humanities University. After successfully graduating from the university, he first enrolled in a psychology graduate school, but then went to work in film. At first he worked as an administrator, coordinator and producer of post-production, then as a storyboard artist, and in 2012, at the invitation of director and producer Timur Bekmambetov, he went to Hollywood, where he worked as a storyboard artist and second unit director on *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. In 2015, Indar Jendubaev made his directorial debut with a feature-length feature film, *He's a Dragon*. As a creative producer, art director and creative consultant for visual development of complex staging scenes, he has worked on many major Russian feature projects, including *Silver Skates*, *Invasion*, *The Last Bogatyr* (Part 2 and 3), *Fire, Couple from the Future*, etc. In this interview, Indar Dzhendubaev talks to film critic Alexander Fedorov about his childhood hobbies and the creative path he has taken over the past twenty years...

**Keywords:** Dzhendubaev, film, movie, Hollywood, He's a Dragon, film education, film director, fantasy.

### 1. Introduction

Indar Dzhendubaev was born on September 8, 1983 in Cherkessk. While still in high school, he was fascinated by movies and drawing comics, but after an unsuccessful attempt to enter the Moscow State University of Design and Technology, he became a student in the psychology department of the Moscow Humanities University. After successfully graduating from the university, he first enrolled in a psychology graduate school, but then went to work in film. At first he worked as an administrator, coordinator and producer of post-production, then as a storyboard artist, and in 2012, at the invitation of director and producer Timur Bekmambetov, he went to Hollywood, where he worked as a storyboard artist and second unit director on *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. In 2015, Indar Jendubaev made his directorial debut with a feature-length feature film, *He's a Dragon*. As a creative producer, art director and creative consultant for visual development of complex staging scenes, he has worked on many major Russian feature projects, including *Silver Skates*, *Invasion*, *The Last Bogatyr* (Part 2 and 3), *Fire, Couple from the Future*, etc.

In this interview, Indar Dzhendubaev talks to film critic Alexander Fedorov about his childhood hobbies and the creative path he has taken over the past twenty years...

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– *You were born in 1983, back in the Soviet Union, and you probably remember the Soviet films you watched as a child. What tapes did you like back then, at the turn of the 1990s?*

– In the very beginning of the 1990s, I first had a VCR and a videocassette with a recording of Leonid Gaidai's comedy *The Twelve Chairs*. I really liked this film, as well as another Gaidai film *Ivan Vasilievich Changes His Profession*. I think I was then a classic Soviet child - I watched with pleasure *Gentlemen of Fortune*, *Amphibian Man*, *Pirates of the 20th Century*, that is, comedy, fantasy and adventure films. I, in general, was a prisoner of the adventure genre. As I realize now, I liked that Soviet films with these kinds of plots were less pathetic than American ones. But American and European films were, of course, just as important to my formation as an artist and cinematographer.

– *When you were still at school you were passionate about drawing comics, but after graduating in 2000 you entered the Psychology Department of Moscow Humanitarian University and even wrote your PhD thesis in social psychology. Why did you choose psychology instead of, for example, studying painting at some art school?*

– Frankly speaking, even when I was already studying psychology I wondered more than once why I hadn't pushed myself to study art. When I came to Moscow to apply, at first I chose the University of Design and Technology, but then I realized that I did not have a basic education in classical art. I drew really well, in my own way, but I could not do academic drawings of plaster heads. So, the members of the admission committee of the Moscow University of Design and Technology did not accept my work. And then I remembered (and my relatives supported me) that when I was at school I loved psychology, and with the help of my grandfather, a philosopher, I understood already in the sixth form the difference between Nietzsche and Hegel. So I was told: "Well, that's good! You'll be a psychologist - also necessary and useful to society". And I entered the Psychology Department very easily; I studied there with great pleasure; I was good at everything... But all the same, I never let go of my attraction to the world of art, and during my student years I earned money drawing illustrations for children's books for various publishing houses.

– *You played in student theater and in Students' Comedy Club, staged student productions. You also worked as a choreographer. How did that come about? You didn't have any special choreographic training?*

– At school in Cherkessk I, of course, dreamt about Moscow, especially as my elder brother had already entered one of the universities in the capital. And he, by the way, danced just amazingly. And, in general, we all dance very well from an early age. Where I come from, the ability to dance well is a normal thing (when it comes to national dances). Well, I liked not only the national dances. I copied some moves from music videos, got good at it and even opened a small informal school of my own when I was a pupil. And then when I was already at university I choreographed plays for stage shows with elements of choreography, and it turned out that I did that quite well. And then on one project I needed an actress to teach a couple of movements for the stage. There was no choreographer, and I, the stage manager, was there. I taught it. And got the official line in the credits. And now I can proudly wear the title of choreographer in the movie (laughs).

– *So, you successfully graduate from university, and opportunities open up for you to become a university teacher or a research psychologist, but, even after writing your dissertation, you choose to work in film. How did this happen?*

– It happened that a professional film crew came to the university where I was studying to shoot one of the episodes. And I was just stunned: it was a real movie, not some kind of student theater. I helped the film crew to gather students for the crowd...

In 2005, after I graduated, I opened my own private psychological training center. Everything seemed to be going well, but after a while I got a call from a film studio, and they asked me to work as an administrator on one of TV shows. I immediately agreed, although then I said to

myself: "You're without five minutes Ph.D. in psychology, and you do some nonsense – in the cold sweeping up trash on the set!"

But I do not even know why, I continued to work hard in the movie, even though the administrator from me was not a who knows what - I liked the creative process on the set. And then one day during the preparation of a project sick storyboard artist, and I volunteered to take his place. Generally speaking, as a storyboard artist I later developed a certain reputation, because I worked in that capacity for seven years (in advertising, TV, cinema), and I liked it much more than the administrative work. I began to do a job that I was passionate about.

But most importantly, the work of a storyboarder is a great film school. You're in the very beginning stages of translating a literary script into a film project. My film studies were collaborations with many directors with whom I worked at the very beginning of their conception. I still remember how just one line in a script about "a soldier getting out of a burning tank" turned into a whole series of drawings with general, medium and close-ups... The first attempts at constructing complex scenes, and honing the techniques of cinematographic language began then.

– *How did you get into Timur Bekmambetov's studio?*

- At first I was invited to his *Bazelevs studio* as a storyboardist for commercials. And then in the same capacity, I got on one of the series of *Christmas Trees*, where I met with Timur Bekmambetov.

– *They say that it was after the filming of “Christmas Trees” and a couple of other projects director and producer Timur Bekmambetov took you with him to Hollywood, where you were his assistant on the film “Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter” (2012). What does this Hollywood experience give you?*

– Yes, that's right, Timur invited me to Hollywood with him. By that time I was not only engaged in storyboarding, but also participated in the development of previsualization scenes, for future projects, that is, I was involved in the process more deeply than before. Of course, it was easier for the Americans to hire a Hollywood storyboarder, but Timur insisted on my candidacy. So from the Russian development team I ended up on the American set of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* in New Orleans. There I continued to draw storyboards on the set, helped with the creative planning of scenes, and, eventually, Timur Bekmambetov trusted me and Igor Tsai (the future creative producer of the project *Hi's a Dragon*) to become directors of the second unit for the shooting of the stunt episodes of the film. After that I worked in Los Angeles for another three years in Timur's team to develop projects, and then Moscow and *Hi's a Dragon*.

– *After “Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter”, did you ever think of staying in Hollywood to further your career?*

– Yes, I had such thoughts, and there were offers from American colleagues. But at the time, my main priority was loyalty to Timur's team, I knew of his plans and I wanted to work with him further. And it was obvious that the people with whom Timur worked were always "people for the future" for him. For me Timur was like part of my family. He wasn't just my boss, but my teacher and mentor, and I will be grateful to him for the rest of my life for his trust and all the lessons and opportunities he gave me. I, in general, consider him one of the most outstanding visionary directors of his generation...

Then, when I came back to Russia and started working in Moscow again, I never had the feeling that I had missed out on anything. And I still have that feeling. Although it is clear that if I had stayed to work in Los Angeles, my life would have turned out differently. But would it have been better? I don't know.

– *In 2015, your first feature-length directorial work was released in Russia: the fantasy “He’s a Dragon”, which was seen by 0.5 million viewers in Russia and 3.2 million in China. How did you get the idea to screen the novel by Sergei and Marina Dyachenko? What difficulties did you encounter during this film?*

– It went like this. When we were working in Los Angeles, one of the projects we were thinking about, gathering visuals, was "about a dragon." And then we came to Moscow, and we had a meeting with Sergei and Marina Diachenko about something else entirely. And they saw some of our drawings and asked: "Why do you have a dragon? We answered that we would like to shoot something about it. And then Sergey and Marina said that they have already written a book about the dragon. So Timur Bekmambetov started developing a film project for this book. But then he was invited to Hollywood to shoot a major film *Ben-Hur*, and I at this time was already fully immersed in the development of the script and casting of the fantasy *He's a Dragon*. Then Timur decided (for which I am very grateful) to entrust me with directing this film, relying on the strong team which he had already gathered for the shooting (including an excellent and very experienced cameraman Sergey Trofimov, a wonderful set designer Grigory Pushkin and the studio of computer graphics A. Gorokhov), and the maximum number of episodes he had thought over visual code. True, realizing that, despite all my experience, I am still a novice in independent directing of "full meter", the project was adjusted in the direction of less cost of its production. But a more chamber story became, perhaps, even a greater challenge for me. After all, when you shoot a "higher-priced" fantasy, you can always hide behind the swoop of special effects and fast-changing action scenes...

I was lucky that we had Sergei Nevshupov in our team, who had also created dragons for *Avatar*, so with his help all the complicated scenes connected with the movements and flights of our main character were visually very convincing, especially as it was in 3D.

We offered the Chinese producers of *He's a Dragon* as a co-production in China while we were still preparing the project, but they refused: "How! You're suggesting a story where one of the greatest symbols of our national culture would be paired with an ordinary person? You can't do that, it's a violation of all canons!"

We started shooting on our own. Initially, it was a more "adult" project, with a fantasy "dark world". But, in the process of production, *He's a Dragon* somehow transformed smoothly and imperceptibly and became more light intonationally. There was no calculation in it, it just happened that way, both the objective circumstances and my understanding of the project.

As for the film's theatrical release, due to objective circumstances the distributors had to put the premiere of *He's a Dragon* on New Year's Day in December (and not on Valentine's Day in February, as originally planned), we did not have time to develop the planned advertising campaign in full, and most importantly - the picture hit the screens along with the final series of *The Hunger Games* and *Star Wars*, that is, the Hollywood blockbusters our *He's a Dragon* was not spared at the box office...

But if we look at the number of viewers of this film on the Internet, the citation index and the composition of the fan base (there are more girls and young women, by the way) of our film, we see that the figures are much higher there. For example, on an Internet portal, *He's a Dragon* gathered 17 million views in two years. But China surprised us the most. Accidentally ended up on one of their online platforms (even without voice translation, just with subtitles) for the first four days it attracted 6 million viewers, while *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight* watched for a year on the same site no more than 300 thousand people.

It was after such a success that Chinese distributors started calling us with requests to organize a movie premiere with a film crew as part of a limited release of the film on the territory of the Celestial Empire. And, in spite of the fact that by the time of the theatrical premiere of *He's a Dragon* in China has already watched on the Internet more than 150 million viewers, it still aroused the interest of the public in cinemas. The actor Matvey Lykov, who played the title role, became a superstar in China, and he was met by crowds of female fans everywhere.

I am a very self-critical person, but I understood from the example of the film *He's a Dragon* that you make a film not for yourself but for the audience. And if you personally don't like something in your film, you have to show it to the audience anyway, and it's very possible that the audience will appreciate a lot of things quite differently...

– *Film critics' opinions on the film were sometimes contradictory (see, for example: Dolin, 2015; Ivanov, 2015; Rogova, 2015; Litovchenko, 2015). Does it matter to you at all what film critics write about your films?*

– When I read many reviews of my film with fear, I made sure that not a single one, even the most trashy review of *He's a Dragon*, had the level of critical intensity that I was charging to myself.



I thought, "You guys aren't getting it right: there's a lot to really scold!" As it seemed to me at the time. But this situation served as a big lesson for me: if none of the film critics managed to hurt me with their review, so how did I feel about my work? Was it even more critical and picky? I realized then that I had to be kinder to myself in this respect. Let the critics criticize, but you create!

And one more thing: it's understandable that film critics advise the audience whether or not to watch this or that film. But as a filmmaker, I would like film critics to give me some constructive advice. And I have had such film critics, too. I thank them.

– In 2016, you co-directed the New Year's Eve comedy "Christmas Tree 5". But your new directorial works haven't been made for five years. In 2017, it was announced that the shooting of "He's a Dragon 2" would start soon, but then it didn't happen. Why is that? What were you working on after "He's a Dragon" and "Christmas Trees"?

– First of all, after *He's a Dragon*, the Chinese producers quite quickly suggested doing *He's a Dragon 2*, and we started to develop this project, which took us almost a year and a half. In spite of the fact that we made a tremendous leap forward in the field of visual development, I encountered serious difficulties as a playwright. There are all sorts of "capsule" type stories, and then there are, conventionally speaking, "block", franchise stories like *Toy Story* and *Star Wars* that can go on for decades... *He's a Dragon* seemed to be more of a "capsule" story. The characters found each other and fulfilled a basic purpose. But we still found a very original script that put everything in its place. And then our Chinese partners started having difficulties with other projects and had to give up cooperation. The situation was similar with the next partners. So we decided that the time was not ripe for the second part. Who knows, maybe it is not so easy with the Dragons in China. But the material remained. Both visual and dramaturgical. The time will come and quite possibly our dragon will take off again!

Then I got married. A child was born, then a second. I decided to devote more time to my family, my children, not to break away from them for long and distant film expeditions. But I did not lose time. In Moscow I took an active part in artistic, visual, creative development projects in various teams and projects with great pleasure. I worked on the film crews of *Invasion*, *Silver Skates*, the second and third series of *The Last Bogatyr*, *Fire*, *A Couple from the Future* and many others. I've been there as an art director, elaborate scene developer, creative consultant, and creative producer.

But now I'm ready to dive back into directing a feature film on my own. The main thing is to have a decent story and a decent team.

– Now you are involved in an ambitious online film education project. What attracted you to it? What are you going to teach there?

– While I was still shooting the film *He's a Dragon*, I was invited to a film school in Moscow to teach a storyboard course. And there I discovered that I was terribly interested in telling students about film. There were more and more courses, and the topics became more and more profound. There emerged a method and a personal approach. And I have a lot to tell, because I have worked with various teams – Russian and American – on dozens of film projects in many different capacities.

Then I began to be invited as a film teacher and other universities, for example, in the Film School Industry.

And then the film director and producer Konstantin Kutuev invited me to this "International Online Content School". There are courses for masters of the film industry ([www.moshka.pro](http://www.moshka.pro)). I completely like it. It inspires me a lot. There is something in there that I, as an educator, have been missing a lot. I'm very excited about this opportunity for myself and for future students, and I think it's still just the beginning of a great journey...

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## Why the Film *In August 1944th (Moment of Truth)*, Filmed in 1975, Was Not Released On the Screen

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### Abstract

The organizer of film production, educator in Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), Honored Worker of Culture of the Russian Federation Boris Krishtul began his creative film career back in 1960, when he entered the correspondence department of the Faculty of Economics of VGIK and got a job as an administrator of the film crew of A. Rowe's film *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Then B. Krishtul worked as an administrator on the set of the films *Sofya Perovskaya*, *Retribution*, *Red Tent*, *The Seagull*, *Egor Bulychov and others*, *This sweet word is freedom!*, *The right to jump*.

In the 1970s – 1990s, B. Krishtul was the executive producer of such well-known films as *Front behind the front line*, *Crew*, *Say a word about the poor hussar*, *Winning a lone businessman*, *Arsonists*, *Furious bus*, etc.

One of the brightest pages of Boris Krishtul's creative biography is his work as a film director on the set of the film adaptation of Vladimir Bogomolov's famous novel *In August 1944 (Moment of Truth)*, which was filmed in 1975, but, alas, never reached the audience.

**Keywords:** Boris Krishtul, In August 1944th, film.

### 1. Introduction

The organizer of film production, educator in Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), Honored Worker of Culture of the Russian Federation Boris Krishtul began his creative film career back in 1960, when he entered the correspondence department of the Faculty of Economics of VGIK and got a job as an administrator of the film crew of A. Rowe's film *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Then B. Krishtul worked as an administrator on the set of the films *Sofya Perovskaya*, *Retribution*, *Red Tent*, *The Seagull*, *Egor Bulychov and others*, *This sweet word is freedom!*, *The right to jump*.

In the 1970s – 1990s, B. Krishtul was the executive producer of such well-known films as *Front behind the front line*, *Crew*, *Say a word about the poor hussar*, *Winning a lone businessman*, *Arsonists*, *Furious bus*, etc.

One of the brightest pages of Boris Krishtul's creative biography is his work as a film director on the set of the film adaptation of Vladimir Bogomolov's famous novel *In August 1944 (Moment of Truth)*, which was filmed in 1975, but, alas, never reached the audience.

There are still many legends around this film. Also published are interviews of the actors who played the main roles in it – Sergei Shakurov ([Shakurov, 2012](#)) and Alexander Ivanov ([Ivanov, 2020](#)), memoirs of the writer Vladimir Bogomolov.

Boris Krishtul kindly agreed to give an interview about the filming of this film to film historian Alexander Fedorov.

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– *I read with great interest the chapter from your book (Krishtul, Artemov, 2002) devoted to the filming of the film “Moment of Truth”. In it, you describe in detail the conflict between the author of the novel “Moment of Truth” (“In August 1944”), writer Vladimir Bogomolov (1924–2003) and director Vytautas Žalakyavičius (1930-1996). Since March 1975, you have been the executive producer of this film adaptation, and, of course, you have been privy to all the details of the events. You also cite in your book the following fragment from the letter of the writer to the general director of the studio N.T. Sizov: “The whole trouble with the director's script is that the director has the most remote, incorrect idea of the people and events that he must depict, and with the non-intervention of the studio, he persists in his delusions and his ignorance. These delusions of the director and his ignorance of the subject of the image cannot lead to anything good. Sincerely, V. Bogomolov, 22.06.75”.*

– The conflict between the writer and director began to flare up literally immediately after V. Bogomolov read the director's script for the film. Instead of discussing it with us, Bogomolov for some reason stated his position in a letter addressed to the General Director of the studio. Such an act offended the director. V. Žalakyavičius “stood a pose” and asked me to protect him from contacts with V. Bogomolov. I found myself between a heavy hammer and a massive anvil. How to suppress the brewing squabble? No matter how hard he tried to convince the writer what a wonderful director is making the film, he heard the same thing in response: he doesn't understand ... he didn't fight ... he's off topic ... The director, on the other hand, was laconic in relation to the author and limited himself mainly to unprintable words.

After showing Vladimir Bogomolov the working materials of the film, I realized from his face that he did not like the material. – And these are counterintelligence officers?! Bogomolov exclaimed with pathos. – Unshaven, in dirty tunics (as if I forgot that this is how I described them, crawling through forests and swamps for weeks). Your director didn't fight, he doesn't know what the film is about...

– *In several publications in the press (and in your book, too), the following lines of the writer from a letter to the general director of the “Mosfilm” studio N.T. Sizov: “Since the director persists in his ignorance, in his delusions without the intervention of the studio, I consider it necessary to warn the studio that if all the necessary amendments are not made to the director's script, I will not be able to be responsible for the ideological content and artistry of the picture, and I will have only one way out: remove your name from the credits. Sincerely, V. Bogomolov, 22.06.75”.* From which it seemed to follow that the writer gave up on the film and retired. Is it so?

– Alas, no. Although at first it seemed so. “Vladimir Osipovich, maybe we'll put a caption “based on”? I asked Bogomolov. He immediately agreed and assured me that he would “step aside”, that he would not be in the credits ... He left me at parting – in general, do what you want...

But in the fall of 1975, we received a telegram from Moscow: "Stop filming and urgently arrive in Moscow." It turned out that, having learned that V. Bogomolov had filed a lawsuit against us, on November 26, 1975, Sizov signed order No. 705 to suspend the production of the film. Its preamble read: “In connection with the creative disagreements that arose over the footage between the author and the director of the film *Moment of Truth*, and also because of the death of artist B. Babkauskas...”.

On December 5, 1975, a meeting of the Moscow City Court was held on the claim of V.O. Bogomolov about the prohibition of filming the film *Moment of Truth* at the film studio *Mosfilm*. The court ruled: “Production of the film should be suspended and no filming should be made without the consent of the author. To try to find an acceptable solution for the author and the film studio and continue the work in order to prevent unprofitable expenses for the film studio.

By the way, in his now published diary, V. Bogomolov again returned to the fate of the work by V. Žalakyavičius, and what surprised me most of all was that he never remembered the trial, as if it never happened! The writer claimed that the true reason for the closing of the film was the death of the performer of the role of General Yegorov. Of course, the death of the wonderful Lithuanian artist B. Babkauskas was a heavy blow for the film crew, but our film did not die because the artist was gone – the outstanding writer Vladimir Bogomolov “buried” the living picture of the talented director with his own hands.



– *Have you ever seen the official text of the contract in which V. Bogomolov transferred the rights to film adaptation to “Mosfilm”? Were there clauses in this text that allowed the writer – in case of disagreement with the final result – to sue the studio? Or veto filming?*

– We filmed in 1975, and in May 1973 the USSR joined the Geneva Convention for the Protection of Copyrights (World..., 1952). This prompted the writer to sue.

– *Were there any other attempts to save the film after the trial?*

– Two weeks after the trial, a special meeting of the secretariat of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR took place, at which eminent directors branded Bogomolov with pathos and defended V. Žalakyavičius. But anybody would not have been able to change the position of the author. Shooting of the film was stopped forever, the crew disbanded... “Clinic,” as my deputy put it, handing over the costumes and props of the unfinished film... Perhaps V. Bogomolov is right about something. After all, he is the master of his work. But the fact that millions of viewers have lost the opportunity to watch a beautiful picture (everyone who has seen the filmed material is sure of this), the fault lies with Bogomolov. Let it remain on his conscience...

– *The history of Soviet cinema knows many cases when the working material of a film unfinished for some reason was deposited by the studio with the State Film Fund. After all, even then it was clear that we were talking about the work of an outstanding director. Why didn't you insist then, in 1976, that all the filmed materials of “Moment of Truth” end up on the shelves of the State Film Fund?*

– This is always the decision of the film studio management. All filmed material was destroyed.

– *You are one of the few who have seen the entire material of the “Moment of Truth”. What were your personal impressions? From acting, directing? If this film were to be completed after all, would it (given the huge popularity of the novel) become the box office champion, surpassing “Pirates of the 20th Century” in the number of millions of viewers?*

– I know many examples when the material was called brilliant, but the finished film turned out to be mediocre, and vice versa. I remember how they praised the material of the films *Red Bells*, *Memory*, and how they scolded the material of the films *The Ballad of a Soldier*, *Belorussky Station*, *Burn, Burn My Star*... It's like judging Rodin's sculpture by the hand, ear or shoe... You have to look at the whole!

### Filmography

*In August 1944.../Moment of Truth. USSR, 1975.* Directed by Vytautas Žalakevičius. Screenwriter Vladimir Bogomolov (based on his own novel of the same name). Actors: Sergey Shakurov, Anatoly Azo, Alexander Ivanov, Bronius Babkauskas, Borislav Brondukov, Nikolay Trofimov, Mihai Volontir, Elena Safonova, Sergey Sazontiev, Boris Shcherbakov and others.

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