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Ukrainian Information Space. Issue 7

# The phenomenon of social networks in the context of modern information space

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*The article is devoted to understanding the phenomenon of social networks in the context of modern information space.*

*The thesis substantiates that the most important feature of the Internet environment as a communicative space is the digital technologies use, digitalization. Information and communication component is one of the defining features of modern society, which provides unimpeded access to information and its exchange, no restrictions, and what is the framework of communication (political, geographical, temporal), interpenetration of ideas and cultures, feedback. At the same time, the information and communication society, with all the positive aspects of its organization, is also an environment for the implementation of any kind of manipulation and suggestive influences on individual members of the network community and their associations.*

*The article considers modern approaches to the study of social networks and their forms of "people's" participation in journalism, the role of the mass media in public opinion expression, the influence of mass communications on tastes, and the organization of social action. The author emphasizes that the phenomenon of society's reaction to the information disseminated in the network remains interesting for study. The study is especially true of socially momentous processes such as economics, politics, health, and education. The unique possibilities of social networks are outlined: as a specific social phenomenon, they appeared suddenly and began to develop rapidly, increasingly penetrating the life of society. This is the essence of any phenomenon when the new immediately becomes familiar.*

*The study emphasizes that the studied phenomenon is much broader. It is not only about changes in media consumption but also about the transformation of the information space as a plane of various socio-cultural practices.*

*It is concluded that social networks are a new but very dynamic phenomenon of the information space (the formation of which occurs both in Ukraine and in other countries), the problem field of which requires further research.*

***Keywords:*** *social networks, social media, mass media, Internet environment, communicative space, media platforms, sites, digitalization.*

# ФЕНОМЕН СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖ У КОНТЕКСТІ СУЧАСНОГО ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОГО ПРОСТОРУ

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*Стаття присвячена осмисленню феномена соціальних мереж у контексті сучасного інформаційного простору.*

*Обґрунтовано тезу про те, що найголовнішою особливістю інтернет-середовища як комунікативного простору є використання цифрових технологій, а однією з визначальних рис сучасного суспільства є його інформаційно-комунікативний складник, що передбачає безперешкодний доступ до інформації і обмін нею, відсутність обмежень, будь-яких рамок комунікації (політичних, географічних, тимчасових), взаємопроникнення ідей і культур, зворотний комунікативний зв'язок. У той же час інформаційно-комунікативне суспільство при всіх позитивних аспектах його організації є також і середовищем для здійснення будь-якого роду маніпулювань і сугестивних впливів на окремих учасників мережевої спільноти та їх об'єднань.*

*Розглядаються сучасні підходи щодо вивчення соціальних мереж та їхніх форм «народної» участі в журналістиці, ролі масмедіа в вираженні громадської думки, впливу масових комунікацій на смаки і організацію соціальної дії. Наголошено, що цікавим для вивчення залишається і феномен реакції суспільства на інформацію, котра поширюється у мережі. Особливо це стосується суспільно важливих процесів, таких як економіка, політика, здоров'я та освіта. Окреслено унікальні можливості соціальних мереж: як особливе соціальне явище вони з'явилися раптово і почали бурхливо розвиватися, все більше проникаючи в життя суспільства. В цьому і полягає суть будь-якого феномена, коли нове відразу стає звичним.*

*У статті підкреслюється, що досліджуване явище є ширшим — йдеться не лише про зміни в медіаспоживанні, а і про трансформацію інформаційного простору як площини найрізноманітніших соціокультурних практик.*

*Зроблено висновок, що соціальні мережі є новим, але дуже динамічним феноменом інформаційного простору (становлення та розвиток якого відбувається як в Україні, так і в інших країнах світу), проблематика якого потребує подальших досліджень.*

***Ключові слова:*** *соціальні мережі, соціальні медіа, масмедіа, інтернет-середовище, комунікативний простір, медіаплатформи, сайти, діджиталізація.*

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*The study relevance*

The most important feature of the Internet environment as a communication space is the use of digital technologies: all information is stored digitally and has no physical form, can also be transported over any distance at the speed of light. The era of one-way simple content transfer, regardless of the audience's impressions and ideas, is coming to an end. There are already systems that provide instant feedback.

Information access channels democratization and Internet technologies simplification for the user has changed the space of modern mass communications. Against the background of the classical media crisis, new public models of informing the public and commenting on the news are emerging, less limited control, and less costly economically. The current media crisis leads to the emergence of new forms of employment, in terms of job losses in traditional media, which, in general, increases competition in this sector of production. There is a phenomenon of social networks, blogs, websites that contain individual or collective records linked by a single platform, as well as the ability to comment and disseminate information to members of the community and readers who do not belong to them.

It is noteworthy that in Ukraine, organizations and movements of various directions are also trying to use social networks, as well as any opportunities to communicate on the Internet, as a springboard for propaganda. By posting text and video materials there, they can influence the citizens' opinion, replenish their ranks and transfer their views on public life already to the plane of real practical action. It is characteristic that information exchange analysis in social networks can give important material on the public moods analysis, the attitude to resonant problems.

By way of example, the reflection of the topic in the media space, we can conclude that networks as a tool of public influence in Ukraine are not yet used by existing players in the political arena with high efficiency. At the same time, the new media development in Ukraine is quite chaotic, spontaneous. Thus, we can assume that Ukrainian social networks to some extent lack an in-depth analysis and development strategy that is useful for the state and society as a whole.

*Status of problem development.*

One of the defining features of modern society is its information and communication component, which provides unimpeded access to information and exchange, lack of restrictions, any framework of communication (political, geographical, temporal), interpenetration of ideas and cultures, feedback. At the same time, the information and communication society, with all the positive aspects of its organization, is also an environment for any kind of manipulation and suggestive influences on individual members of the network community and their associations (Petryk and others, 2011).

The development of the theory and methodology of social networks and forms of "people's" participation in journalism was studied by W. Lippmann, who showed the role of mass media in expressing public opinion, representatives of the Frankfurt School T. Adorno, J. Habermas, and M. Horkheimer, who considered journalism in the light of the concept public sphere as an independent discursive platform, as well as P. Lazarsfeld and R. Merton, who studied the influence of mass communications on the tastes and organization of social action. However, some applied aspects of the development of the social networks, their commercialization, are studied sporadically. The phenomenon of society's reaction to the information disseminated on the Internet also remains interesting to investigate. This is especially true of socially serious processes such as economics, politics, health, and education.

The processes of formation and functioning of the media environment were studied in the works of O. Akopov, O. Belyaev, T. Brant, M. Butyrina, O. Vartanova, O. Harmatin, A. Dosenko, V. Ivanov, V. Kikhtan, M. Kolesnikov, T. Liutyi, B. Sterling, F. Sawyer, O. Sytnyk, O. Kholod, M. Ulanova, O. Shylov, I. Shokhin and many others. At the same time, the phenomenon under study is broader. It is not only about changes in media consumption but also about the information space transformation as a plane of various socio-cultural practices.

*Research tasks.* The main task is to clarify the social networks phenomenon in the context of modern information space formation.

*Main research material.*

The development of the information society in Ukraine is approaching the level when the activities of any person or organization will be difficult to imagine without a social network account for communication, feedback and coverage of important information.

At the present stage, the social reality in which a person is, is increasingly called the information or network society. The basis of the concept of an information-network society is the idea of information as knowledge, which constructively changes the social system. As for social networks, information has the ability to be present everywhere, and even in some sense, in an uncontrolled broadcast, that is, in constant communication. For its part, this communication is not only a process of transmitting information from the transmitter to the receiver, but also a constant change in the state of communication participants in social networks as interacting systems.

Communication and interaction of people led to the transition from the civilizational era of communication "face to face" within the local space to the civilizational era of remote and indirect contacts in the information environment, social networks. Social networks do not surprise anyone now, although they are a global phenomenon in communication.

Social media not only has a multimillion audience, these platforms, for many, replace the very concept of socially significant information and the Internet. For a professional working in social networks, this is a new opportunity to work directly with an interested audience without investing large sums in creating your infrastructure. Working on social networks allows you to create a channel for exchanging information with the audience and will help solve several complex problems. For example, with the help of social networks, you can increase brand awareness, increase audience loyalty, conduct research, and even organize direct sales.

The advantages of online and digital media resources, first, are that online technologies offer a flexible interaction system. Participation in various social media and communities allows us to talk about the company's transparency, and therefore about the growth of consumer confidence.

Third, the use of such technologies is extremely important for medium and small regional actors. Especially when they reach a wider audience and promote their information outside the region.

Fourth, many target groups are active users of the Internet and social media, where they are more accessible and prone to active dialogue.

Fifth, today's online and offline communication are closely linked, as evidenced by the fact that online activity is a reflection of offline action, and in the absence of the possibility of active action in real life, intentions and desires are transferred to the social media environment.

If we talk about social networks as a new information space, then there are two important aspects to focus on.

The first aspect is the new opportunities for communication and promotion of the subject, which provide the fundamental technologies of social media. More specifically, the entire social network is social media, with the ability to publish your thoughts and ideas, see the reaction of others, and gather communities around it all; social networks with the opportunity to create interest groups and also build communication around these communities; video hosting with the possibility of viral distribution of promotional materials.

The second aspect is the familiar tools and technologies used in day-to-day public relations (press releases, commissioned articles, press conferences), but reformatted online, where they have taken on a different form.

Social media, as a platform for promoting an entity or organization, is gaining popularity and will be active for several reasons:

1. The popularity of social media is undeniable. Ukraine is one of the fastest-growing social media markets in Europe — more than 90 % of Internet users have at least one social media account.

2. The use of social media in the business communications field and promotion of public authorities, namely — R-communications and promotion of the subject, is a trend.

3. Social media contributes to the emergence of new trends in online communication.

4. Promoting the subject is one of the topmost tasks of any customer-oriented organization. The popularity of social media means only that the policy of loyalty development should be conducted not only in the real world, but also in the virtual (Danko, 2012).

It is worth noting that social networks as information source have a significant level of audience trust. However, according to researchers, the versatility of social networks, opportunities to structure the communication space, and objectively contribute to the development of civil society make them a specific information source.

Social networks have long ceased to be a "phenomenon on the Internet" — today it is a powerful marketing, social and political tool. In fact, the very concept of "citizen journalism" has developed precisely due to the widespread use of networks. They, like many other phenomena generated by the Internet, have become not only a social factor, but also part of our recent history.

One of the most important trends in the virtual environment today is to maximize the space of social networks. Here comes to the fore "Web 2.0" — a new generation platform that has no clear boundaries and is a "center of gravity" for users. Web 2.0 brings together social networks, blogs, video hosting, messenger services, and resources that specialize in hosting user content. The key is that the more people use the service, the more perfect it automatically becomes. The main feature of "Web 2.0" — attracting users to create content ("Web 2.0", 2020).

Today, social networks have become so firmly entrenched in our lives that the leaders' composition of the most popular social platforms does not change from year to year. However, the scale of penetration and use of these social networks varies depending on geography and demographic factors. Understanding these differences is considerable when targeting a specific audience. When comparing the most popular social networks, it is weighty to pay attention, not to the number of registered accounts but the number of active users. The list of the most popular social platforms is headed by Facebook, occupying most of the market thanks to more than 2 billion active users. The giant's closest competitor is YouTube. Then the honorary places are occupied by Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. They are followed by platforms, most of whose audience is in the Asia-Pacific region. These are QQ, WeChat, and Qzone (with over 600 million active users). That facts show that there are many popular social media in the Asia-Pacific countries. After them, we see a cluster of sites popular mainly in the West — Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter ("Age Audience", b.r.).

*Conclusions*

The basis of modern society is network communication, one of the forms of expression of which is a significant increase in the number of social Internet networks. Social networks, which began to develop on the basis of the first generation of Internet network, a new philosophical approach and a new method for improving the quality of work, changing the rules of the game and communicating with people in a new, smarter and more informative way. However, it is not the tools or the new communication channels that make this a fundamentally new phenomenon, but the communicator itself, capable of a more open and fair game. Moreover, in the conditions of functioning and dialogue of the organization with the public in social networks, both communication participants are in equal rights. And this is the same equality, which can be considered in a sense as a phenomenon of modern society.

The unique capabilities of social networks today cannot be denied. As a specific social phenomenon, they appeared suddenly and began to develop rapidly, penetrating more and more into the life of society and all its possible structures, which gave the impression that they were before. This is the essence of any phenomenon when the new immediately becomes habitual. Hence the conclusion that the benefits of social networks for many spheres of society cannot be denied.

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