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Russia in the World Internet Project 2012: The Main Results of Research

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Abstract: The results of the study "World Internet Project in Russia" In 2012, the Sholokhov Moscow State University for the humanities first presented the Russian Federation in the international study. The article described in detail the method of investigation and the basic parameters of a sample population respondents. The article focuses on the analysis of the problems of perception of political subjectivity of Internet users, the reasons for refusal of Internet communication.

Key words: Internet · Internet communication · World Internet Project · Non-users and users · The runet

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the World Internet Project (WIP) has become the main international platform which unites researchers from all over the world [1]. The project originated in 1999 at the UCLA center for communication policy (now the UCS Annenberg School Center for the digital future). The founders of the project considered the increasing influence of digital technologies and the Internet as a cross-national phenomenon which transforms social, political, economic aspects of life for individuals, societies, nations and the global. The researchers set out an ambitious goal to supervise annually, register and analyze those changes which are connected with the expansion of the Internet communication in different parts of the globe. It has become obvious that the solution of such a great scale task seems impossible for a single center, so for the last 12 years representatives from over 30 countries (including Canada, China, Japan, UK, Germany, Italy, etc.) have joined the project. The year 2012 was unique in the sense that the number of its partners reached 39 countries, it was also important for the Russian scientific community because Russian researchers received an opportunity to take part in it. The Institute for High-Hume Technologies in Social Computing of the Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities was chosen as the hosting center of the research project WIP – 2012 [2].

Main Parameters of Research: The research project has the following characteristics: scientists conduct massive national surveys using the same methods (it means that people in different countries respond to the same questions during interviews). The average number of respondents in one country is 1000, which corresponds to 30.000-40.000 respondents of WIP project in general. The respondents participate in the survey irrespective of their inclusion in the Internet communication, in other words their status of «user» or «non-user» is of no importance.

The data collection was fulfilled in cooperation with Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) [3, 4]. The research was based on the results of the four-level stratified regional selection of respondents (1600 people aged over 14) which reflects the population structure of the Russian Federation depending on gender, age, level of education, types of settlements and federal districts.

Random Sampling: The regions of RF belong to the first level of selection. There are two clusters of RF regions which are based on various characteristics for the representative selection of the region. The research includes 80 RF regions except the Nenetskiy Autonomous Region (due to its small population and remote location); the Chechen Republic (due to the absence of reliable statistical data and complicated political situation); the Taymyr (Dolgano-Nenetskiy)

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Autonomous Region, the Evenkiyskiy Autonomous Region, the Buryatskiy Autonomous Region, the Koryakskiy Autonomous Region (because in reality these regions have nearly lost their independence) and the Chukotskiy Autonomous Region (due to its small population and remote location)

Cluster 1: Economic parameters of the region

The Following Parameters Were Analyzed: Economy, indices of development

- The size of urban and rural population in proportion to the general population size
- Number of people with the income lower than the bread line
- General regional product per capita
- Retail trade turnover per capita
- Amount of paid services per capita
- Investment in the capital asset per capita

Social Domain:

- Indices of child mortality
- Indices of natural population growth
- Indices of migrational growth
- Level of economic activity of the population
- Level of unemployment

Cluster 2: Political characteristics of the region

The research is based on the analysis of the official results of the election to the State Duma of RF in December 2011 and the election of the President in March 2012.

Final distribution and selection of regions

Both clusterizations of regions are applied, as a result there are 19 groups of regions, the regions from the same group belong to the same cluster with its all clusterizations.

The further selection of regions was carried out in accordance with the following conditions:

- The region with the largest population is selected in each sampling.
- If there is a group of several regions only about a half of them are chosen for sampling.
- Each Federal District is represented by nearly a half of its regions.

Consequently, there is a group of 46 RF regions which represent all kinds of regions (according to the types described above)

Distribution of respondents depending on the type of settlements

Each Federal District has a number of respondents which is proportional to its population size (the total number of respondents – 1600)

Within the Federal District the respondents are distributed into 7 groups which correspond to 7 types of settlements (cities with the population over 1.000.000, cities with the population 500.000 - 1.000.000, cities with the population 100.000-500.000, cities with the population 50.000 - 100.000, cities with the population lower than 50.000, villages, rural areas).

Respondents from each group are equally distributed among regions which belong to a certain Federal District and have a certain type of settlement.

- Selection of a settlement in the region
- If there is only one settlement of a particular type it is surely included into the regional sampling.
- If there are several settlements, which is always true for the rural areas and nearly always for villages and small towns, then there is a random choice of settlements.

Internet Communication in Russia: The degree of inclusion of Russian people in the Internet communication, first and foremost, reflect the correlation between non-users and users: 32% and 66%.The number of users is twice as much as the number of those who do not use the Internet communication, 46% of respondents use the Internet every day, 16% do it several times a week, 4% 1 time every six months. The number of users is 5-6% more than the data collected by other research centers, it can be explained by the fast growth of the Internet communication in Russia. 43% of respondents have been using the Internet over 5 years (30% of respondents chose the variant “5-7 years”, 13% - “over 8 years”), 41% of Russian people began to use the Internet not so long ago (2-4 years ago), only 5% of respondents have been using the Internet less than a year.

The Russian society has the following communicative hierarchy: personal communication (informal communication) television – Internet – the press – the radio. The difference between the audiences can be 13-17%. 50% of respondents find the first three sources (communication, television and the Internet) rather

important and consequently they should be considered as the most important components of the Russian information space. There is a certain degree of "polarization" in the attitude of the Russian people towards the Internet as the source of information. 57% of respondents say that it is rather important, 18% - rather unimportant, more than 23% do not receive any information. This difference proves the «digital disruption» in the Russian society between users interested in the Internet opportunities and social segments which prefer the printed media and informal communication to the Internet. This «digital disruption» depends on the age: for the majority of young people (younger than 33 years old) the Internet is an important source of information, whereas older age groups (older than 54 years old) do not use this communicative format.

The analysis of the Internet search content and its structure allows to single out several aspects of the information consumption in Russia: news search (more than 75%), f un-content (73%), h ealth (65%), self-education (60%), tourism and travel (50%), work (42%). Thus, Russian users, like other users in the world, appreciate fast and unlimited access to news information. The Internet-communication has a number of informational effects. First, the increase of standards of social services (for example, healthcare) reflects the immerse in the problem (each second Russian user searches for the information about health). Second, we can expect that the great users' interest in the development of a certain segment of the market (each second Russian traveler who participates in the Internet communication prepares their travel with the help of the Internet) actively influences on the quality of offer. The transparency of information about touristic services in Russia has become the locomotive for its development.

The content and formats of informational consumption on the Internet show its influence on the structure of leisure activities in Russia. The Internet has become so popular because of its opportunities for entertainment and it is still an important element of fun industry. The results help to describe the typical roles of the majority of participants of the Internet communication which dominate the leisure segment of Runet: 24% out of 60 % of the respondents are active gamers (once a day or more often), 14% out of 58% - are active shoppers (once a month or more often), 9% out of 80 % music fans listen to the music on the Internet several times a day.

Does this structure of the Internet leisure activities serve as a factor which substitutes the interpersonal communication? The users themselves say that the Internet communication has not changed the intensity of their communication with primary (family, friends, colleagues) and secondary (people with similar interests, political and religious beliefs) groups with which a person usually associates his or her values, norms and rules of behavior [5]. They communicate as much as they used to. Alongside with the above mentioned results quite a large number of respondents (15-25%) think that the Internet has intensified their contacts with their family, friends, colleagues, people with similar interests and hobbies.

To a great extent it is gamers who are excluded from real interpersonal communication. Game addiction is typical for people who play computer games once a day or more often, the results show that 24% of the respondents belong to this group. It is not surprising that most gamers are 14-18 years old. However, the Internet-games which have the online multi users services affect not only teenagers but also people aged 43 (though the most active participants are respondents aged 34). This result shows that games as a leisure activity are also popular among middle-aged respondents, this conclusion is supported by the accounts analysis of the World of Tanks, the most popular game in Russia, the number of its participants has reached 40.000.000 people.

In their turn shoppers and other users who are interested in economic opportunities of the Internet greatly influence the economy of Runet as well as the economy of Russia. Modern users are quite active : 23% do the shopping online, 21% pay their bills on the Internet (every third user), 17% of the respondents use the Internet-banking, 10% invest money online. The number of users of the economic Internet-services reveals the influence of online retailers on the Runet economy which tends to grow. The market of educational services looks rather modest: 15% of users study online (respondents aged 14-33). Being another important indicator which reflects frequency and quality of the Internet use, the intensity of web-surfing shows that the subculture of the Internet behavior is actively evolving. The Internet is no longer a tool, it is gradually becoming a lifestyle for a great part of Russian people.

Users and Non-Users in Russia: The intensity of the Internet use depends on the age of the respondents: the younger the respondents the more actively they participate in the Internet communication (the maximum

activity is shown by the users aged 14-23 (over 90%), the minimum belongs to the group aged older than 64 (7%). The generation of 14-23 due to the objective reasons is distanced from the political soviet and post-soviet experience (the 1990-s) of older generations, therefore they may be conflicts of values and there is also serious difference not only in communicative but also in life strategies of representatives of various age groups [6].

The level of education also plays an important role, the higher the level of education the more actively the respondents are involved in the Internet communication: the number of users with university degrees is 20% more, than the number of users with vocational degrees (57 and 36% correspondingly). In this situation it is also possible to single out additional factors: the influence of the educational process on the degree of the users' activity. Among the students the number of users is twice as much as the number of those people who do not study at present. The employment status shows that the most active users are unemployed (53%), housewives (52%), respondents with partial employment (46%).

The intensity of participation of Russian users in the Internet communication reveals the difference in their income level: people with higher income show the greater degree of the Internet activity (the difference among families with the monthly income of 1000$ and 3000$ is 11% (45 and 56% correspondingly – Graph 36). Consequently, age, education, free time, educational status as well as the income level are important factors which form strategies of the Internet behavior.

The family status and family size are other significant factor which influence the users' activity in Russia: respondents with families are less actively involved in the Internet communication (38%) than single men or women (70 %); large families reveal the higher Internet activity. It is possible to predict that active users aged 14-18 can direct their parents' interests.

The greatest level of the Internet activity in Russia was found in the Siberian District (51%), the Central District (48%), the North-Caucasus (47%), the Ural District (47%). Traditionally citizens of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg also have a high level of Internet activity. 63% of the respondents there use the Internet every day. 37 % of the respondents form rural areas are also active Internet users (it is only 8 % less than the average number).

The social portrait of a non user in Russia includes the following elements. First, these respondents come form the most remote Federal Districts such as the Far Eastern District (37%), the North Caucasus (39%), the Southern District (39%), concentrated either in cities with the population of 1.000.000 (37%), or living in villages (39%). The fact that in the same federal districts/settlements there is high activity shown by those who use the Internet and those who do not proves the idea that the place of residence is of secondary importance in comparison with other factors which influence the Internet activity in Russia.

Second, there are only 6% of non users among young people aged 14-18, the age group 19-23 has practically the same results. At the same time the share of older age groups is 10 times more (63% of the respondents aged 54-63). The maximum number of non users can be found among the respondents aged over 64 (86 %). Among non users there are few people with a university or associate degrees. Only 19 % of the respondents with higher education do not use the Internet.

Third, non users usually have low income (35%), come from two-adult families either without any children or with grown up children who live separately (44%).

It is possible to assert that the refusal of the Internet communication in Russia is primarily defined by social and economic reasons which include the limited amount of material resources, age (old age groups have difficulties with new technologies), family structure. The influence of the residence in this respect is not so significant.

To verify our hypothesis we analyzed the reasons mentioned by the respondents why they refuse to use the Internet (Graphs 39-43). «The first reason (typical for the whole sampling) is - «I don't use the Internet because I am not interested» (36%). These people mainly live in capital regions (46%), they are aged over 54 (46%), have an associate degree (over 60%) or an incomplete vocational degree (44%), they are usually pensioners (48%) or respondents with partial employment (37%).

The second place belongs to the position – «I can't, I don't have necessary knowledge or skills» (25 %). The respondents with this opinion usually live in the Far Eastern District (over 50%), in small towns with 50.000-100.000 people (39%), older than 64 (33%), pensioners (32%) or respondents with partial employment (30 %), with income of 1000$ per month (25 %), married (26 %), in two or three-adult families (25%), having no children or living separately from them (25 %).

The third place is taken by the following position: «I haven't got a computer/I haven't got Internet access» (25%). These respondents usually live in the Ural Federal District (more than 50%), live mainly in villages with the

population up to 50.000 (30 %), in rural areas (26%), aged 14-33 (more than 50 %), study (about 60%), unemployed respondents, housewives, respondents with partial employment constitute 30-38%, with income less than 1000$ per month (25 %), without families or living in civil families (over 45 %).

The forth place of the hierarchy belongs to the position: «It is expensive, I don't have money» (6%). These respondents have the following characteristics: they live in the Far Eastern (22%) and Southern Districts (10%), in small towns or villages (8-11%), aged 44-53 (10%), they have an incomplete or complete vocational degree, working day (8 %), housewives (15 %) and unemployed (23 %) with the overall family income not less than 1000 $ per month (7 %), those who have no family (23 %) and also large families with many children.

Thus, belonging to the group of "non-users" is determined by the following factors: demographic (age group, family structure), socio-economic (level of income, employment), competence-based (level of knowledge and skills). These factors make up the following portrait of typical Russian "non-users": they are mainly men and women older than 64 years, pensioners or respondents with limited employment, low-income, whose family consists of two grown-ups, as a rule. Consequently, a typical "non-user" in Russia is a person with limited social and economic resources.

Russian non-users can be divided into several subgroups on the basis of the reasons which they named as barriers for the inclusion into the Internet communication. The first type (conditionally "non-competent") comprises such respondents who explain their refusal to take part in the Internet communication by lack of necessary knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, they possess all the characteristics of a typical Russian non-user, so the real reason for these subjectively "non-competent" non-users is a deficit of social and economic resources. Moreover, the fact that families in this group have no children (or their children live autonomously) also plays a certain role, because such family composition limits opportunities to teach representatives of the older generation skills of the Internet communication.

The second type (conditionally "unprivileged") can also be divided into two subgroups: with a relative deficit of resources and with a considerable deficit of resources. Respondents of the first subgroup are mainly young people from low-income families living in small towns and in the country together with their parents. Evidently, respondents of this subgroup can't afford to buy a computer now. Respondents of the second subgroup are primarily middle-aged people (44 – 53 years old) who live either in small towns or in the country and who have no family or come from a large family with many children. They are also characterized by a low level of education, employment and income. On the basis of comparison of these two subgroups of the "unprivileged" non-users we can draw a conclusion the a deficit of resources has a different nature, i.e. the first subgroup embraces "poor due to circumstances" respondents whereas the second one comprises the so called "traditionally poor" respondents.

Political Functions of the Internet: It is on the Internet where Russian citizens demonstrate more and more political subjectness and readiness to defend their political rights and freedoms. This statement is proven by the fact that the majority of the respondents regard the Internet as a means of ensuring a wider range of opportunities to realize political rights and freedoms (48 % of the sum of affirmative responses). These views are shared primarily by young people of the older age group and by middle-aged people (from 24 to 53 years old) with the vocational secondary education or the higher professional education (18 and 13 % respectively). In this case there are also correlations with the intensity of reading / searching for information on the Internet; the involvement into communication with people who share similar political views; critical assessment of the credibility of various materials presented on the Internet.

Two almost equal groups of the respondents were distinguished on the basis of their assessing the Internet as a means providing citizens with enhanced opportunities to influence the authorities: 42 % (on the sum of all affirmative answers) and 43 % (on the sum of negative answers). The highest assessment of the Internet potential to exert an impact on the authorities is given by respondents at the age of 24 - 33 years. They mostly have either vocational secondary education or higher professional education and are involved into the Internet communication with people who share similar political views. A rather abstract function of the Internet "enhancing opportunities to exercise political rights and freedoms" is more popular among respondents than the statement which contains certain instruments "The Internet enhances opportunities to exert influence on the authorities". Due to this fact, we can put forward a supposition that the "declared" political subjectness of the Russian people differs from the "real" one which reflects readiness to resort to active actions, including, in turn, having influence on the authorities.

As a matter of fact, we registered the effect of "impersonal activity" [7]. The Russians mostly assess positively those "political functions" which don't require any personal participation. On the one hand, this peculiarity can be regarded as a reflection of the formation of the so-called "network-based WE", i.e. a special level of the identity system. On the other hand, it can be treated as an expression of anti-social individuality and absenteeism which are connected with distancing from personal participation in political life.

While expressing their attitude to the Internet as a means to understand various political actions better, the majority of respondents (45 % on the sum of affirmative answers) agreed with the given function of the global network. The same correlations, which have already been registered, are found in this case (with age and education): the highest optimism in this issue is expressed by the young Russian people (24 – 33 years old) who have vocational secondary education or higher professional education. Nevertheless, 38 % of the respondents are dissatisfied with the information about political actions which is posted on the Internet. It can be caused either by the quality of the content or by the character of the users' activity.

On the basis of the research into the Russians' attitude to the Internet as a means which can make state officials pay more attention to the public opinion (47 and 38 % on the sum of affirmative and negative answers respectively) we can put forward a hypothesis that the positive image of the Internet as a space which enhances opportunities to exercise political rights and freedoms is built mainly on the perception of the free expression of political views, including attitude to the behavior of the authorities [8].

Positive evaluation of the political subjectness of the Russians on the Internet is primarily expressed by the respondents at the age of 24-33 years old with either secondary or higher education and with a higher level of involvement in the Internet communication. It is this category of the respondents that makes up the nucleus of those users who are oriented to the "political functions" of the Internet. As a result of the analyses of all data on the correlation between variables we detected the following characteristic of the "networking behavior" of the Russians – the more is the involvement in the Internet communication and the orientation to the communication with other users expressing similar political views, the higher is the level of the declared subjectness on the Internet. Due to this fact we suppose that ideological and political foundations of the system of the Russians' identities will be more and more formed in the process of the Internet communication which, in turn, will increase the mobilizing potential of the global network in the future [9].

The Russians assess their own potential to influence the actions of the authorities rather low, even via the Internet. The described situation correlates with the low level of legitimacy of the majority of government bodies and politicians, except for the president. Having said that, it is necessary to point out that the level of "the political online subjectness" demonstrated by the Russians is significantly higher than that of "the political offline subjectness". We suppose that it is in the first place caused by the already formed image of the Internet as a safer space in comparison with real politics.

The analysis helped us to detect a significant correlation between positive perception of political subjectness and a group of variables which reflect peculiarities of the way the Russians perceive the borders of freedom and security in the Internet space. These variables can conditionally be divided into three subgroups:

- Feeling of comfort and security / discomfort and lack of protection from the openness of the political segment on the Internet;
- Views on the necessity of existence / absence of borders in exercising the freedom of speech in the Internet space;
- Attitude towards control over all actions of the Internet users from the authorities, Internet-corporations, search engines etc.

Assessing the statement "people feel comfortable on the Internet, expressing freely their views on the current politics", 68 % of the respondents agreed with it and only 19 % of the respondents didn't share this opinion. Among those respondents who consider the openness of expression on the Internet to be a norm there are representatives of most age groups, including young people from 14 to 18 years old. The only exception is made for the old age group which is caused by an insufficient level of the involvement of elderly people in the Internet communication. It is important to underline that the Russians feel more comfortable expressing their views openly on the general political situation, rather than on the actions of a specific politician. Although even in this case the share of respondents associating themselves with the described position is also rather large (59 % on the sum of affirmative answers). These are mainly the

respondents at the age of 24 – 33 years who are oriented to the "political functions" of the Internet and who connect their everyday routine with the realization of their political subjectness in the global network. A slight difference in the assessment of the level of both comfort and security in expressing free views on "general politics" and on a "specific politician" reflects, on the one hand, mental peculiarities of the perception of the authorities in Russia and, on the other hand, it should be born in mind that 38 % of respondents declare their disagreement with the following view "the Internet allows to understand the actions of politicians better". Consequently, while conducting an analysis we should take into consideration such an important factor as the "quality of the political discourse" on the Internet.

Describing the Russians' perception of the necessity of existence / absence of borders in exercising the freedom of speech in the Internet space it is important to underline some aspects. Firstly, the viewpoint "people should have an opportunity to criticize the authorities freely on the Internet" has the maximum consolidating potential (70 % of the respondents support this statement). Secondly, free criticism of the government is regarded as a norm on the Internet by all age groups, except for the elderly people. Thirdly, quantitative parameters of the support of this viewpoint, presumably, reflect the prevailing forms of expressing political subjectness of the Russian people on the Internet. Having said that, only 40 % of the respondents claim that free circulation of extremist ideas on the Internet should be prohibited, whereas 47 % expressed their support for the standpoint "people should have an opportunity to declare their ideas, even if they are extremist, freely on the Internet". In the analysis of the described variable the following correlations with the age group and intensity of the Internet communication are detected:

- The younger and more involved in the Internet communication people are, the more significant is their support of the "absolute freedom of speech" on the Internet;
- The older and less involved in the Internet communication people are, the less loyal is their attitude to the permission to express extremist ideas without any limitations on the Internet.

The presented data correlate with a group of variables which reflect the attitude of the Russian people to the control over the users' actions on the Internet by the authorities, Internet corporations and search engines. To be more specific, a significant share of the respondents are concerned about the possibility of monitoring all actions of every user on the Internet by the government or by the Internet corporations (44 % on the sum of affirmative answers in both cases). It should be noted, that in this respect the Russians don't differentiate their attitude to the control on the basis of such a criterion as its source. Therefore, the respondents' concern is caused by the situation of being under control regardless its nature or source. Moreover, about 50 % of the respondents (on the sum of affirmative answers) support the following viewpoint: "the government should control the Internet more that it is doing at the moment". It should be taken into consideration, that this opinion is supported by a rather well-educated, young and active from the point of view of their involvement in the Internet communication, share of respondents, i.e. the same audience whose representatives consolidated with the "absolute freedom of speech" viewpoint. How can this controversy in the Russians' viewpoints be accounted for?

According to the first version, this way the orientation to anti-social individuality, which has become rather widely spread in Russia recently, is expressed. In other words, it can be illustrated by the following formula: "freedom for myself, restrictions – for others". This version is backed up by the findings of the cross-national research of the value orientations. On the basis of the results the conclusion can be drawn that the Russians have a low level of interpersonal trust in comparison with the Europeans.

The second version is based on the supposition that support of increasing control over the Internet by the government reflects a low level of the Russians' trust to the credibility of the information posted on the Internet. Thus, for instance, 36 % of the respondents think that "about the half of all information posted on the Internet is credible"; about one third of the respondents assess information presented by various websites negatively; the fourth share of the respondents express a high level of trust to the Internet-resources.

Finally, the third version is based on the hypothesis that there is a connection between the supportive attitude of the respondents to increasing control over the Internet by the government and their own negative background experience in violation of security of their personal interests on the Internet. The analysis of the variable "the level of concern about ensuring the security of financial transactions carried out via the Internet" supports this hypothesis only to a certain extent. More than 70 % of the

Russians don't effect any payments via the Internet. Among those who use these financial operations in their routine life the share of the respondents concerned about security of payments is 13 %; nearly the same number of the respondents (11 %) don't express any concern about this issue.

Thus, the global network is perceived by the Russians, first of all, as a free space, therefore, such parameters and functions as "openness for declaring any views" and "unlimited criticism of the authorities and politicians" are regarded as a norm. Such perception is based on the feeling of comfort and security and has a great consolidating potential, integrating representatives of various age groups. Criticism of the authorities (including its radical forms) is one of the dominating forms of the realization of the Russians' political subjectness on the Internet.

CONCLUSION

The information landscape of the Runet is changing. Growing consumption of video materials has caused reformatting of the traditional ways of posting information, changing them into video and, thus, increasing the share of video, virus and educational commercials, establishing a rapid development of the Internet television. An active process of merging various blogs, social networks, audio- and video services is going on in the Runet. It results in the increase of the number of Internet users. Integral services based on the social networks offer an opportunity to meet the demands for communication, self-expression, searching for any information and working with it simultaneously.

Evidently, the Internet has raised the level of our information awareness and, as a consequence, has increased the level of our requirements and claims to the quality of services provided by state institutions and private corporations. Some market spheres are dynamically changing under the influence of the user-consumers' opinions. Administrative establishments are trying to comply with the principle of transparency [10].

Apart from some evident changes which are connected with intensification of the information consumption, emerging of new formats and priorities in the communication focus and orientation, involvement in the global network is exerting impact on everyday routine and lifestyle of a significant part of the Russians. Every day active Internet-users communicate, search for some information, study, pay their bills, buy various goods, set up and promote business companies online. As a rule, this description can be referred to a younger, more educated and relatively successful audience – the so-called "party of the Internet". This party is conditionally opposed by the so-called "party of the television" which comprises mainly non-users. A considerable share of its members belongs to groups with limited economical and social resources. These two parties are divided not only by a significant social distance, but also by conflicts of values.

RESULTS

Results of the WIP-2012 in the Russian Federation clearly demonstrate that communicative and social processes are closely intertwined. This close connection results in certain social and political effects. Thus, for instance, the factor of involvement in the Internet communication not only reflects the processes of social exclusion (i.e. "social exclusion": "the situationally poor" and "the traditionally poor" make up a social nucleus of all non-users), but also, supposedly, increases them (exclusion from the Internet communication enhances the social distance with other groups). Consequently, the reasons which cause the "digital inequality" in Russia are not only territorial, but mainly the social ones.

Users who are oriented to the political functions of the Internet make up about 45 % of all users involved in the Internet communication. However, in spite of the fact that the politically-conscious segment of the Runet remains rather large, here as well as in real political space there is a gap between the "declared" and implemented political position and also there is a priority of such patterns of political behavior which don't require any personal participation in politics.

It would be too early to draw any conclusions about the formation of "networking political identities" in Russia, because only every fourth user is oriented to communication with groups which share similar political views. Moreover, political self-identification of a typical average user is characterized by amorphism, as a rule.

Both parties ("the Internet party" and "the party of the television") are dissatisfied with the quality of the political communication and political discourse. It is absolutely clear, that these groups are principally different in the content as well as in the format of the consumed information audiences, so this dissatisfaction most probably reflects lack of trust to the political elite. Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that the Runet with its current political sphere is a highly

complicated cultural and psychological system which lives according to its own inner principles. One of such fundamental principles is an ongoing unceasing "presence effect", a dialogue-based character of communication. For that very reason formal presence of some characters of the Russian political life on the Internet often turns to be rather inefficient.

Representatives of the "party of the Internet" express a more significant demand for such political values as "freedom", "transparency", "accountability of the authorities and control over their actions". It is worth taking into consideration that every second user regards such notions as freedom and responsibility in the conflict context (the demand for absolute freedom in the global network stands next to the awareness of the necessity to regulate the Internet communication). The conflict between the values "freedom" and "responsibility" ("freedom for myself" – "responsibility for others") reflects primarily the level of interpersonal trust of the Russian people and is equally expressed in the virtual reality as well as in real life.

Evidently, the significance of the Internet in the political life of the Russian society will be constantly increasing in the future. The Internet is changing not only quantitatively due to "infusions" of many new Russian citizens into the ranks of users. What is more important, "the political Runet" is undergoing significant qualitative changes and is starting to carry out social functions which have not been typical for it before. Thus, for instance, it has acquired functions of mass political mobilization and maintaining inner identification of informal political societies. The most important feature in the beginning of 2010s is that the Russian Internet is moving dramatically fast from the role of some "alternative", "virtual" political sphere which is primarily used for the circulation of various oppositional views. Nowadays it is turning into one of the main spaces of the real Russian politics.

These days "survival" of any political leader or any political party is to a large extent determined by how successfully they have presented themselves on the Runet and have made up their own "virtual" brand which, in turn, should be able to meet the requirements of rather demanding Russian users who demonstrate highly diversified political interests. That is why, involvement of Russian politicians and major state officials in the "ocean of the virtual reality" is not only a tribute to fashion and desire to keep up with the modern society, but also an urgent necessity dictated by the new "game rules" in the public space of the Russian politics. In other words, when modern politicians make a decision to become professional users, they invest in their future. Such "virtual investments" are likely to be highly profitable.

It all gives rise to the obvious question: how can a modern politician who decided to bet on the "party of the Internet" become successful in this stormy "ocean" of information, ideas, opinions and rumours? There is only one answer - to study the Russian Internet not only by means of practice, own mistakes and competitors' failures, but to carry out a fundamental research. It is necessary to monitor and study thoroughly and unceasingly every new phenomenon and tendency which emerges on the Internet and to launch appropriate scientific (both applied and fundamental) researches and to integrate them into international researching projects.

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