El papel de los medios de comunicación en la juventud rusa

The role of mass media in the lives of Russian youth people

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Resumen
El propósito de este artículo es analizar el papel de los medios de comunicación en la formación de los valores morales de la juventud rusa en la ciudad de Nizhny Novgorod, y medir el efecto de diversas fuentes de los medios de comunicación en la conciencia de esos jóvenes. En el centro de esta investigación se encontraba un enfoque sociocultural, que permitió a identificar las principales tendencias en el desarrollo de la dimensión sociocultural de la sociedad rusa. Presentamos los resultados de nuestro estudio sociológico de jóvenes (N-195) basado en el método de encuesta por cuestionario seguido de procesamiento de datos en el programa SPSS-21. Los resultados de la investigación indican el cambio en las fuentes de información prioritarias, pues el interés actual de los jóvenes se ha desplazado hacia el consumo de recursos de Internet. Los encuestados mencionaron a los mensajeros, los juegos de computadora, los servicios de música y las tiendas en línea como el contenido de Internet más atractivo. Debido a la gran popularidad de Internet entre esta población etaria, se convierte en una poderosa herramienta de manipulación de las mentes jóvenes. Por ello, los hallazgos de este documento pueden ser útiles para organizar actividades culturales, esclarecedoras, de concienciación y educativas con los jóvenes.
Palabras clave: mass media, youth, transmission of values, mass consumption society, postmodernism.

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of the media in shaping the moral values of Russian youth in the city of Nizhny Novgorod, and to measure the effect of various media sources on the consciousness of these young people. . At the center of this research was a

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sociocultural approach, which allowed to identify the main trends in the development of the sociocultural dimension of Russian society. We present the results of our sociological study of young people (N-195) based on the questionnaire survey method followed by data processing in the SPSS-21 program. The results of the research indicate the change in the priority sources of information, since the current interest of young people has shifted towards the consumption of Internet resources. Respondents named messengers, computer games, music services, and online stores as the most attractive Internet content. Due to the great popularity of the Internet among this age population, it becomes a powerful tool for manipulating young minds. Therefore, the findings of this document can be useful to organize cultural, enlightening, awareness-raising and educational activities with young people.

Introduction

The study of the impact of mass media on the younger generation of young people continues to be a vital subject for research (Zheltukhina et al, 2017). Already in the early days of television, scientists began to raise the alarm about the need to censor the scenes of violence, erotic and pornographic content, i.e. everything that can harm the children's psyche. Back in the 1960s, the American scientists proved the direct correlation between the scenes of violence appearing on TV screens and the level of real-life violence (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). The first censorship restrictions on demonstrated violence in the American media, in a country with a highly sensitive attitude to any kind of censorship and restrictions on freedom of speech do not appear to be coincidental.

For a deeper understanding of the urgency of problems existing in the Russian society, a historical perspective of its development is necessary. The overthrow of monarchy by the Bolsheviks in 1917 led to a transition from an idealistic type of culture, with the prevailing belief in God and the supersensible phenomena, to an idealistic stage, which was essentially a transition to the sensual stage (Pushkareva & Agaltsova, 2021). The example of television provides a convincing illustration of this thesis. Everything shown by the Soviet television was carefully filtered and censored. When proletarian ideology was dominant, most popular were movies about the lives of working men in towns and villages. It may be argued that the modern generation of great grandparents, grandparents and partly the generation of parents on the modern historical stage were brought up wrapped in cotton wool, with a strong believe in the prevalence of good and the triumph of justice (Zhuk, 2011).

The 180-degree turn in 1991 dropped a bombshell on at least three generations of Russians. A bacchanalia of basest instincts, rampant sex and pornography, violence and cruelty,

advertising of alcohol, cigarettes, erotic services of women with low moral standards poured down as if out of a trash can onto the heads of former Soviet viewers, who were totally unprepared for it (Borenstein, 2007). Thus, the economic shock therapy of the 1990s was also accompanied by the anti-cultural shock therapy. Only in the 2000s the minimal censorship was gradually reinstated, which goal was to protect the child's psyche and spiritual world.

Meanwhile, the generation of parents whose years of birth and socialization fall on the turbulent 1990s has already absorbed the values of the "sensual type of culture" with all its "charms". It is worth noting that what our compatriot Sorokin (2017) wrote about the "sensual" stage of society, using the example of American society at the peak of the sexual revolution, turned out to be extremely pertinent and acute for Russia in the 1990s. It can also be argued that Russia also experienced a bloodless "sexual revolution" in "the wild 90s". Of course, there were no rallies or demonstrations promoting free sexual relations, as in Europe in 1968.

Today's generation of children (those who are under 18) is now being raised by a generation of parents whose period of active socialization coincided with "the wild 90s," the tough times of crisis and controversy. The Russian society at this stage of its history found itself in a state of anomie, when the norms and ideals of the Soviet society were harshly criticized by the liberal-market elite, while the majority of the Russian population refused to accept the new criminal and mercantile, merely Western values (Popova and Popova, 2020). It can be argued that the modern generation of parents as an aftermath of this historical phenomenon has the values and norms that are profoundly contradictory.

In this context, the research purpose was to identify the role of mass media in the lives of modern youth in Nizhny Novgorod. The research objectives were: to determine the role of information sources for the modern youth and their prioritization by the youth; also, to present the results of the quantitative analysis of the amount of daily time spent watching TV shows, listening to the radio, reading printed newspapers and magazines, and surfing the Internet; finally, to propose the effective ways of using the youth-targeting mass media as a tool for their spiritual and moral development.

Literature review

In Russian sociological science, the effects of mass media on the minds of young people are a crucial topic that is extensively discussed. Yakoba (2014) demonstrated how effective the use of "soft power" may be. In the other hand, the use of information technologies and methods instead of weapons and hard power in achieving dominance and gaining and retaining power. The forecast based on the analysis of the typology of Russian media consumption (television

and Internet) made by Nazarov (2014) in 2014 was empirically verified in 2021 by our sociological study. In his forecast, Nazarov (2018) predicted that consumption of television only will be mainly seen in the older age groups. Pecherskaya et al. (2014) lay emphasis on the important socialization function of the Internet. They affirm that the Internet is one of the drivers of children's socialization today.

The methodological basis of this paper was constituted by two works: Sorokin's (2017) theory of socio-cultural development of society and Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis (Pushkin, 2019) in the context of his research into the specific relationship between culturogenesis and ethnogenesis. The progression of society is largely driven by passionaries, thanks to whom a nation develops.

Studying the effects of mass media on the minds of young people is impossible without studying young people themselves and their way of thinking, without understanding the parental view of their children. The idea of childhood through the eyes of parents, as a combination of their social ideas of the role of a childhood period in life, the goals and meaning of education, the desirable future for a child, social and cultural resources of the family, is explored (Andreeva, 2019). The distinctive features of mechanisms for transmitting basic values, the processes of value orientations passing on from parents to children in modern families are revealed in some works (Retivina, 2019).

Naftalieva (2011) provided an extensive review of sociological research on the problem of youth-targeting mass media. Factors like spiritual and moral world of the modern youth, the labor and patriotic values and attitudes are of importance too (Svadbina & Vagin, 2012; Svadbina, et al., 2017; Nemova & Svadbina, 2020).

The media most strongly affects not the minds of adults, but the minds of young people under the age of majority whose worldview is just shaping. It has been proven that television may not radically change the views of adults, it can only strengthen their existing believes or ideas (Nemova & Kartasheva, 2019; Ermakov et al., 2018). This is not the case with the effect of mass media on a young mind in its formative stage. In this connection, we believe it is crucial to exercise control over mass media for facilitating the harmonious development of a child's personality and instilling humanistic and patriotic values and beliefs.

Methodology

We relied on the socio-cultural approach offered by Sorokin (2017) as the core methodological principle. The underlying criterion of this approach is the value-based

perception of reality by the majority of population. It was supplemented by sociological research, using quantitative analysis of empirical data. The questionnaire survey toolkit contained 25 questions, the answers to which made it possible to obtain and analyze data from both quantitative and qualitative perspective.

In the era of domination of information technology, the social world kind of splits into two: a real one and a virtual one. For three generations of parent's socialization occurred through audiovisual sources of information, but as concerns the children of today it would be fair to call them a digital generation. In an effort to understand which values and ideals are nurtured in the modern generation of children (those who are under 18, and born after 2003), what role in their lives is played by television and other means of mass communication, the City Research and Practice Laboratory on the Problems of Education and Family and the Laboratory on the Problems of Modern Family in the Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University organized and conducted a collaborative study: "Mass Media as a Factor Shaping the Spiritual and Moral Values of the Youth in Nizhny Novgorod".

A sociological questionnaire survey was conducted among the students of Nizhny Novgorod universities in 2020 (Number of respondents - 195), of which 10.3% were male and 89.7% were female, by creating an online questionnaire survey using Google forms represented in full in Russian at https://clck.ru/TfP4s. It included 12 close-end questions and 13 open-end questions. Most questions were of a multiple-choice type (generally, it was offered to choose no more than three answers).

The questionnaire survey respondents were the students of the Department of Management of Social and Technical Services and the Department of Design and Media Technologies at Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University (2nd and 3rd years of study). This research involved the use of a questionnaire survey, and the obtained data was processed with the help of the SPSS Statistics Ver.23.0 program. All tables provided in this paper were made by the authors, and present the results of the sociological research undertaken by them.

The choice of research tools is theoretically substantiated. The study employed both general scientific research methods (analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparative-historical and dialectical methods) and a sociological method, namely the questionnaire survey. Under a structural-functional approach, which was first introduced by Parsons (2000), a questionnaire appears to be the most convenient tool for obtaining objective information about the objects of social reality, as it makes it possible to cover a large number of respondents in the shortest time with the least material and human resources. When designing

a questionnaire survey we followed the steps reflected in the survey questionnaire design offered by Boparai et al. (2018) and visualized at Figure 1.

Figure 1. The steps followed in questionnaire survey design (Boparai et al., 2018)
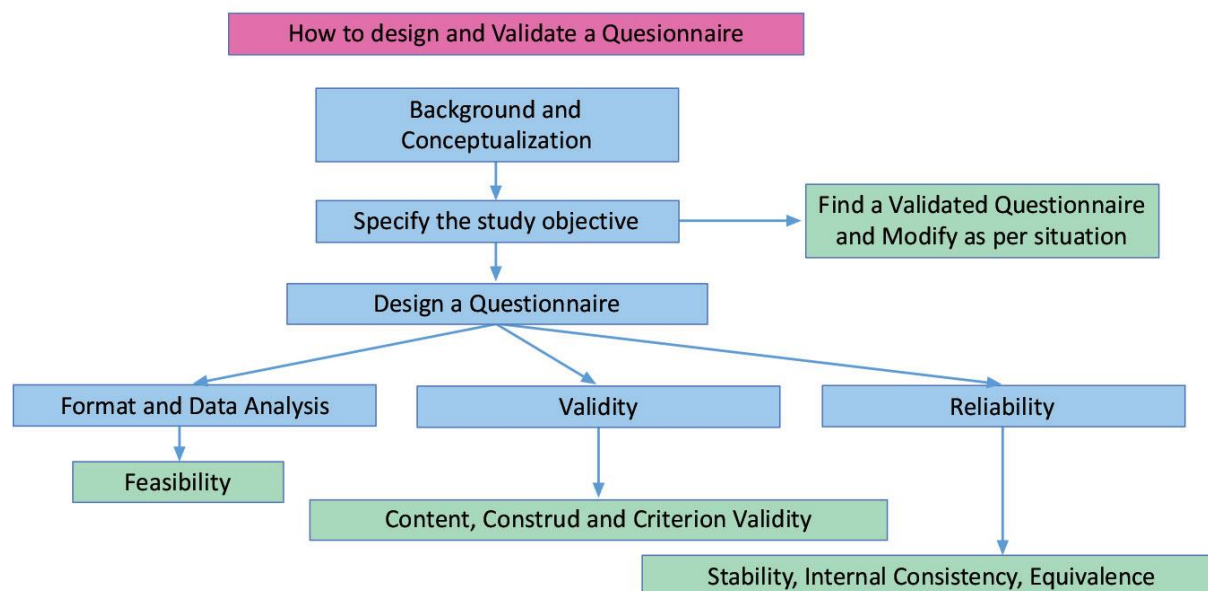
Following these steps in questionnaire survey construction allowed us to check its feasibility, validation and reliability. The final variant of the questionnaire survey was evaluated and approved by the ethics committee of Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University. Thus, this model of work proved its usefulness and ensured correct interpretation and generalization of the obtained research results.

Results

First, we had to find out the need of respondents for obtaining information related to culture, politics, science in the overall structure of their leisure time. For this purpose, the questionnaire survey participants were asked a question: "How do you prefer spending your leisure time?". The questionnaire survey revealed that in terms of the structure of free time and leisure activities, young people prefer: going out (74.9%), doing housework (76.4%), spending time with a family (66.2%), meeting friends (65.6%), getting creative (drawing, crafts, dancing, etc.) (46.7%), doing sports (40.5%) and reading books and magazines (40.5%). It should be noted that in the structure of leisure time of the young generation the mass media are far from the top. Only 27.7% of respondents spend their free time watching

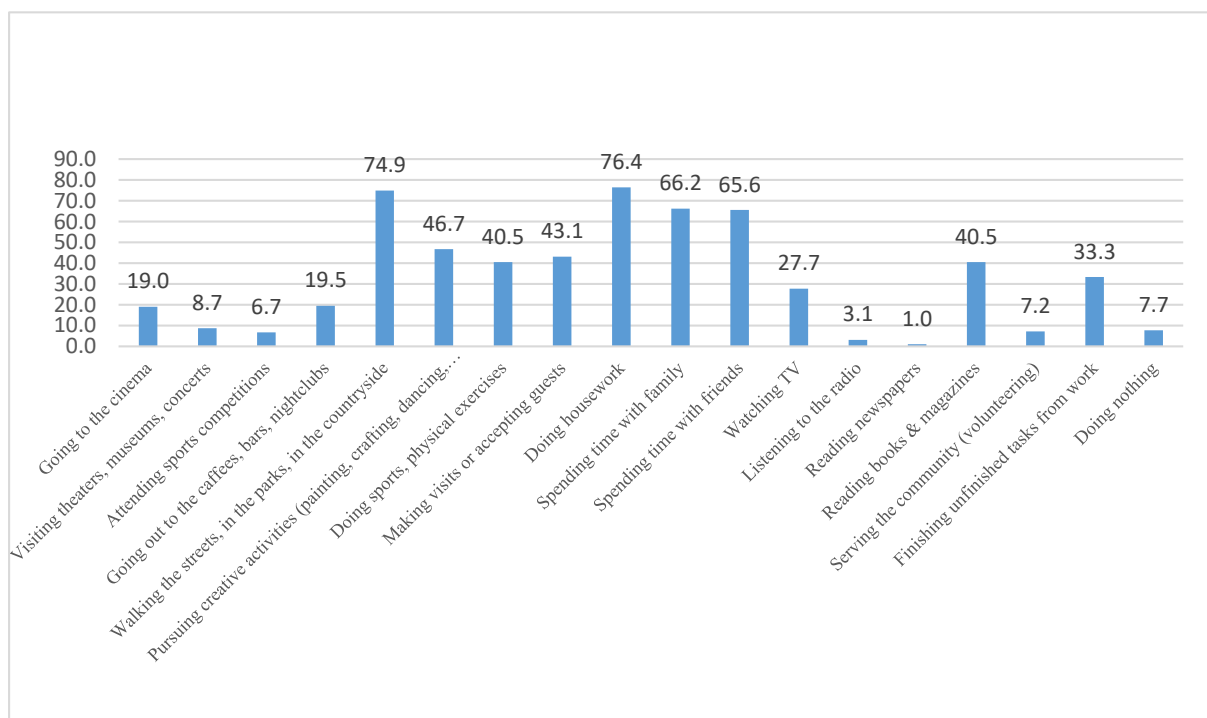TV, only 3.1% listen to the radio and 1.0% read newspapers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Preferences of respondents for leisure activities, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

For a deeper look into the attitudes of young people toward the modern media, respondents were offered a question: "Where do you most often get the latest news from?" Respondents had a multiple choice (not more than three answers). The analysis of answers revealed that 95.9% of the respondents indicated the Internet as their primary source of information, 70.3% get news by the word of mouth and only 28.2% watch TV for the news (see Figure 2).
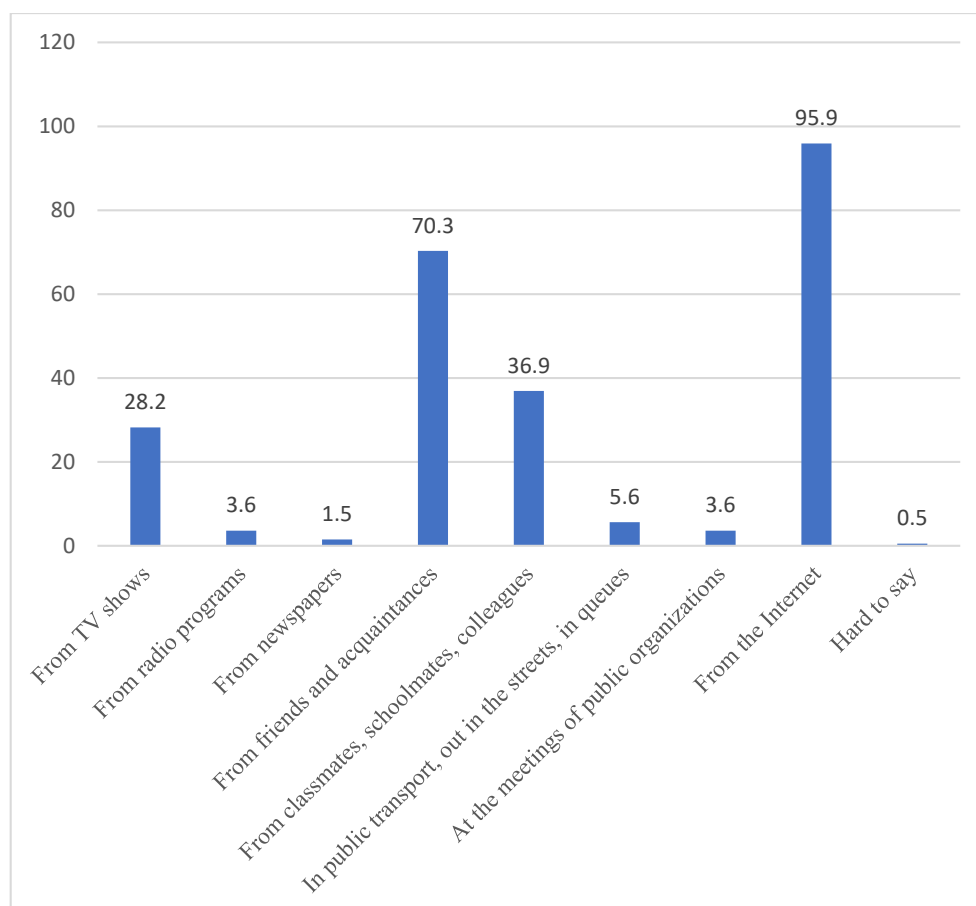
Figure 2. Source of the latest news, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

On the one hand, we can only be glad for today's youth that within the shortest time they could respond adequately to the challenges of time, keeping up with the latest information technology and easily navigating the Internet space, leaving all three parental generations far behind. Meanwhile, the quality and reliability of Internet sources arouses serious concern. It is commonly known that the control over society and global processes is often exercised through manipulation of public opinion. The Internet has become this very tool by using which, for example, the non-systemic opposition may manipulate youth' opinions. The mechanism of manipulation is quite simple: the fake images and political scenes are staged and then spread in the youth information field. The created images easily reach the youth, as they provide simple answers to two Russian age-old questions: "Who is to blame?" and "What should be done?".

The answers of the respondents revealing whom they discuss the received information with are also highly illustrative. Thus, respondents were asked: "Who do you discuss the information from the Internet, the movies you watched, the radio programs, etc., with?" and were offered to choose no more than 3 answers. Due to their age specifics, the young people

discuss news primarily with their reference group: with friends - 95.9% and with parents - 72.8%.

We would like to highlight the steep drop in the teacher's status in the eyes of young people as a competent source of information and as a possible interlocutor. Only 7.2% of respondents indicated that they discuss new information from the Internet with their teachers. Today the system of education in Russia bears witness to a rapidly growing formalism and digitalization of the learning process. In the pursuit of ratings and indicators, the need for producing more and more reports every year, teachers are losing the human touch with their students and, as a consequence, the relationship of trust, i.e. here we see the clear signs of communication crisis.

Television as a source of information is rapidly losing its former position, especially among young people. As revealed by the authors' questionnaire survey, 45.6% of the respondents do not watch TV at all during the day, 25.6% give it less than one hour a day, 19.0% - one to two hours a day, 7.2% - two to four hours a day, 2.6% - more than four hours a day. The situation is even worse with listening to the radio: 84.1% of the respondents do not listen to the radio at all; 11.3% give less than 1 hour a day to the radio programs; 2.1% - 1 to 2 hours a day; 1.5% - 2 to 4 hours a day, 1.0% - more than 4 hours a day.

Unwillingness of the youth to read print media is another red flag. Only 26.7%, i. e. every fourth respondent, mentioned print media as a source of information. Although, as a preferred leisure activity (see Fig. 1) 40.5% of respondents indicated reading books and magazines. These data indicate the following trends: 1) the format of mass media is changing, digital media are replacing print media; 2) the reading culture of the modern youth has dropped dramatically, and the same happened with their critical thinking.

As part of the questionnaire, the students were asked to describe characters of fiction who inspire the feelings of pride and respect. It was a free response question which implied the use of the phenomenological analysis for further processing of data. Processing of the respondents' answers to this question revealed paucity of fine literature knowledge among students (the youth elite!). Literary outlook of the students eventually proved very limited! They only named characters from the fiction books on the school curriculum and from the "masterpieces" of the so-called "tabloid literature", which are of low artistic and spiritual-moral value. Attention should also be paid to the vanishing of demand for specialized mass media for youth. So, to the question: "In your opinion, will the print media for young audience be demanded?" the majority of respondents (96.1%) answered negatively, demonstrating the lack of interest in the information source of this type.

Naftalieva (2011) rightly notes that not only the consumer audience of print media is changing, but also the journalistic environment itself. Today, we may see a plentitude of various forms of media: blogs, forums, Internet commentaries, amateur newspapers and magazines, photo, audio and video creations, SMS messages, mobile communications, and much more. According to the Public Opinion Foundation, 25% of authors aged 16-20, live by their own laws and rules, bringing their own style of behavior and moral criteria into the media community. Therefore, our study confirmed the hypothesis that today's youth has redirected the focus of their interest from television space to Internet consumption. The world of a young person is concentrated within a small screen of their cell phone, tablet, or computer. It is through mobile gadgets that young people satisfy most of their needs, from mobile communication and watching news, to receiving entertaining content, i. e. "the whole world fits in the palm of one's hand".

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has further boosted Internet consumption among the youngsters. We view the necessity for distance learning and working as the side effects of the pandemic. No matter how strongly we criticize the contemporary television for low spiritual, moral and patriotic value of the media content ("Dom-2", "Let's Get Married", etc.), the content broadcasted by television is subject to at least some censorship, while with the Internet the case is different.

Exploration of virtual space by young people occurs spontaneously, without any reasonable control and guidance from competent mentors. Three generations of parents do not have valid experience of surfing, navigating and managing the Internet space over a long span of time. The resulting managerial Internet vacuum in less than no time is filled by rogue people, not distinguished by high spiritual, moral, ethical, patriotic and aesthetic values. Moreover, young people often become an easy prey to mentally unstable individuals with pathological disturbances, deviant and delinquent behavior. Over the past five years, the society was swept by a wave of unjustified aggression, blatant criminal and oppositional behavior of the youth. The content of all sorts and types rapidly spreading on the Internet and propagandizing asocial, aberrant and suicidal behaviors is primarily targeting the young audiences. We all should be clear that in the present days the unknown people from the Internet act as the modern Pied Piper, who lures our children away from parental care.

The analysis of answers to a straightforward question: "How much daily time do you spend in the Internet?" showed that 80% of the respondents spend online more than 4 hours; 14.9% - 2 to 4 hours; 4.1% -1 to 2 hours and only 1% - less than one hour. Thus, for 94.9% of

respondent's virtual life is of great importance. There were no respondents who never use the Internet.

So, what are young people seeking for in the virtual space? With a view to find this out, we asked the below question: "Which Internet resources are of the highest appeal for you? (it was offered to choose no more than three answers). The answers of respondents were distributed as follows: messengers - 96.4%; gaming resources - 70.8%, music services - 60%, online shopping - 48.2%; news of politics - 26.7%, news of culture - 18.5%, news of science and technology - 17.9% (See Figure 3).
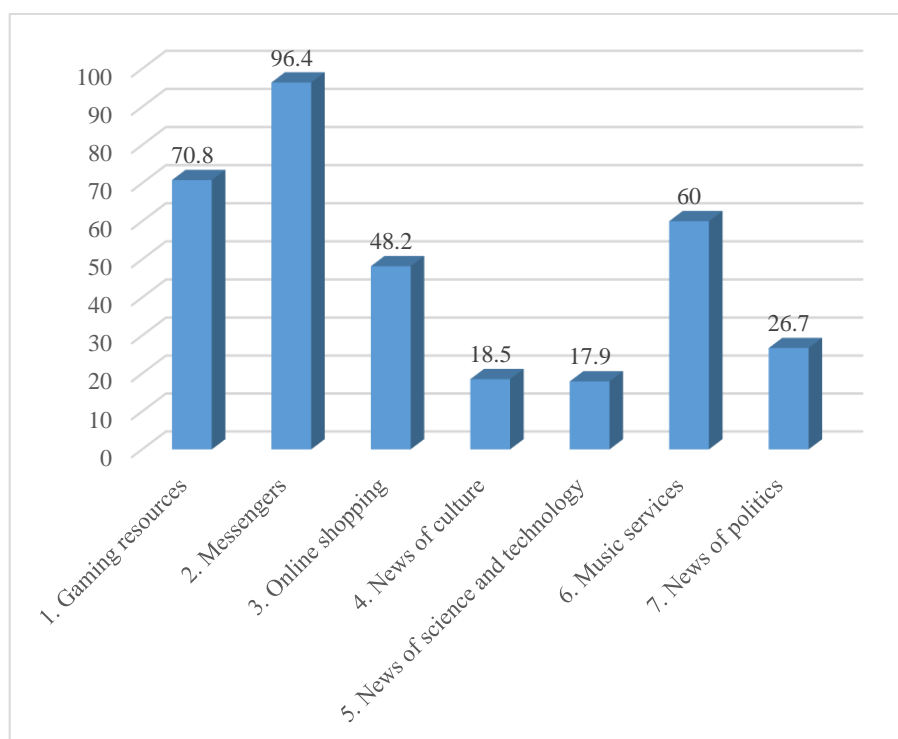

Figure 3. Internet Resources which the respondents find most appealing, %
Source: compiled by the authors.

Discussion

A gender analysis of the time spent online by Internet users suggests that girls are more active than boys in messengers (97.1% vs. 90%), online shopping (52.0% vs. 15%, respectively); and music services (61.1% vs. 50%). The proportion of girls (70%) and boys (70.9%) playing computer games is almost the same. However, the boys as compared to the girls, are leading in the consumption of the news of science and technology (65% vs. 12.6%); and the news of culture (25% vs. 17.7%).

The so-called "social media" are particularly popular among young people (Tang et al., 2021). One of the questions was intended to find out the reasons for high popularity of certain

Internet content. So, the respondents were offered a question: "Personally for your social media (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Facebook) are:" (it was offered to choose not more than three answers). 96,4% responded that for them social media are first of all the means of communication. Such eagerness to communicate can be explained by age specifics. Young people are actively searching for a life partner, their self-identification occurs through social contacts, and the sense of self is built. 70.8% of respondents noted that for them social media are a source of information; 49.2% see them as a pleasant pastime; for 19,5% they hold opportunities for creative self-fulfillment; 13.9% use them to find new friends.

According to Tejedor et al., (2019), analysis of gender differences in the consumption of social media content showed that for 97.1% of girls and 90% of boys social media in the first place are a means of communication; for 70.9% of girls and 70% of boys it is first of all a source of information; for 50.9% of girls and 35% of boys - a pleasant pastime; for 14.9% of girls and 25% of boys - a way to find new friends; for 18.9% of girls and 25% of boys - an opportunity for creative self-fulfillment. The use of technologies by the millennial generation has become the subject of analysis of numerous studies (Steeves & Regan, 2014).

The "migration" of young people to the Internet is largely due to the spread of mass consumerism ideology. It is impossible to comprehend the problems caused by this social phenomenon without turning to the philosophical concepts of postmodernists Baudrillard (2000); Debord (1999) and Lipovetsky (2001).

For his part, Baudrillard (2000) pointed out that in the mass consumer society seduction becomes a powerful lever for manipulating people. The Internet lets young people plunge into the world of virtual reality, which is in essence woven of staged edited photos and images, simulacra, the world of emptiness and seductive symbols, sometimes having no connection with the physical, material and social world.

Lipovetsky (2001) reflects on the world of seductive emptiness. He argued that today in the world of politics, education, production, services, in everyday life, and even in intimate life, the center stage is taken by the strategy of seduction as a method of influencing the human minds. Seduction as a social force causes the craving for pleasure, legitimizing the human's right to enjoy all the pleasures of life. In his opinion, the consumer revolution has elevated the right to enjoyment to the category of the highest human values.

Eventually, in the mass consumer society the values and attitudes are shifting toward hedonism, eudemonism, personalized individualism, and narcissism. The narcissism in the era of mass information culture is defined by Lipovetsky (2001) as all kinds of self-presentation in various chats, talk shows, messengers and information channels. At the same time, the

narcissist's desire to express in mass media is nothing more than the joy of self-presentation, with the logic of play behind it, and nothing but emptiness in it.

The danger of global digitalization to the human consciousness is that behind the seeming abundance of choice and the pseudo-freedom there hide total emptiness and spiritual poverty. Skillful luring and enticing by these values put the youth under an impression of all-permissiveness, with no restrictions or boundaries in the socio-cultural sphere, which had been created by many generations for thousands of years, as can be seen in Soldatova and Rasskazova, (2014).

Therefore, since it is apparent that the process of digitalization cannot be stopped, we consider it essential to tighten censorship over the Internet informational space, and to raise the competence in the use of web-resources of both youngsters and their parents, etc. Gustavsson and MacEachron (2015), and Marsh, et al. (2017), supported this point of view and expressed the idea of the importance of the role of parents in teaching children the skills to assess the reliability of information.

Russian and foreign researchers emphasize that the formation of digital competence in children and their parents is necessary for functioning in the context of widespread digitalization (Nikken & Opree, 2018). A special role in this belongs to pedagogical science, which is undergoing changes in modern conditions. Under the influence of globalization contemporary pedagogy/education appears in a peculiar "reference point" of its development what causes the changes in the vector and goal of its movement and brings forward as a main idea decentralization of researcher's consciousness and his/her multiple-aspect vision and interpretation of social and cultural phenomena (Chigisheva, 2015). At the same time, despite a significant amount of work in the field of digitalization of education, this area of research is still not sufficiently studied. Rapid changes can prevent adequate scientific rethinking of the phenomenon of digitization, since practical needs come first (Soltovets et al., 2021).

Limitations of the study

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the study has some limitations. Mostly because it is of a pilot nature, due to the average sample number of respondents (N-195) and non-observance of the gender proportions in the Russian youth cohort. The authors of the study formed a sample according to the data on the number of students at the Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University, where the majority of the students are female. The study also showed that the predominant use of the quantitative survey method does not prove a more reasoned explanation of the underlying reasons for the popularity of certain types of media among young

people. To obtain more detailed information in the future, it is necessary to supplement this study with conducting, for example, interviews or focus groups. In general, the research results obtained by the team of authors once again confirmed the existing trends in the modern spiritual space of the youth. Continuation of research work in this direction would allow reaching more understanding about the deeper layers in the process of spiritual and moral formation of the consciousness by modern youth.

Conclusion

The sociological study "Mass Media as a Factor Shaping the Spiritual and Moral Values of the Youth in Nizhny Novgorod," undertaken in 2020, revealed certain problems requiring further thorough research and a well-orchestrated response. The most concerning problems include Commercialization of mass media, and especially television, which due to the intrusive advertising content destroying the viewer's perception of video sequence and distracting from the broadcasted content, has reoriented modern youth to the consumption of Internet resources, where advertising is still present, but not as much as on TV.

For the other hand, modern media are gradually losing their educational function and becoming more focused on satisfying the eudemonic and hedonistic, purely pragmatic and utilitarian needs of young people. Overall, the study of the role of mass media in the lives of youth has once again proven its extreme relevance and vital importance, which is why this subject requires further exploration.

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