



FEATURES OF NEWS CONSUMPTION BY CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN STUDENT YOUTH

CARACTERÍSTICAS DO CONSUMO DE NOTÍCIAS POR JOVENS ESTUDANTES RUSSOS CONTEMPORÂNEOS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aims to determine the features of the consumption of political news by student youth and youth preferences in political news sources and media terminals.

Methods: A sociological study was conducted in the form of a survey of young people aged between 15 and 29 (N=1,102). The results of the fall 2022 survey were compared to those of a similar 2017 study. **Results:** Survey participants name online resources, including social media and news portals, as the leading source of information (62.43%). Telegram channels and television rank second and third with 21.69 and 14%, respectively.

Trust in Internet news sources rose by 13% since 2017 (from 57 to 70.5%), while traditional media, such as television and radio, rank last by the level of trust (12.95%). **Conclusion:** The study confirms the ongoing trend of decreasing trust in traditional media, especially concerning news. Despite declining trust, television continues to be popular among young people as a source of entertainment. The study shows a clear shift in preference toward digital media.

Keywords: Youth; Media consumption; News sources.





RESUMO

Objetivo: O estudo visa determinar as características do consumo de notícias políticas por jovens estudantes e suas preferências em relação a fontes de notícias políticas e terminais de mídia. **Métodos:** Foi realizado um estudo sociológico na forma de uma pesquisa com jovens entre 15 e 29 anos (N=1.102). Os resultados da pesquisa do outono de 2022 foram comparados com os de um estudo semelhante de 2017. **Resultados:** Os participantes da pesquisa citam os recursos on-line, incluindo mídia social e portais de notícias, como a principal fonte de informações (62,43%). Os canais de telegrama e a televisão estão em segundo e terceiro lugar, com 21,69 e 14%, respectivamente. A confiança nas fontes de notícias da Internet aumentou 13% desde 2017 (de 57 para 70,5%), enquanto a mídia tradicional, como televisão e rádio, ficou em último lugar no nível de confiança (12,95%). **Conclusão:** O estudo confirma a tendência contínua de diminuição da confiança na mídia tradicional, especialmente em relação às notícias. Apesar do declínio da confiança, a televisão continua a ser popular entre os jovens como fonte de entretenimento. O estudo mostra uma clara mudança na preferência pela mídia digital.

Palavras-chave: Jovens; consumo de mídia; fontes de notícias.

1 INTRODUCTION

Today's global information environment is constantly changing under the influence of new technologies, social and economic changes, and political events. The main drivers of this change include the rapid development of technology, the rising importance of social networks, and the avalanche-like growth in the volume of data. The advent of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things, affects the way people obtain and exchange information. Social media are growing in popularity among users, leading to a change in the ways people communicate and share information. With the development of technology and the growing number of devices with Internet access, the volume of data generated and processed every day is growing exponentially. This requires people to adapt and continuously learn new technology and means of exchanging information.

New technologies are expanding access to content, thereby enabling consumption whenever and wherever needed, changing the way people consume content, and opening up opportunities to create new formats. For example, mobile apps and streaming platforms allow watching videos and listening to music on smartphones and tablets, and virtual reality and augmented reality generate new formats of content, such as virtual tours and games.





The development of mobile media terminals, such as smartphones and tablets, has greatly intensified the consumption of content over the past decade and a half – primarily in the form of videos, music, and games, at any time and place. Moreover, various applications and social networks allow users to create and share content among themselves. This leads to an exponential increase in the amount of information created and consumed.

The development of social media also has a tremendous impact on content consumption. Social media allows users to share information quickly and easily, resulting in a steady rise in the amount of content consumed. In addition, social media provide a platform for content creation and distribution, enabling users to become creators and distributors of content. This brings a greater variety of digital content that can be accessed for consumption.

Contemporary youth always represents the most progressive part of any society in terms of the choice of channels and forms of information consumption. Sociological monitoring of the features of information and news consumption by modern youth is meant to answer today's urgent questions about the prospects and directions of the development of Russian society. Without it, it is impossible to effectively solve the issues of developing, implementing, and planning both state and youth policy.

The characteristics of media consumption and young people's consumption of news are constant subjects of research and publications, usually in the context of the study of political preferences (Babarykina & Miletskii, 2022; Gatieva, 2021; Laptev, 2015; Müller & Fatykhova, 2016; Russian Public Opinion Research Center, 2017). The features of news (including political) consumption by today's youth is a highly topical issue. Its relevance is associated primarily with the issues of development, planning, and implementation of state youth policy, which is also the subject of a significant number of publications (Kolobova, 2019; Levashov et al., 2021; Morozova et al., 2015; Technavio, 2019; Zircon, 2021). In the current conditions, the rate of technology change combined with societal changes causes the choice of the right channels and forms of communication with the youth target audience to be an extremely difficult task – so much so that often targeted efforts in this area lead to modest results at best (Selezneva & Zinenko, 2020). Features of young people's motivation and their avant-gardism in the choice of forms and channels for obtaining information make the construction of effective communication with the youth target audience a non-trivial task.





The present study aims to identify the specific features of news consumption by student youth, as well as the preferences of student youth in the choice of media terminals.

2 METHODS

Our sociological study on the topic "Features of news consumption by contemporary youth" was conducted in the fall of 2022 by the Department of Public Relations and Applied Political Science of the Kazan Federal University (Russia). Studies on the attitude of youth to politics, elections, and the choice of news sources have been conducted at the department regularly since 2011, which allows for concluding dynamic changes in the situation.

The survey was conducted in the period from September 14 to October 21, 2022 in Kazan, Russia. The general population was defined as young people between the ages of 15 and 29 living in Kazan. According to data from the portal "Open Tatarstan", at the beginning of 2021, there were 603,374 people registered in this age group in Kazan (Open Tatarstan, 2022). In the course of the survey, a quota sample was formed, representative in terms of age. Out of 603,374 people, 1,102 were selected. The confidence probability was 97%, with a 3% confidence interval. Participants in the survey were university and high school students from Kazan.

The method for collecting raw sociological data in the course of the study was a questionnaire survey.

3 RESULTS

A major part of publications on the subject is based on the designation of contemporary Russian youth as representatives of Generation Z. This is the youngest generation at the moment (born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s), who have grown up in the era of digital technology and the Internet. They differ from previous generations in their values, behavior, and methods of content consumption. The characteristics of this generation usually include them being more tolerant, open to different cultures and ideas, concerned about the environmental agenda, and socially responsible. They are also singled out as having a greater concern for their health and physical fitness, as well as for their mental and emotional well-being. Gen Z also differs from previous generations in that they are more inclined toward self-





expression and individualism, as well as the use of digital technology in everyday life.

The most significant characteristic of today's youth, in our view, is precisely that these young people are digital natives, having grown up with access to broadband Internet and a variety of digital content.

We should note that the Howe-Strauss generational theory developed more than 30 years ago has been criticized on several grounds. First of all, it is critiqued for its excessive focus on marketing aspects and consumer behavior, excessive stereotyping and simplification, lack of attention to the number of generations, and several other salient factors.

In terms of content consumption, today's young people differ considerably from older age groups. There are objective reasons for this, the main one being the availability of diverse and accessible media terminals, as well as access to high-speed Internet, which allows consuming content continuously and without restrictions on the volume of information.

Noted among the significant features of youth today is the fact of it being tied to a large number of devices and having more trust in the information published by friends, as well as the recommendations of bloggers and opinion leaders. Furthermore, the prominent concept of word of mouth is now the most popular model of communication among this generation. The typical traits of Gen Z are said to be the ability to multitask (including in media consumption), thoughtfulness, straightforwardness, frugality (this applies primarily to time), and reservedness.

The characteristics of media consumption in modern youth are a regular subject of study (Kiselev & Zagrebin, 2022; Korolev, 2014; Podgornova, 2022). In terms of media consumption patterns, it is usually highlighted that today's youth prefer concise and visual content, such as short videos, memes, and graphic images. The tendency to use mobile devices to access content is also a common characteristic. It is generally agreed that Gen Z also expects personalized content and active participation in content creation, e.g. through comments and discussions on social media. They are also more skeptical of traditional forms of advertising and prefer native advertising or collaborations with brands that support their values and interests.

4 DISCUSSION

When asked about their preferred sources of news, almost two-thirds of the





respondents (62.43%) cited Internet resources, including social networks and news portals. One-fifth (21.69%) named Telegram channels among them. Notably, only 14% named television and 1.85% radio as their preferred source of news. In 2017, when answering similar questions, 21% named television and 15% radio as the preferred channel for obtaining news.

The issue of youth target audience trust in news sources deserves separate consideration. In general, more than half (57.5%) trust the information received from mass media. Two-thirds trust specialized news portals (62.5%) and Telegram channels (60%). A third trust sources recommended by relatives or friends, and another 32% trust social networks. In the ranking by the degree of trust in the information sources, the leader is Telegram channels with a third (32.9%) reporting the greatest trust in this particular source. Specialized news portals rank second (19.5%), and social media are trusted by 18.1%. Thus, Internet news sources are trusted by more than two-thirds. Compared with 2017, the level of trust in Internet sources has increased by 13 percentage points (from 57 to 70.5%). Interestingly, traditional media (television and radio) ranked last in the trust rating (12.95%). In the 2017 study, a total of 38% declared their trust in television and radio as information sources.

Over half of the respondents (60%) seek to verify the obtained information by comparing it with information from different sources. When asked about the qualities required from modern mass media, the respondents note relevance (43.9%) and reliability (41.9%). Independence is indicated as an important characteristic of mass media by 31.4%.

Of particular interest is the issue of young people's attitude to television as a mass media outlet. Contrary to the popular opinion that today's youth do not watch television at all, only one-fifth (21.2%) report that they do not. The majority (78.7%) watch television from time to time. However, only a fifth of the modern youth target audience considers television as a news source, with the majority seeing it as a source of entertainment.

A separate block of the study was devoted to identifying the characteristics of the use of media terminals by contemporary youth. Technological aspects of media consumption by today's youth are regularly addressed in scientific publications (Granados, 2018; Levashov et al., 2021).

The most preferred and often used terminal is mobile phones (41.8%); a third name laptops and a fifth (21.6%) TV. Phones and laptops are most frequently used for





browsing the news (46.7 and 33%, respectively). Considering factors that influence the choice of the terminal, the principal ones are convenience (33.6%) and ease of use (33.1%). An important factor is also the accessibility of the media terminal, which is cited as a significant factor by 27.2%.

A critical feature of the youth target audience is its inherent characteristic of using gadgets and being online all the time. This is usually seen as an unconditional and unquestionable feature. The term "digital native" itself means, in the first place, that today's young people cannot imagine life without the Internet – the network, in this case, is an unconditional part of their reality that "has always been around". This circumstance is now considered from various angles, and there are different assessments on this subject ranging from total denial to unambiguous approval. Criticism of young people's dependence on devices and the Internet should consider the nature of perception of the Internet as an unconditional and objective part of the picture of the world in today's youth.

An important feature of media consumption among modern young people is the intensive use of devices and social networks. These facts are often assessed negatively. Yet these characteristics of media consumption by young people are objective and widespread. The model of using devices and being on social media all the time, except for bedtime, is a given for much of the Russian youth. Young people's dependence on devices and social media is an objective fact, although research into the characteristics and dynamics of this phenomenon – including its negative consequences – does not currently provide for unequivocal conclusions.

Another significant characteristic is the change in the ability to concentrate when consuming content. Most researchers note that attention retention time in the modern young target audience is counted in tens of seconds. It is important to note that this fact, although undeniable, is less applicable to the consumption of cinematic content. Importantly, the reason for this circumstance is the notorious competition of terminals for the attention of modern youth. When several terminals are available at the same time, attention becomes scattered. Mobile phones remain the most valuable and attractive terminal for young people. This can also be seen as one of the reasons why television loses as a terminal in the struggle for the attention of the youth audience.

Trust in news sources remains a key issue. In general, as noted in publications on the topic (Kiselev & Zagrebin, 2022; Zircon, 2021), the level of trust in news and political news sources among young people is somewhat lower than in other age groups.





However, while stating the decline in the level of trust in traditional media, we cannot disregard such an important result of the study as the degree of trust in news sources. Here the leader was Telegram channels, trusted by more than a third of the respondents.

In this respect, in 2022, the steady growth in the importance of Telegram channels as sources of news in general and socio-political information in particular is noticeable. A steady rise in attention to Telegram channels as a trustworthy information source has been observed in the Russian media sphere for at least the last five years. Interestingly, the measures taken by the authorities to block the messenger did not affect this rise. This circumstance is indicative and cannot be ignored when making decisions in the sphere of state youth policy.

5 CONCLUSION

According to our results, we can draw several conclusions largely consistent with the results of similar studies on the subject. First of all, attention is drawn to the continuing decline in trust in television and radio as sources of news in general and trustworthy sources in particular. The popularity of television as a media remains relatively high among young people, but this concerns mainly entertainment content. Our findings indicate a significant shift in news consumers' preferences in favor of digital media, while trust in traditional media is diminishing.

Another important feature is the prevalence of mobile media terminals (primarily smartphones) as an instrument for consuming content in general and news in particular.

An essential characteristic of media consumption in modern youth is its predominantly mobile nature. For a considerable part of today's youth, a mobile phone is the leading if not the only terminal for going online. The widespread development of 3G and 4G mobile data networks since the late 2000s is the chief and primary factor in the mobile nature of media consumption among today's youth. The fact is that young people have simply taken advantage of new technical opportunities and the conveniences associated with them. In this sense, many of the media habits of contemporary youth can be seen as derived from technological progress and not the other way around.





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