



Can online media be platform for active social interaction and social activism?

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to study and describe the practices of participation and interaction of city residents that contribute to the expression of civic activity. The survey method is used as a research method, which allows studying the forms and methods of communication between social activists. The article examines the relationship between the development of modern media and the formation of the public sphere. The article analyzes the specifics of online interaction practices of participants of new social movements, describes the need for Internet and media support in the activities of activists, and examines the extent to which the Internet activates civil initiatives. The originality of the research lies in the fact that for the first time social activity and forms of its interaction were studied. It is shown that activists deliberately refuse to organize a free market at the official level, to interact with state structures, and seek help from city authorities. It is revealed that the organizers of actions use Internet resources to promote their ideas, but they evaluate the importance of the Internet network in different ways: the Internet as the main media; the Internet as an additional media; the Internet as an optional media, in contrast to print media, ads and personal invitations. For the first time, it is determined that social activism notes the effectiveness of Internet resources for creating a team, also at the stage of informing citizens about actions and at the stage of distributing a report on the past action. It is shown that new social movements offer a clearly formulated ideology. For free market activists, these are anti-capitalist views, criticism of the consumer society, and a focus on solving global problems. The movement is characterized by a reflexive nature of ideology, which involves analyzing activities, reviewing goals, and searching for ways to develop. It is determined that in General, activists are working to form an urban identity that is an alternative to the image of a passive consumer. It is shown that it is more important for activists to create direct communication, rather than a virtual network for communication. The data Obtained in this work can be used in Economics, management, social psychology and education.

Keywords: social interaction, communication, identity, Internet media

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INTRODUCTION

The transformations taking place with social movements in our country change both the level of civic activity and its potential strength (Budantsev, 1979; Levashov, 2007; Sokolov, 2002; Kartashova, Nikonova & Solomanidina, 2003). Manifestations of civic activism indicate the formation of a civil society. Meanwhile, the definition of civil society is in constant development, modification, transformation. The uncertainty of this

concept, the multiplicity of interpretations and, as a result, the lack of indicators, hinder the quantitative analysis of civil society development. Since the construction of civil society in modern scientific theories is considered as a constructive process, the expansion of the area of citizens' activity is perceived in a positive

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way. Modern forms of civic activism are diverse. Special attention is drawn to those that are eventful and performative (Filatova, 2006; Chernykh, 2007; Nosov, 2000).

It is in the last few years that movements have emerged that can significantly increase the level of civic activity of Russian residents. In post-Soviet Russia, where the public sphere has not developed, the role of a space for open communication between representatives of different social groups is played by the Internet. Therefore, it seems relevant to pay attention to the peculiarities of civic activity expression in the virtual space of new media. The Internet, therefore, is an effective tool for maintaining the activity of modern citizens, but it does not in itself create forms that generate civil initiatives, and is, first, a means of increasing the effectiveness of communication between activists and city residents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of civil society depends, largely, on the level of civil activity in society. Most forecasts of civil society development are based on an analysis of traditional activism. It is more difficult to predict the consequences of the actions of new social movements' representatives who have a different understanding of civil society's essence and, as a result, see other results as the goal of building this society, since there are no well-established mechanisms for its formation (Castells, 2000; Borodkin, 1990; Kholodkovsky, 1996; Mukhametzyanova et al., 2018; Sorokoumova & Cherdymova, 2020).

Quite a lot of changes taking place in civil society depend on specific people, and there are many examples of this. In addition, it is difficult to expect any specific change and the predicted result, since transformations can occur over time and change the direction of changes (Gutorov, 2002; Arato, 1995; Blyakhman, 2000; Bayanova et al., 2019).

The transformations taking place with social movements in Russia change both the level of civic activity and its potential strength. It is in the last few years that movements have emerged that can significantly increase the level of civic activity of Russian residents (Cherdymova & Cherdymova, 2006). New social movements are constantly developing, acquiring new meanings due to increased reflexivity, which was not inherent in the old social movements. This increase in reflexivity is one of the expressions of postmodernism as a new way of thinking, life, expression (Grabelnikov, 1996, Chumikov, 1998; Kholodkovsky, 1998). Activists, whose goal is to form Russian civil society, have a valuable and little-studied resource—the virtual space of communication via the Internet. The Internet is a powerful resource for collective mobilization and implementation of a wide range of civil initiatives

(Rakitov, 1991; Luhman, 2005; Ryzhykh, 2008; Garmatin, 2004; Olkhovaya et al., 2019; Virilio, 2002).

Today in Russia, one of the offline platforms that create conditions for discussion is the movement of free markets. Combined with a well-developed network of online communications, this movement can gain a more serious position in Russian society and become not only a form of non-consumer leisure for *advanced* youth, but also a way to create a public sphere and a resource for the development of civil society. Free market activists use the opportunities of new media at different stages of the organization of *free markets* and the development of the movement as a whole. (Shkondin, 2002; Kokorina, 2007; Kayumova, 2016; Cherdymova et al., 2017; Vinogradova, 2004; Smetanina, 2002; Hanson, 2001; Schennikov, 2002).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the process of studying new social activity and practices of citizens' participation in activism, the following tasks were formulated: to identify the goal of activism and its ideology; to determine the stages, sequence and result of changes desired by activists; to determine the image of the urban community in the minds of activists; to identify the features of online communication practices related to the community.

To solve these tasks, we used the questionnaire method, which includes the following questions:

Are you familiar with social activist communities?

How do you see the development of the community of social activists in your city and in Russia?

Do you think community events of social activists will remain as they are, or develop into something more, into something else?

Is it possible to interact with the community of social activists with the city administration, with regional government, for example, with the Committee of youth Affairs, other state agencies?

Social activists in the West criticize capitalist society. Does it exist in Russia?

What are the specifics of the Russian community of social activists?

Have there been similar actions in the Russian experience in the past?

Are social activist communities linked to other social movements?

Do you participate in social events? (Environmental, political, art events, etc.)

Do you use online resources to organize a community of social activists?

What online resources, how are they organized, what does it give?

In Your opinion, at what stage of organizing a community of social activists are Internet resources most effective?

What new media do you think is most effective?

Do Internet technologies create problems for the social activist community?

How do you assess the effectiveness of the community of social activists?

Who is the audience of the social activist community?

Modern city residents, what are they like?

How can one attract city residents to participate in organizing and holding actions of social activists' community?

What do you think is the purpose of city residents taking part in actions of social activists' community?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed that communication between activists, participants and visitors of the community of social activists (free market) is built according to the rules of happening-it is built on a combination of interactivity, game moments, spontaneity, with an emphasis on initiative (99%). Interaction practices are determined by the main goal of the community and the tasks that are solved at promotions, so it was important to find out how the organizers of free markets themselves see the goal of the movement. Activists unanimously perceive free market actions as a protest against the values of the consumer society (100%). At the same time, respondents identify different goals as the main one: free exchange of things (79%) Here, activists focus on the following tasks and aspects of the free market: eliminating money as an unnecessary intermediary in the process of turnover of things: thus, the thing becomes a way of direct communication between people; helping the poor; reducing the volume of production of things through the organization of multiple use of things; solving problems related to the ecology of the city, country, planet;

The concept of aid plays a special role in the Russian version of the free market. The free market movement that has emerged in the United States focuses on the fight against the accumulation of things, while in Russia the number of people who really need clothes, products, and household items is many times greater than in countries of economic prosperity. The item goes from being a product to a way to help. It becomes useful, turns into a resource. According to the logic of 56% of respondents, it makes no sense to produce a new thing and thus use new resources, when you can once again use a thing that has become unnecessary to another. Holding free market actions helps to reduce the volume of production of things by organizing the reuse of things. This is the opinion of 81% of respondents. This aspect is logically related to solving environmental problems - overproduction, resource depletion, and the negative impact of production on the environment. Solving problems related to the ecology of the city, country, and planet (91% of respondents). The free market, therefore,

becomes a way for activists to save not only people (again a function of aid), but the Planet as a whole. At some actions (65%), activists talked about separate garbage collection and elements of an ecological lifestyle.

The next set of goals that activists set for themselves proves that the free market movement belongs to the new social activism itself: changing the Outlook of city residents; shifting the focus from the need to the value of giving; awareness of the value of an active position, refusing to search for money only to meet individual needs and freebies; creating new forms of social interaction of city residents; highlighting as the main value of communication; self-limitation of material needs.

The free market implies the rejection of money and sellers, which in the future should lead to the creation of alternative forms of interaction, since modern society cannot return to subsistence farming and the exchange of products of production. This is the opinion of 1005 respondents who participated in the campaign. The rejection of the capitalist system implies the search for other ways of economic organization (85%).

In free-market events, like flea markets and art bazaars, things are exempt from brands, i.e. from the modern way of material consumption. Outside of the brand, the item returns to its main functions, and the values that the product previously conveyed through advertising and image strategies are erased. 79% of the participants in the campaign pay attention to this. A visitor to the free market, according to the activists, should understand that a thing has less value than it previously seemed to him, and often does not satisfy spiritual needs: the possession of a thing in fact does not add a new quality to a person (81%). The value of mutual assistance, selfless offers of things and services, and the so-called gift economy (100%) is declared. As the activists themselves note, a personal example of friendly behavior, openness and generosity surprises and attracts the attention of those who come to free markets for the first time: non-standard spending of free time; changing the political system;

Some of the activists perceive socializing at promotions as a hangout (79%), and free markets themselves as one of the ways to spend an unusual time (56%), but there are few of them, and their hedonistic values are justified by their young age. On the other hand, the opportunity to hang out in the pleasant company of friendly peers is a way to attract a wide audience of schoolchildren and students of different interests and views, and they are the most mobile social group with a flexible system of values and stereotypes. It is possible that there will be new activists in this community who will be lit up the ideas of the free market. Respondents do not specify what kind of communication is valuable for them during promotions. The total value

of communication in a communicative society is declared.

In the opinion of some activists, the free market is a political project in the usual sense of the political things (39%). Dissatisfied with the existing political regime, young people decided to undermine the economy from below. At free market events, protest-minded activists communicate with visitors on political topics and distribute leaflets. Among the global problems, they highlight overproduction, asymmetric distribution of resources, atmospheric pollution, destruction of the ozone layer, etc. One can note that there are people with anarchist views in the ranks of free market activists (13%). At the same time, other activists seek to dissociate themselves from anarchists. This contradiction within the community of free market organizers testifies to the heterogeneity of the movement, that activists are included in the organization personally, and strive to find a way of self-realization on a new public platform. Therefore, while some people distribute leaflets with anarchist appeals, others treat visitors to vegan dishes, while others implement art projects, etc. The stated goals of the free market confirm that such actions are an expression of a new social activism, with its focus on changing consciousness, values, and organizing grassroots initiatives. New activism implies a different attitude of its participants to each other and the search for democratic ways of interaction, starting from the local level.

Respondents divide free market users into the following groups: by social status: (young people: students, representatives of subcultures, pensioners, low-income families); by political views (politically passive citizens, politically active youth, primarily anti — fascists and anarchists); by cultural level (consumers of mass culture, ordinary people, representatives of subcultures, people with a high cultural level who have preserved the ability to think critically and at the same time human qualities - mutual assistance, solidarity, non-acceptance of any kind of discrimination). At the same time, representatives of the passive audience can be active on free market shares (35%). This shows the expected spontaneity, happening occurs. Activity on the part of visitors is important for activists (85%). Activists are attentive to personal stories that show a surge in civic engagement (85%)

In the political scenario, activists perceive the free market as a communication platform that is convenient for conducting propaganda, and act as educators, explaining the shortcomings of the existing political system to politically passive citizens.

In the environmental scenario, activists tend not to offer specific projects to solve the problems of the planet's resource shortage, but rather to change the minds of citizens, to point out to them the problems left without a solution by the state and corporations. Activists often take concrete steps to improve the situation within

the framework of other movements, taking part in third-party actions.

Veganism, Vedic knowledge are popular ideas among modern youth. Some free markets develop exactly according to the worldview scenario, offering visitors, in addition to exchanging things, to listen to lectures on raw food and natural hygiene, try vegan dishes, and watch a movie about proper nutrition.

Activists deliberately refuse to organize a free market at the official level, to interact with state structures, to seek help from city authorities, because the free market is initially an anti-capitalist grassroots initiative, a way to self-organize citizens, increase civic activity. Connection with anarchist activists sometimes creates obstacles to organizing actions, but it does not become a reason for stopping activities.

The following groups are excluded from the free market audience: high-income families, civil servants, representatives of political parties, and representatives of commercial structures. Activists deliberately do not involve these groups as disinterested in the development of the free market movement as a possible opposition force. Now, it is difficult to make predictions about the possibility of solving global problems only by initiative citizens, without organizing close cooperation with the state, political leaders and corporations.

How do modern activists present themselves? Despite the declared difference in political views and interests, there are common features that unite people who want to show civic activity. Emphasis is done on independent choice of activism, reflection and critical attitude to information.

In the free market movement, one can distinguish the following roles that activists play: a hard-working Manager; a social worker; an educator; a revolutionary-reformer; a creative person.

Activists suggest different scenarios for the development of the free market movement in Russia: increasing the number of indicators (to hold actions more often, to attract more people); creating a cultural platform; organizing a permanent platform for actions; combining with other social actions; implementing the ideas of the movement through other forms.

So, despite the specifics that Russian free markets have-in addition to the socially and politically active audience, the actions are attended by young people who hang out (to show themselves, find free things and entertainment) and those in need (in the West, this group, according to informants, is almost not represented) - the free market movement in Russia is focused on increasing the reflexivity, activity, initiative of citizens and embodies in practice criticism of the consumer society. Forms of participation in actions for citizens are diverse - from organizational assistance (search for premises, provision of musical equipment, invitation to the free market, printing and posting ads) to content-based (participation in meetings of activists,

suggestions on the form of actions, conducting their own master classes, etc.) Every informed citizen can take part in the actions. One of the most important tasks of activists is to convey information about the movement. The lowest-cost way to spread the ideas of promotions is through new media. There are features of the practices of interaction between activists and participants of actions in the online space.

All free market organizers, without exception, use Internet resources to promote their ideas. However, they assess the importance of the Network in different ways: the Internet as the main media; the Internet as an additional media; the Internet as an optional media, in contrast to print media, ads and personal invitations. To attract more participants, one should use different communication channels effectively. This is the opinion of 100% of respondents. Thus, traditional means of mass information, such as ads on poles, posters in public places, flyers, publications in Newspapers, radio ads, remain effective. Having limited themselves to Internet resources, activists will see a different audience at the actions - there will be no pensioners and low-income families, i.e. those who potentially need old things. Nevertheless, there will be people who understand the goals of the free market and share the ideas of the movement-mainly students, young professionals, and socially active citizens. The combination of different media will attract people of different degrees of civic activity and consciousness to the action, which will allow realizing the goals of the movement declared by the activists.

Informants note the effectiveness of online resources for creating a team, also at the stage of informing citizens about promotions and at the stage of distributing a report on the past campaign.

The most popular means of online communication on the topic of the free market in Russia now are email, private chats and the social network *Vkontakte*. The latter partially allows you to track the process of online interaction of movement participants - but only by those records that are put on public display.

The study of online communication practices between activists and city residents leads to the conclusion that online communication is complementary, which serves as reinforcement, reminder, information, and continuation of communication. Outside of the online space, it could be broken and even terminated due to the lack of time of modern city residents, geographical borders, and

information noise (there are many events in the city that can overlap and erase the significance of the previous one without constant communication reinforcement).

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the special value of the new social activism is that the participants of the actions stop looking at the social order as something unchangeable, and begin to realize themselves as subjects who can be active in the political sphere, change everyday life and the social world. Activists are beginning to realize their responsibility for what is happening around them and their importance in society. They show how everyone can change the social order on an everyday level.

A new understanding of politics and the political expands the scope of civic engagement. Politics today is understood as the formation of a new society in which we want to live. Thus, artistic gestures can also claim to work with the political, because a modern artist often offers an original view of the problems of social life and, using the power of visual art, influences the opinions of viewers. As it was revealed, social actions today are held in the format of a happening. A new identity is formed through creative tactics, evasion of strategies, implementation of grassroots initiatives, that is, citizens' own ideas about socially significant problems and adequate ways to solve them. In General, activists are working to create an urban identity that is an alternative to the image of a passive alienated consumer. At the same time, a new identity is not imposed, but is formed, first, within the framework of its subjectivity. Activism is a conscious independent choice. New media resources contribute to the creation of an alternative urban identity, as they provide modern city residents with an open, democratic Internet space, rich in opportunities for expression of opinions, unlimited communication and implementation of socially significant ideas.

New media are becoming the sphere where, in modern conditions, points of growth of civil society and social changes are possible. However, changes are taking place not only due to the emergence of new mobilizing resources, such as the Internet, but also new problem areas. Around them, collective opinions are formed, which are interpreted as significant elements of collective and individual identity, and which become points of Assembly of civic consciousness and initiatives.

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