

# Information Adaptation of Migrants as a Subject of Sociological Analysis

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**Abstract** – This article studies the concept of information adaptation of migrants as a specific subject of sociological analysis in modern conditions of significant influence of information environment on the human socialization process. The authors proposed criteria for evaluating the success of information adaptation of people who change their place of residence. Faced with the new information environment, the migrant is in a state of information shock, which is often accompanied by cultural shock. The results of the sociological poll show adaptive differences of migrants with regard to their information preferences. Therefore, the level of information the adaptation of migrants depends on improvement of their IT-competencies and skills. A higher range of information competence indicates that migrants adapt more quickly to new socio-economic environment.

**Keywords** – *information adaptation, migrants, media, Internet, sociological poll*

## I. INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPT DEFINITION

While migration flows are becoming more and more active, in recent years the issues of social adaptation and integration of migrants have been actively discussed by domestic and foreign scientists, politicians, members of the public. In relation to Russia this situation is primarily associated with the next wave of refugees, who have been arriving from the South-East of Ukraine since 2014 [1]. At the same time, according to researchers, similar problems were common during mass immigration from the CIS countries to Russia in 1990s [2].

The critical point to be understood is the inevitability of the onset of an adaptive shock, which migrants suffer at the initial stage of adaptation. This shock is determined by differences in structure of values, norms and stereotypes of social behavior of migrants and the receiving party. Above all it affects refugees – forced migrants who are rapidly leaving their homeland due to political, military or other threats to their life without any prior preparations.

The reasons that force people to change their place of residence may be different including political factors. In the conditions of global climate changes we can assume that migration will be the most essential social process accompanying the development of civilization over the next century [3].

Partially the fact that refugees have difficulties in obtaining necessary information, overcoming administrative barriers, lack of housing and work is still caused by ineffective state policy in the field of migration. It is doubtless that, as a rule, host countries including Russia are objectively interested in the integration of visitors. In modern conditions highly skilled migrants represent a valuable labor, demographic and cultural resource for the development of territories. However, a number of state migration programs with a low degree of efficiency are being implemented for the following reasons: lack of funding, insufficient qualifications and low interest of performers at the local level.

At the same time, one should agree with L.V. Korel that the substantiation of mechanisms for effective adaptation of migrants is hampered by many factors including the presence of terminological gaps that require additional theoretical studies [4].

A significant theoretical and methodological basis has been developed while researching the stated issues. Thus, in their works Russian scientists considered various aspects of migrants' socio-cultural adaptation in the conditions of modern Russia. They studied the way of apprehension of factors influencing the adaptation process [5], socio-technological aspects of effecting this process [6], the problems of adaptation in the local community [7].

A significant number of foreign authors' studies allows using the results, which scientists obtained considering various aspects of modern migration processes, as a scientific and methodological basis [8]. In particular, the research of adaptation of migrants, especially specific social categories within the ethnic, professional and other types of migration, is of interest [9].

Features of adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants were studied, for example, by New Zealand sociologists from Victoria University in Wellington. They note that all migrants had a high level of stress at the initial stage of resettlement. However, among those, who later chose the integration strategy of acculturation, the success rate and satisfaction were significantly higher than among those who chose the strategy of isolationism [10].

The analysis of the course of research allows us to identify several types of social adaptation of migrants mentioned by the authors, namely: physiological, cultural, economic, professional, geographical, psychological.

At the same time, it should be taken into account that the skills of obtaining and transforming information are a necessary condition human vital activity. Socialization of the individual, construction and implementation of one's strategies in various fields – economic, social, spiritual and political is carried out through information-interpretative reflection of the surrounding reality in the conscience. At the same time, in modern society, which is characterized by researchers as an emerging information environment, the information environment is becoming a new form of human existence [11] that requires adaptation to it through changes in traditional standards of information behavior, for example, acquiring the skills of information search in interactive information networks, virtual communication. In this regard, it is advisable to highlight a special kind of adaptation – information adaptation, which, according to the authors, plays an important role in modern conditions of post-industrial society.

When changing the place of residence there is inevitably a lack of information about the social order established in the host community, which encourages the migrant to seek opportunities to fill it through interacting with the closest information environment that is external to him. Awareness in this case can be a tool for maintaining the social status of the individual, possibly one's social mobility in the new community. At the same time, the usual sources of information (family and friends, the media of the country of birth, etc.) become irrelevant for solving social problems. The migrant is forced to study the local information environment, which also requires adaptation due to its socio-cultural features (for example, the peculiarities of the structure, language, norms and values that determine communicative behavior, etc.). In this case the information environment can be characterized as a kind of resultant of all information flows, at the intersection of which there is a person [11]. The information space itself is very uneven: it consists of an infinite number of information fields of varying complexity, which are generated and emitted by different sources of information [12].

Facing substantially and qualitatively new information environment the migrant falls into a state of information shock, which is often accompanied by a cultural shock. Therefore, there is a potential for so-called future shock, or innovation shock. This state is enhanced by the so-called "limit of novelty", that is, the presence of a limit of a certain amount of information that any individual or group can learn for a short period of time. This terminology was introduced into the sociological thesaurus by E. Toffler.

Younger migrants suffer less "shock", especially children who are faster to adapt to everything including the new information environment [13].

Successful overcoming of the "shock" state is a necessary condition for further assimilation and accommodation of the newcomers. The representatives of the host community are objectively interested in mitigating the consequences. According to the authors, this can be facilitated by successful adaptation to the local information environment due to the possibility of indirect communication with the information

environment, for example, in the Internet environment. Moreover, virtual communication or obtaining information from official sources can smooth such barriers to adaptation as lack of communication, openness in communication and lack of confidence. Information preparation on the eve of moving can reduce the negative effect of "unrealized expectations".

The success of the migrant's adaptation to the new information environment is determined by a number of factors. These should include personal attitudes, ability and willingness to build a strategy of behavior rationally and evaluate the effectiveness and consequences of one's own actions, information and cognitive potential of the individual. The latter is characterized by:

- the level of proficiency of the thesaurus including such concepts as information resources, information environment, information worldview, information behavior, etc.;
- the ability to formulate the information needs and requests correctly;
- the ability to carry out an independent search for information effectively;
- the ability to choose the channels to obtain necessary information;
- the skills of rational storage and rapid processing of large flows and arrays of information;
- knowledge of the norms and regulations of "information ethics" and the ability to conduct information and communication dialogue.

Using these characteristics it is advisable to define the concept of information adaptation in relation to the social category under consideration. This is the process of adaptation of migrants to the changing information environment in relation to the change of residence place, and information and communication processes occurring in it for successful integration into the socio-economic space of the recipient country. Successful information adaptation is promoted by the purposeful cognitive activity of the person directed on systematic acquisition of knowledge and development of skills in the field of information technologies.

External factors include the authenticity of the information environment, its homogeneity, saturation, the scale of the socio-cultural distance, the presence and activity of subjects that contribute to adaptation, the existence of competition between them, etc. The important factor is the degree of acceptance of the migrants' problems on behalf of the host society and its ability to provide the necessary support and assistance in the process of adaptation of the migrant's personality to new living conditions.

## II. METHODS

As part of this study the analysis of empirical material obtained during the poll of migrants in Belgorod region in 2018 (n=260) was carried out. With its mild climate, developed industry and agriculture Belgorod region is

attractive for external migration. Stable socio-psychological climate in the region and local population's relatively tolerant attitude to migrants are important factors. Migration of the population in the region is closely connected with the ethnic processes that take place on its territory. All these factors actualizes the problem of effective integration of migrants into the local community.

A greater part of the sampling population was made up of Ukrainian migrants (186 respondents), a significant proportion of representatives of Central Asian states (43), 20 respondents represent the Transcaucasian countries, 6 representatives of Moldova and 5 representatives of Belarus. Given the current socio-political situation as a result of the crisis in Ukraine the predominance of Ukrainian migrants in the sampling structure generally reflects the current picture of migration flows in Russian regions bordering Ukraine (Table I).

TABLE I. MIGRANTS BY COUNTRY IN RUSSIA

<b>Migrants by country</b>	<b>%</b>
Ukraine	71.54
Turkmenistan	4.62
Armenia	3.85
Kazakhstan	3.85
Azerbaijan	3.85
Tajikistan	3.85
Moldova	2.31
Uzbekistan	2.31
Kyrgyzstan	1.92
Belarus	1.92

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Studying the process of migrants' information adaptation we note that the lack of information is a priority in the list of problems, which are faced by non-residents at a new place. This was pointed out by 40.38 % of the respondents. Only the problem with paperwork (38.08 %) is comparable in order of importance for the ones arriving at a new place of residence. For comparison, only 12.31 and 9.23 % of respondents indicated such problems as poor living conditions and conflicts with the local population, respectively. It is obvious that the collision with the information environment significantly different from the usual clichés is the first serious test for non-residents on the way of adaptation to the new social reality.

The problem with search of the necessary information is relevant for migrants after a certain while after the beginning of living in a new place. At the time of the poll this was indicated by almost a quarter of respondents (22.31 %), while, for example, the lack of friends and acquaintances worries only 13.08 % of respondents, that occupies the third place. Only the problem of employment prevails (31.54 %).

In the process of information adaptation the ability to orientate and use those information sources that provide effective consumption of information in the new living environment is of key importance (Table II).

Among the respondents who primarily focused on the consumption of information from television and radio sources (59.32 %) and Internet resources (58.33 %) of their own

country, as well as social networks (87.50 %), the majority faced information hunger upon arrival. Consumers of information from Russian television and radio sources (45.59 %), Russian Internet resources (44.19 %), as well as those who focused on foreign information sources, which are not Russian ones or the ones from their own country (33.33 %), and those for whom local residents (25 %) acted as the main source of information were exposed to this phenomenon to a less extent. Thus, at the initial stage information adaptation is facilitated by the maximum communicative rapprochement of migrants with the local population and reorientation to Russian sources of information regarding our case. Attention is drawn to the phenomenon peculiar to the part of immigrants focused on foreign sources of information, who are less likely to experience information hunger. Probably, this category is better than others oriented in the information field and quickly adapts to the information environment regardless of the place of its real presence.

TABLE II. THE MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MIGRANTS IN RUSSIA

<b>The main sources of information for migrants</b>	<b>%</b>
Russian media (TV, radio)	52.31
Relatives and friends at homeland	33.85
Russian Internet-sources	33.08
Homeland media (TV, radio)	22.69
Local community members in Russian region	12.31
Social network	12.31
Homeland Internet-sources	9.23
Foreign media (not Russian and not homeland) (TV, radio, Internet)	5.77

Social networks still play a significant role in the process of adaptation, but only if migrants begin to communicate with members of local virtual communities actively forming a new system of social relationships. Confirmation of this, in particular, is identified in the course of sociological studies by scientists from the Netherlands [14].

Adaptation to the new information environment has a direct impact on the process of social adaptation of migrants including the professional sphere. For example, S.C. Buttigieg analyses the adaptation process of immigrants working as nurses on Malta, who sometimes face discrimination due to cultural differences with local staff, and the problems emerging in the process of information exchange [15].

Many respondents, who regularly access the media of their own country, are currently experiencing problems with employment (tele – radio – 44.07 %, Internet resources – 41.67 %). This problem is also relevant for users of social networks (46.88 %). At the same time consumers of information from Russian media face this problem much less often (tele-radio – 25 %, Internet – 36.05 %), as well as those for whom foreign sources of information are priority (26.67 %).

The latter can be classified as universal consumers of information, their outlook is not confined to the search for information limited to the framework of national or administrative borders. This category of migrants will feel relatively comfortable in the information environment on the

territory of any state and adapt to the existing social conditions quite successfully.

At the same time, there are less such people among the Pro-Russian consumers of information resources. People who are focused on Russian tele-radio media – 37.21 %, Internet-sources – 37.21 %. The proportion of migrants who estimated their high level of readiness to move is even lower among consumers of information from their country's sources, including television and radio – 28.81 %, Internet – 25 %. The share of such among users of social networks is quite low – 21.88 %. Thus, in the context of the obtained results the key factor determining the success of the information adaptation of the individual is the information and cognitive potential [11], which is defined as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual to search, process and broadcast of information, taking into account the dynamics of challenges in conditions of changing information environment.

Some confirmation of this thesis is in the self-assessment of respondents regarding their readiness to move to Russia. The largest share of those who claim to be ready to move is among those who focus on foreign sources of information (46.67 %), they are so-called universal consumers. At the same time there are less people among the Pro-Russian consumers of information resources. Focused on Russian tele-radio media – 37.21 %, Internet-sources – 37.21 %. The proportion of migrants who estimated their high level of readiness to move is even lower among consumers of information from their country's sources, including television and radio – 28.81 %, Internet – 25 %. The share of such among users of social networks is quite low – 21.88 %. Thus, in the context of the results obtained, the key factor determining the success of the information adaptation of the individual is the information and cognitive potential, defined in our case as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual to search, process and broadcast information, taking into account the dynamics of challenges in a changing information environment.

The analysis of their normative-value orientation is noteworthy in the context of the study of the process of migrants' information adaptation (Table III).

TABLE III. ACCEPTANCE OF NORMS AND VALUES BY MIGRANTS IN RUSSIA

Acceptance of norms and values by migrants	%			
	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Difficult to answer</i>
Russian norms and values	57.31	37.31	0.77	4.61
Native norms and values	46.15	31.15	12.69	10.01
European (EU) norms and values	19.62	52.31	13.46	14.61

It is quite logical that among the respondents focused on the Russian media (TV and radio) a significant part (70.59 %) perceives the norms and values prevailing in modern Russian society positively. The share of such people among consumers of information from the Russian Internet resources is slightly lower (54.65 %), which also looks quite objective, given the predominant role of television over the Runet in the issue of patriotic and value education of the residents of Russia.

The level of acceptance of Russian social norms and values is relatively high among migrants, who focus on television and radio media (52.54 %) and Internet resources (41.67 %) of their own country. The latter figure is comparable with that of users of social networks (46.88 %). At the same time, only one in four consumers of information from foreign sources, that is television, radio, Internet (26.67 %), perceives the values of modern Russian society positively. It will be fair to note that the level of acceptance of modern European values among this category of migrants is similar (26.67 %), and slightly lower among consumers of information of the Russian television and radio mass media (22.06 %). Thus, the value-normative integration of migrants into the Russian society is neither a condition nor a sign of their successful information adaptation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the problems of social adaptation, which are actively discussed by the scientific community, are not still effectively solved a local level. According to modern authors this is happening due to many reasons including the lack of theoretical elaboration.

Despite the fact that in the migrants' opinion the lack of information is a priority in the list of problems they face at the new place there are still underexplored issue of migrants' adaptation to the local information environment. The relevance of the study of its mechanisms is confirmed by the results of empirical studies illustrating that this issue is still relevant for migrants that is a while after the start of living at a new place.

According to the authors information adaptation can be characterized as the process of adaptation of migrants to the changing conditions, in connection with the change of place residence, information environment and information and communication processes occurring in it for successful integration into the socio-economic space of the recipient country.

It is expected that this process requires some specific knowledge and skills in the field of information and communication technologies from the individual. They are related to the receipt, analysis, interpretation and translation of information by usual means provided by the public information environment, for example, sources of broadcasting, as well as using special tools available while using a computer and software designed to automate the process of working with information, such as RSS-aggregators.

In turn, the success of the information adaptation of the considered social category depends on their ability to go beyond the usual information environment, to shift to the consumption of information from the most accessible list of sources regardless of their state and nationality identity. Thus, information preparation on the eve of moving can significantly reduce the negative effect of "unrealized expectations".

In this regard the state migration policy needs to introduce such an element of assessment of immigrants' qualification as identification of the level of information competence. A higher

level of information competence indicates the migrants' potential to adapt more quickly to new socio-economic conditions. Depending on the results of the assessment the state migration policy can be optimized taking into account the categories of visitors.

In the authors' opinion, centers for assistance to migrants in social and information adaptation can solve such problems, improve the management of the process of migrants' socio-cultural adaptation, in general, and information adaptation, in particular. Centers could provide: assistance to migrants, assistance to them while overcoming barriers to adaptation; assessment of information competence of arriving migrants; assessment of the success of migrants in solving the problems of socio-cultural adaptation in General, and information adaptation in particular; rapprochement of cultures of migrants and the host community; informing stakeholders about the activities of the Center.

As part of the activities of the Center it is necessary to organize the work of an Internet portal containing the initial information necessary for the initial adaptation, and possibly the creation of specialized mobile applications that allow searching for work, housing, educational institutions for children, etc. It is also advisable to create groups in social networks, which, as a rule, are created spontaneously and update information from time to time. Volunteers wishing to provide housing to migrants and register them for a period of 2 to 4 weeks can also be advertised there.

Informing foreign citizens about the existence of the Center can be carried out with the help of widespread information education about its work and services including sending SMS messages to arrivals, distribution of booklets, information leaflets at airports, bus stations, bus stops, regional migration offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Thus, migrants will be provided with moral, psychological and legal assistance as part of their legal education.

In Belgorod region, for example, such a center could become an important element of the system of assistance and support in successful adaptation of migrants from CIS countries who arrived in the region. Residents of Belgorod region, public authorities and local self-government of Belgorod region, Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Belgorod region, the

regional public organization of immigrants "Vera" could be involved in its activities.

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