

Communication Models in Russian Video Blogs: An Author and Audience Influence on Public Discourse

Grushevskaya V. Yu.

Institute of Economics and Management, Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg, Russia
Corresponding author. E-mail: v.iu.grushevskaya@urfu.ru

ABSTRACT

The article is concerned with the notions of Russian video blogs communication. The purpose of this study is to identify the specifics of communication in video blogs and build a typology of communication models. In order to achieve the purpose, the following objectives were set and solved: the systematization of current notions of communication in new media, presentation of basic communication models in video blogs. The use of a systematic approach allowed to give a comprehensive and multidimensional description of various principles of communication organization in video blogs, to reveal their notions. The video blog is considered to be an author's internet project, which implies regular publication of video materials, developing on the basis of the author's concept and uniting the audience intention synthesis. The main focus of the work is on typology based on the theory of communicative action by Khabermas Yu. In particular, video blogs highlight the communicative, dramaturgical, and instrumental types of action. This field is also supplemented by the description of provocative and playful communication in video blogs, and also characterizes the impact of technologies of maximizing relevance on the interaction between the author and audience of video blogs.

Keywords: *video blogs, communication, public sphere, new media, relevance, virtuality, self-representation*

1. INTRODUCTION

This article is devoted to the study of communication models in video blogs at the present stage of society's internetization. Research rationale is due to the need to describe and analyze the ways of exchanging views, conducting public discussions, broadcasting values that appear in the network visual media. The dynamic development of this sphere, the high popularity of video blogs among young people and the impact that this culture has on public opinion require an analysis of the nature of this type of media communications.

In building analytical models describing communications in video blogs, we face the need to solve a number of methodological problems. Building an analytical model of communication in video blogs requires the integration of developments in a wide range of social and human sciences. On the one hand, it is necessary to consider the video blogging phenomenon in the context of the new media's impact on the socio-cultural reality, and on the other hand to analyze the features of the technological environment of video blogging and characterize its specifics.

the most characteristic notions of communication for video blogs. This study of video blogs as a type of network media communications is based, first of all, on the theory of communicative action, presented in the works of Khabermas Yu. [1]. Khabermas's theories are used in political sociology and explain the structure of mass communication and the role of its participants. In particular, the categories of the public sphere as a communicative space of collision and interaction between the system and the "lifeworld", private and political are used. Olga Verbilovich's study [2] reconstructs the origins and evolution of the theory of communicative action, and notes the great potential of network communications, allowing to bring topics and problems that are formed on the "periphery of the private sphere" in the sphere of public discussion. In T. V. Cherepanov's study, the influence of media communications on the transformation of the public sphere in contemporary culture is considered [3]. Kazakov M.Yu. [4]; Gostev A.N., Belous O.V. [5] also indicate the productivity of the use of Khabermas's theoretical approaches in digital sociology. At the same time, the specifics of the public sphere of visual network media have yet to be revealed.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This publication is a review and systematization of modern social and human sciences approaches to the study of communication models in new media, and identification of

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The emergence of online media has significantly changed the nature of the public sphere, making it accessible to the general public. New technologies have led to a significant increase in supply on the visual media market. We would like to focus on logos or video blogs - an author's media project that involves the regular publication of video materials on video hosting with the open archive. Tekutiyeva I.A. defines a video blog as "an Internet phenomenon that includes the creation and posting of video materials on a particular topic in a format chosen by the author, corresponding to the genre" [6].

We consider a video blog to be an author's internet project, which implies regular publication of video materials, and developing on the basis of the author's concept and uniting the audience intention synthesis.

The structural basis of the video blog is the figure of the author, who can work in various genre forms. While traditional media offer mostly collaborative products, which are most often in the interests of the creative team, corporate rules, editorial policy, etc., the video blog brings the individual back into the public sphere.

The appearance of the author as a talking subject makes it possible to express a personal position on discussion and topical issues and allows to realize a wide range of communicative interactions: interpretation, understanding, criticism, agreement, trust. For this reason, a number of well-known public figures and media personalities (Navalny A., Shariy A., Prilepin Z., Parfenov L., Semin K., etc.) began to actively use video blogs as an additional platform for their creativity or made it the main.

In the video blog format it is possible to use dialogue media genres to reveal the community or collision of views of the participants. Today, many author's video projects covering social and political topics are built as interviews or conversations with invited guests (Dud Yu., Puchkov D., etc.).

Thus, video hosting provides an opportunity to organize an autonomous platform for discussion, opening access to communication with the interested audience. In this case, the video blogger is present directly in the shot, his facial expressions, gestures, and intonation convey an emotional attitude to the topic. A video blogger can become an author, opinion leader, media personality, and celebrity in one person.

From the point of view of a number of researchers, all this set of factors potentially makes social media a suitable environment for the public sphere. In the article "New Media as a Factor in the "Reloaded" of PR Ideology", A.G. Kvyat lists the factors due to which the concept of communicative action is currently gaining a second birth. This is the emergence of "the environment of collective media self-service", conditions of increased reputation vulnerability, the emergence of trust-based communication in social media, the destruction of the "gatekeeper model" - the fundamental principle of information flow management in traditional PR [7].

Video blogs form a communicative space in which it is possible to form a public sphere of youth audience. In

traditional media, the youth discourse is represented by a limited number of programs, mostly of an entertaining nature. With the advent of video blogs, the situation has changed, young people were able to create a full multimedia information environment that reflects the characteristic worldview, needs, psychological features, value systems, and models of social interaction. In particular, a large number of educational videos are being produced to meet the diverse cognitive needs of young people.

A special form of interaction between the system and the "lifeworld" in the information space of video blogs is the new type of prosumerism, which was recorded by German researchers Hanekop H., Tash A., Wittke F. [8]. Prosumers of a new type are Internet users who take on the task of obtaining, controlling, and adapting information. Video blogger often becomes such a professional consumer, generating media content and participating in the promotion of products on the market, and often in the development of new ideas. Researchers Ritzer J. and Jergenson N. [9] raise issues of exploitation and alienation of labor but believe that economic policies are based on the freedom and creativity of consumers. Plotichkina N.V. notes that the authors "do not consider blogs as a form of alienation or exploitation" and "the majority of prosumers receive emotional and material satisfaction (advertising of brands in Internet blogs, etc.) from engaging in prosumerism", and "occurrence of prosumerism reflects the changed balance among manufacturers, retailers, and marketers towards the end consumer" [10]. Thus, a number of researchers believe that the technological breakthrough has opened up opportunities for the formation of a democratic "participation culture" on social networks, in particular on YouTube, as described in the work of Jean Burgess and Joshua Greene [11]. However, there are also factors that hinder this process.

A man is still able to process a limited amount of information, but today the functions of the information flow filter take the algorithms of information systems that personalize the digital picture of the world. We have seen an increase in the number of participants involved in public discussions, but they are no longer required to have a deep understanding of the topic under discussion and knowledge of the facts. Network discussions are rarely based on serious arguments and are more often an exchange of personal opinions, sometimes rather superficial and aggressive. Video blogs continue to use the full range of PR-technologies developed by traditional media: the model of public information, which implies a biased selection of facts, the model of propaganda. In the studies of Petrenko M.S. [12] and Petrova M.V. [13] some tactics and instruments of manipulation in video blogs are analyzed.

Video blogger can be either a conscious agent of influence or a manipulator, or a "prosumer" who retransmits the values imposed on him/her as his/her own. One of the mechanisms of such retransmission becomes, dramatized action — representation of himself/herself in public, which can serve as a resource for approaching the power circles and demonstration of economic success. Leyek Khan,

along with relaxing entertainment and information exchange, notes social interactions and the search for own status (e.g., the need to impress others) among the motivations for watching YouTube videos [14].

On the one hand, the genres of video blogs are characterized by the informal nature of video messages and reducing the distance between the viewer and the authors, which creates an illusion of approaching the private life of a celebrity and live communication with her. On the other hand, the audience of video blogs in most cases does not know the author personally, video bloggers use a "presentational" pattern, which implies creating a personal public image.

The author can control the volume and quality of the transmitted information about himself/herself in order to influence others. Creating the image of a video blogger is a targeted action even when it is an instinctive replication of stereotypes and mythology: images of a successful businessman, a popular and communicative-active person, a carefree traveler, style icons, etc.

In the case of video blogs, the dramatized action is primarily aimed at stimulating the virtual activity of the audience, from which subscriptions, likes, and comments are expected. However, other tools of influence are also available to the video blogger. Petrenko M.S. in his article "Video Challenge and Video Blogs as Tools of Manipulation" [12], based on the theory of simulation by J. Baudrillard views the challenge as a way of constructing hyper-reality that is illusory in nature but more attractive than natural reality. The author notes that this act of constructing hyper-reality creates a special kind of power relationship.

The power of a video blogger is associated with any acts that serve as symbols of success, exclusivity, progressiveness, high status, etc. Video bloggers can demonstrate prestigious consumption and other status symbols (professional achievements, popularity, wealth, involvement in fashion movements) through beauty and life style blogs, entertainment shows, product reviews. Many video blogs are becoming expressions of creative consumerism, where consumption is seen "as a process of creatively constructing identity through the products and services purchased" [15].

Demonstrative prestigious consumption of video blogger in the presence of subscribers and views attracts advertisers and makes it possible to convert the recognition of the mass audience into money. Demonstrative consumption in this context may indicate not so much the personal needs of the author as the intention to meet the needs of interested advertisers of paying audiences. This type of video blogging uses communication as an "instrumental action" and becomes part of the advertising and information pressure system.

Vavina E. I. notes that practically any action in a social network can be interpreted in accordance with Guy Debord's concept, according to which modern society no longer asks the question "to be or to have?", but prefers "to pretend that one has" [16]. It is no coincidence that blog oriented offers of props and interiors for shooting are in demand today. Symbolic gestures begin to spread and

replicate in the virtual space: symbolic presence at various events, symbolic assignment and exchange of information through reposting, symbolic recognition or rejection through likes and comments. In this context, virtual activity often turns out to be aimed not at analysis and constructive search for solutions to personal and social problems, but at symbolic identification of one's own involvement in current trends and processes in media communities through likes and reposting.

The author of video clips may try to make a good impression, but in many cases his/her behavior is shocking. Dramatic action in video blogs has its own criteria for success: the simulation should not only be status, but also be easy to perceive, funny, unusual, excurrent, to cause informational noise. If a viral effect is required, behavior in the shot may be intended to be provocative and expressive. A whole range of genres addressed by video bloggers are provocative in nature: prank, challenge, trolling interviews, sketch, social experiment, viral video. Video blogs have inherited elements of post-modern culture and journalism, youth subcultures and entertainment genres in which provocative techniques have an important place and are an independent value.

Shemetova T.N., reflecting on the functions of provocation in journalism, notes: "provocation, as a special communication message, can be considered as a method of building a special relationship between the subject and the object of provocation, based on the conflict of their pictures of the world. The conflict nature is determined by the desire ... to replace the picture of the object world of provocation of its ... The main characteristic of a world picture of the ideal provocateur will be mobility, in the sense that such the world picture is not statically formed, it is an endless process of searching for meaning... The specific form of such destruction is "ironic modus" in relation to all manifestations of life. The "ironic modus" nature is determined first of all by negative pathos directed against the authority of state structures and illusionism of mass media" [17].

Authors and audience of youth video blogs are due to age peculiarities carriers of "mobile", growing picture of the world. This age-old audience is characterized by a desire for emancipation, a protest against the established rules and control, a desire for freedom and autonomy. For young authors, the video blog becomes an ideal space for self-expression and self-affirmation. However, not all video blogs provide sufficient volume and quality of information for independent spiritual emancipation. Most popular video blogs are entertaining, and "ironic modus" and demonstrative protest naturally occupy the author's position. Thus high speed and density of streams of the visual information generates clip thinking, and the information itself is simplified before juggling by the ready not critically perceived ideas described by P. Bourdieu as fast-thinking effect [18].

In this regard, it is appropriate to consider part of the communications in the new media through the prism of the game approach. A whole range of genres popular on YouTube (let's play, challenge, battle, show, sketch) is of

gaming or entertaining nature. It is possible to consider virtual activity of video bloggers and their audiences as a joint interactive game, the victory in which is expressed in the number of "subscribers" or "like-minded people", and video bloggers-prosumers become part of the gamified media business, forming trends of status behavior and creative consumerism.

This raises the question of the influence of virtual image on the behavior of an individual, the ratio of virtual image, social role and personality. The more complete the social group slips into the virtual world, the more painfully the problem of the gap between vivid simulation and reality is perceived. The small "energy intensity" of the virtual world in which it is easy to seem like anyone, the abundance of virtual "success stories" and "author's training information products" create the illusion of simplicity in solving any life and social problems. In different conditions, the gap between the simulated-virtual and real can become a stimulus for development and action, the formation of personal worldviews, a reason to protest or imitate the leaders of opinions and "style icons" sometimes to the detriment of their own interests.

Within the framework of this article, we would like to point out relevance as an important feature of communication in video blogs. In the conditions of Internet communication, the attention of the audience becomes particularly important. On the Internet, content is delivered according to a universal cognitive trend to maximize relevance. The analysis of relevance in everyday communication is presented in the works of Schutz A. [19], Grice H.P. [20], Sperber D. and Wilson D. [21]. The authors of the relevance theory assume that any communication supposes first of all attention from the addressee. The companion's or audience's attention is mainly given to personal history, the context of life experience, communication situation, and practical interest.

As we have already noted, algorithms of information systems play an important role in the structuring and selection of hyper-media. In particular, YouTube is organized in such a way as to increase the duration of sessions and ensure the viewer return. One of the means of keeping the viewer is recommended videos, selected for each user based on processing a large amount of data, including a personal history of virtual actions. For example, YouTube ranking systems are aimed at providing the most relevant, i.e. the most appropriate video for the media user's needs. Channels' success is ensured by a combination of contextual factors (topic, titles, tags, keywords, comments) and historical factors (channel age, frequency, and regularity of content updates, number of views and visits, audience retention time, number of subscribers and various virtual actions of viewers: likes and dislikes, sharing, playlist additions, subscriptions after viewing). At the same time, video bloggers have access to statistics that allow them to study fluctuations in audience interest.

Video bloggers in the trend start to replicate successful formats. Thus, the audience response becomes a structural part of the video blog as an evolving project. It is possible

to tell that video blogs not only unite audiences, but also are to a certain extent generation of user intentions and continue to develop thanks to viewing or donation. Such communication conditions stimulate the author's folklore thinking, which Zagidullina M.V. defines as "a conscious, intentional search for a collective response to his/her own work" [22].

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, the video blog, born as an author's project, in the process of its development acquires some features of folklore communication, due to the increasing influence of the audience. The study of relevant folklore-type communication in new media is a separate serious research task. Video blogs form identities and construct models of reality, but this is not a single "public sphere" focused on the search for mutual understanding and not broadcast "pseudo-reality", but a multitude of public discourses created on the basis of synthesis of the author's idea and uniting the intention of the audience. Such discourses can be built around a common problem that brings together world images, life and consumer practices, and use a wide range of communication models. Some models are focused on maintaining the "public sphere" and communication based on reasoned discussion, others are based on the use of PR-technologies, while others act as relays for the collective consciousness. Information filtering technologies, built according to the principle of maximizing relevance, result in an increased influence of the audience. On the one hand, this places high demands on the reputation of authors and makes communication built on the trust of many effective in the long term. On the other hand, the attention of the audience may be due not only to natural or cultural needs. Virtual communication in video blogs can be built around unifying complexes and mythology of the participants of communication. The network communication space of video blogs contains a whole layer of dramatized communication that replicates stereotypes of mass culture and generates its own. Playful and provocative communication plays a significant role in the culture of youth video blogging. The diversity of communication models is explained by the fact that technology makes it possible to create a communicative space for representatives of different cultures, social groups and ages.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research under the scientific project 20-011-00683 A

REFERENCES

- [1] Khabermas YU. *Moral'noye soznaniye i kommunikativnoye deystviye*: per. s nem. SPb.: Nauka, 2000.
- [2] Verbilovich O. *Teoriya kommunikativnogo deystviya: klyuchevyye kategorii i poznavatel'nyy potentsial // Publichnaya sfera: teoriya, metodologiya, keys stadi / pod red. Ye. R. Yarskoy-Smirnovoy i P. V. Romanova M.: OOO "Variant": TSSPGI, 2013. S. 35-52. (Biblioteka "Zhurnal issledovaniy sotsial'noy politiki")*.
- [3] Cherepanova T. V. *Vliyaniye mediakommunikatsiy na transformatsiyu publichnoy sfery v sovremennoy kul'ture*: dis. ... kand. filosof. nauk: 09.00.13. Omsk, 2014. 142 s.
- [4] Kazakov M.YU. *"Publichnaya sfera" YU. Khabermasa: realizatsiya v internet-diskurse // Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta Im. N.I.Lobachevskogo. Seriya Sotsial'nyye Nauki. 2013. T. 31. No. 2. S. 125-130.*
- [5] Gostev A. N., Belous O. V. *Issledovaniye sovremennoy kommunikativnogo diskursa pol'zovateley seti "Internet" v ramkakh reflektivnoy deyatel'nostno-strukturnoy teorii kommunikativnogo deystviya Yurgena Khabermasa // Tsifrovaya sotsiologiya. 2019. No.1. S. 24-31.*
- [6] Tekut'yeva I. A. *Zhanrovo-tematicheskaya klassifikatsiya videobloginga // Mediasreda. 2016. No.11. S. 107-113.*
- [7] Kvyat A.G. *Novyye media kak faktor "perezagruzki" ideologii PR. / Materialy Connect-Universum-2012 / Connect Universum [Elektronnyy resurs]. URL: http://connect-universum.tsu.ru/blog/connectuniversum2012_ru/34.html (data obrashcheniya: 30.03.2020).*
- [8] Hanekop H., Tasch A., Wittke V. *"New Economy" und Dienstleistungsqualität: Verschiebung der Produzenten- und Konsumentenrolle bei digitalen Dienstleistungen // SOFI-Mitteilungen: Soziologisches Forschungsinstitut Göttingen. 2001. No. 29.*
- [9] Jurgenson N., Ritzer G. *Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital Prosumer // Journal of Consumer Culture. — 2010. — Vol. 10. — No. 1.*
- [10] Plotichkina N.V. *Pros'yumerizm kak politicheskaya praktika // Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta družby narodov. Seriya: Sotsiologiya. 2013. No. 3. S. 66-79.*
- [11] Burgess J, Green J. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2009. — 172 p.
- [12] Petrenko M.S. *Video chellendzh i videoblogi kak instrumenty manipulyatsii. 2017. S. 189-194.*
- [13] Petrova M.V. *Taktiki rechevoy kontrmanipulyatsii v rossiyskikh politicheskikh videoblogakh // Voprosy teorii i praktiki zhurnalistiki. 2019. T. 8. No. 3. S. 625-639.*
- [14] Khan M.L. *Social media engagement: What motivates user participation and consumption on YouTube? // Computers in Human Behavior, Volume 66, 2017, pp. 236-247.*
- [15] Il'in V. I. *Kreativnyy konsyumerizm kak trend sovremennoy obshchestva potrebleniya // ZHSSA. 2011. No.5. S.41-54.*
- [16] Vavina Ye.I. *Novyye media i sposoby massovoy kommunikatsii cherez prizmu kontseptsii G-Ernsta Debora "obshchestvo spektaklya" // Sotsial'nyye yavleniya. 2013. Fevral'. [Elektronnyy resurs].— Rezhim dostupa: [http://socialphenomena.org/ru/blog/article/novyye-media-i-sposoby-massovoy-kommun/\(data-obrashcheniya:01.04.2020\)](http://socialphenomena.org/ru/blog/article/novyye-media-i-sposoby-massovoy-kommun/(data-obrashcheniya:01.04.2020)).*
- [17] Shemetova T. N. *Provokatsiya kak metod v sovremennoy zhurnalistike: mysl' po povodu // Voprosy teorii i praktiki zhurnalistiki. 2014. No.1.S. 54-65.*
- [18] Burd'ye P. *O televidenii i zhurnalistike. M.: Fond "Pragmatika kul'tury", 2002.*
- [19] Shyuts A. *Izbrannoye: Mir, svetyashchiysya smyslom. M., 2004. 1056 s.*
- [20] Grays G.P. *Logika i rechevoye obshcheniye // Novoye v zarubezhnoy lingvistike. 1985. T. XVI. M.: P. S. 217-237.*
- [21] Sperber D., Wilson D. *La pertinence. Communication et cognition. P.: Ed. du Minuit, 1989. 250*
- [22] Zagidullina M.V. *Teoriya internet-fol'klora: kommunikatsiya fol'klornogo tipa i samoidentifikatsiya uchastnikov krupnykh forumov // Uchen. zap. Kazan. un-ta. Ser. Gumanit. nauki. 2015. No.4. S. 86-96.*