

## YOUTH COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: COMMUNICATION WITHOUT BORDERS AND SITE TRAPS

*Inna S. Shapovalova*

Belgorod State National Research University, Belgorod, Russia,  
e-mail: shapovalova@bsu.edu.ru  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2855-8968

**Abstract.** The paper summarizes the results of research conducted in a Russian region. The study was focused on the contemporary youth' communicative disposition and communication strategies. The study of the young generation's communication means is especially important, given civilization-related risks of uncontrolled informatization and digitalization. Additional objectives of the research are based on the need to specify the communication practices virtualization and to detect the scope of the problem posed by young men's uncontrolled Internet use.

The study reveals a fundamental difference between the ways Russian and foreign scholars see young people's Internet communication. It constitutes the methodological finding of the paper. Researchers from various states actually complement each other's ideas, with Russian scholars representing phenomenon-based approach and foreign ones demonstrating a utilitarian view of on-line communication environment.

The research finding is contained in the proof of Internet addiction and game addition trends in youth. Risk weights for existing and potential risk groups are provided. Analysis of network communication practices coupled with communicative dispositions enables a conclusion on contemporary youth's socialization result to be made. Communication proves to be superficial, quantity over quality. Young people strive for a high communication status, which is confirmed by network communication presentation.

Internet communication potential and prospects are considered, in terms of building civil values, developing entrepreneurial potential and building efficient educational trajectories.

The research identifies a problem area in managing youth communication environment. A lack of goal-oriented organization of communication processes, as well absence of soft governance technologies for controlling communication agents, is on the perimeter of this problem area.

**Keywords:** youth, communication, communication strategies, socialization, social networks, Internet addiction

## **Introduction**

Youth represents a specific social group of a high present and perspective significance. Its potential is not quite clear. However, the global mission of shaping the nation's future belongs to the young. Russia's strategic benchmarks include the need to fulfil the youth potential being part of human capital assets, as a priority. Russia's future largely depends on the values and social strategies that young people choose. The possibility to implement government programmes and strategies (for example, the 2030 and the 2050 ones) fully depends on the prospects of today's comprehensive, vocational school and university graduates. A preliminary study of social strategies used by young people makes it possible to achieve strategic goals and to enhance the control of region development.

Youth culture accompanied by general and specific risks represents complicated background, where young people have to take vital decisions and choose ways to socialize. The convergence of globalization, informatization and virtualization of young people's environment is among the risk areas. Structural changes in major social processes and mechanisms used by the main socialization institutes to influence young people may lead to unpredictable socialization results and significant changes in future Russian mentality. Such changes may take place in all socialization aspects. This paper is focused on the most vulnerable one, namely, the communication strategies used by young people in Russia.

### **Objectives of the study**

In 2018 International Sociological Research Centre at Belgorod State University undertook global research into youth social strategies, the first of its kind. Eleven strategies were surveyed in economy, education, migration, labour, social sphere, morals, leisure, politics, self-preservation, family and communication. The study object included the young people living in a Russian region (N=2500). They were distributed into different groups based on gender, age and three main quotas: school students, University students and young employees.

*The global goal* of the research project was to study youth socialization trajectories and regional institutes influence potential in the conditions of contemporary riskogenic habitat. A detailed research description may be found in papers by I.S. Shapovalova and A.V. Kisilenko (Shapovalova and Maksimenko, 2018; Shapovalova and Kisilenko, 2018; Kisilenko, 2018.) Youth communication strategies were among the subjects analyzed. One of the *main research objectives* included identifying the risks of contemporary communication dispositions, socialization results and young people's life choices in terms of communication strategies.

## **Methodology**

Communication strategy is among vital life strategies. In a broad sense, communication involves information exchange and transfer. In recent years, youth communication is increasingly associated with aspects of communication transformation in virtual space in convergence with Internet practices. As of 2019, Russian Research Area alone contains about 40, 000 academic papers in open and restricted access. Within the scope of this research, attention should be paid to papers by M.N. Izvekova (Izvekova, 2010), D.N. Karpova (Karpova, 2015), E.O. Kubyakin (Kubyakin, 2011), S.V. Samygin (Samygin, Popov and Zagutin, 2015), Yu.N. Troyegubov (Troyegubov, 2014), N.S. Cheprakova (Cheprakova, 2014), I.S. Shapovalova (Shapovalova, 2015) and others. Foreign scholars are also involved in studying young people's Internet communication aspects. Conclusions that arouse the readers' interest are described in papers by S. Livingstone (Livingstone, 2011), N. Milburn (Rice, Stein, and Milburn, 2008), E. Rice and A. Barman-Adhikari (Rice and Barman-Adhikari, 2014), P. Timonen (Timonen, 2011), E. Rice, J. Stein, J. Wolak, K.J. Mitchell, D. Finkelhor (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2006), M. Žumárová, M. Černá, V. Maněna (Žumárová, Černá и Maněna, 2010) and R. Valaitis (Valaitis, 2005).

In making a comparative analysis of the way Internet expansion into youth communication environment is perceived by Russian and foreign scholars, we should stress significant differences. Russian researchers emphasize the global character of current processes and tend to raise risks and threats issues. They detect current trends and suggest possible generation paradigm changes. Western scholars are more likely to apply the utilitarian approach. They analyze network practices specifics, micro-changes in the statistical data which represent Internet communication parameters and social Internet technologies enabling Internet communication to be used in order to meet young people's social needs in terms of social interaction, including social work with youth.

Hence, from the Russian scholars' perspective, Internet communication is a phenomenon, while foreign researchers treat it as a social resource, communication environment and results of the advance in science and technology.

## **Results**

Based on the extremes disposition analysis, we can draw a contemporary young person's communicative portrait. It is the one who communicates really a lot (70.5%), spends much time on social networks (63.7%) and on family communication (67.6%), contacts people easily (76%), but has few

close friends. It enables us to reveal two socialization results: the young people are sociable, but their communication tends to be superficial.

The Internet addiction displayed by 21% of respondents, mostly students, is the biggest problem. In fact, there is a group at *real risk*. People who fall within this group may experience all aspects of dis-adaptation, social dysfunction and even marginalization social risks. Possible “disaster” scope may be even broader, as 51.7% of respondents suffer a controlled discomfort. These form a group at *potential risk* (Fig. 1).

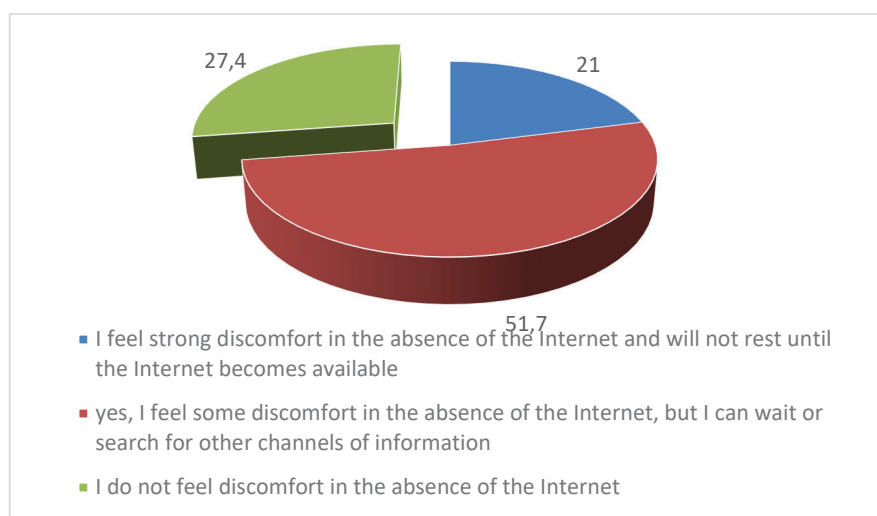


Figure 1 - Internet addiction: groups at real and potential risk

Virtual networks communication possibilities are infinite. “Virtual” friends have become a measure of a young persons’ popularity and their significance. As of today, a new phenomenon has emerged among the young people, namely: *attributable communication status* which means that young people’s social roles and group statuses depend on their network activity and network community recognition level. Of all respondents, 15.4% have over 300 followers in social networks, for 43.5% 300 is the limit, while about a quarter of respondents have about 50 – 100 followers.

What does the Internet mean for the young people? 90.7% of respondents still believe its main function is entertainment. 84.5% use it for studying, while 80.0% use it for communication intentionally. Another trap of the XXI century is *digital gamification* of the youth. Over 20% of respondents play games and watch movies in the Internet. Contrary to the overwhelming majority, only 12.3% of youth use the Internet as a self-promotion resource (Fig. 2).

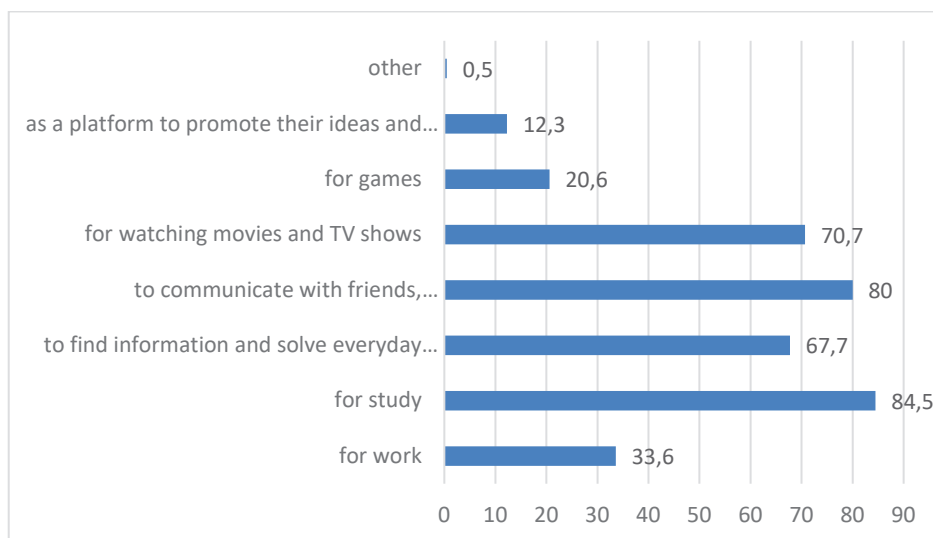


Figure 2 - Purposes of young people's Internet use

A study of communicative dispositions within the trends described here before reveals that over 30% of respondents are aware of their network addiction, 25.7% intend to reduce the time spent on the Internet and 6.8% have already reduced their network use. Contrary to the popular belief, blogging does not appeal to young people a lot. Only 2.4% of respondents admit having a blog, and 12.0% are considering a possibility of starting a blog in the long run (Table 1).

**Table 1 - Internet communication strategic decisions taken by the youth**

Possible answers	Do not intend to	Ready to do so	I have already done so	I do not have this problem / objective	Not sure
To spend less time on social networks and more on real-life communication	17.3	25.7	6.8	11.7	7.9
To start my own blog and attract followers	32.2	12.2	2.4	12.3	9.4
To give up computer games	13.4	8.4	11.5	27.1	7.5
To use the Internet only for working purposes	22.4	16.1	5.6	12.3	11.2
To start my own business on the Internet	24.2	16.4	2.2	10.5	14.6
To support a political or social movement or community on the Internet	28.0	10.0	2.0	13.7	13.5
To study on the Internet	15.5	25.9	6.1	7.2	12.7

Even now, business on the Internet appeals to almost a fifth of the youth (18.6%), which gives good prospects for building economic, career and education strategies. Being employed or self-employed on the Internet may solve the youth migration preparedness problem revealed in our research. Only 12.0% of respondents intend to be engaged in politics via the Internet. The majority of the young people who answered this question (32.0%) are ready to study on-line. Despite the fact that the minimum number of respondents choose the Internet for political technologies purposes (only 12%), this number forms quite a good resource for political parties. One-third of respondents are ready to build their educational socialization trajectories via the Internet. Internet communication today is a resource widely used by education products providers.

### **Recommendations**

Speaking about the ways to influence youth communication strategies as an issue of global significance for the country's future, we would like to address socialization institutes in the first place. The latter exert influence on shaping communicative dispositions and attitudes which are basic to young people's life choices. In order to take a grounded decision, we have specified some campaigns in the sphere of youth policy which will make it possible to control both Internet communication expansion issue and digitalization trends in all aspects of young peoples' lives. As it turns out, young people do not give a high appraisal of the way such campaigns are implemented. They are more satisfied with local communication clubs (26.5%), while local cyber sports and blogger activities are developed much less (15.8% and 16.7% respectively). Focusing on these issues under the auspices of a public youth policy authority will make it possible to influence communication strategies.

The problem area specified by respondents actually points out the scope of activities for regional authorities in order to set conditions for organizing and regulating youth communication. Possible solutions include building recreation areas where young people can socialize, (24.2%), providing Internet access in public places (17.4%) and purposeful organization of youth communication (14.3%). One-third of respondents are concerned about communication digitalization typical of their generation. They say young people are wrapped up in the Internet (18.6%). They also point out that real-life communication is not promoted among the young (16.0%). These issues require that additional regulation measures should be suggested. Social institutions are among the establishments which can take these measures.

## Conclusion

The study of the communication strategies chosen by young people in Russia reveals a number of major concerns. *First*, we are witnessing an accelerated digitalization on the young. As of today, it is a stochastic process with little participation of socialization institutions. *Second*, we should admit that Internet addiction is a disease. We should treat this social deviation as a new social disease which can affect both individual minds and national mentality. Gamification must not be ignored either, as it threatens young people's social health. *Third*, the specifics of network interaction and network communication practices leaves an imprint on young people's communication patterns. In particular, it shapes external communication motivation, preference of superficial and distant communication, demonstrative behaviour and the desire to attain significance within a social network.

At the same time, we can speak about the Internet possibilities, resources and potential. Our awareness of the above factors is quite low, and we cannot control them. For example, young people are interested in Internet entrepreneurship. Coupled with their readiness to use on-line education products, it may allow for a breakthrough in business training and in launching startups. Purposeful management of youth communication strategies deserves attention as well, including their organization, soft regulation and communicative agents. All of the above may allow us to achieve the desired communication result, excluding the possibility of countercultures influence on youth social interaction.

**Acknowledgements.** The research has been conducted under RSCI grant for project No. 18-411-310009, "Assessment of socialization trajectories in youth in terms of risk paradigm, based on a Russian region data".

## References

- Chuprakova, N.S. 2014. Informational and psychological influence of virtual communication environment on the youth in the contemporary political process. *National Security / Nota Bene* 6: 946-955.
- Izvekova, M.N. 2010. The influence of information and communication environment on youth development as a social group in the structure of our society. *Theory and practice of social development* 1: 138-143.
- Karpova, D.N. 2013. Internet communication: new challenges for the youth. *Vestnik MGIMO* 5: 208-212.
- Kisilenko, A.V. 2018. Volunteer activities: the potential of the Russian youth self-organizing. *Research result. Sociology and management* 4 (1): 63-71.



- Kubyakin, E.O. 2011. Youth extremism in the Internet as a social issue. *Historic and socio-educational ideas* 4: 149-152.
- Livingstone, S. 2011. Internet, children and youth. In M. Consalvo and C. Ess (Eds.), *The Handbook of Internet Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 348-368.
- Maksimenko, A.A., Shapovalova, I.S. 2018. The youth and the Russian army: will there be a positive cooperation vector? *Research Result. Sociology and management* 4 (2): 70-87.
- Rice, E., Stein, J. A., & Milburn, N. 2008. Countervailing social network influences on problem behaviors among homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescence* 31(5): 625-639.
- Rice, E. and Barman-Adhikari, A. 2014. Internet and Social Media Use as a Resource Among Homeless Youth. *J Comput Mediat Commun* 19(2): 232-247. doi: 10.1111/jcc4.12038.
- Samygin, S.I., Popov, M.Yu. & Zagutin, D.S. 2015. Social networks as a social institute of youth socialization. *Gumanitarnye, sotsialno-ekonomicheskie i obshhestvennye nauki* 5: 46-49.
- Shapovalova, I.S. 2015. The influence of Internet communication on the youth behavior and intellectual development. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* 4: 148-151.
- Shapovalova, I.S., Kisilenko, A.V. 2018. Spiritual and moral choices in the youth life strategies: a sociological study experience. *Srednerusskij vestnik obshhestvennykh nauk* 13 (6): 14-28.
- Troegubov, Yu.N. 2014. Fighting Extremism on the Internet. *Gumanitarnyj vektor* 3: 143-147.
- Timonen, P. 2011. Using Social Media in Youth Work Communications. In *Charged Up and Online: Advances in Youth Work*. Helsinki: Humak University of Applied Sciences, pp. 3-23.
- Valaitis, R. 2005. Computers and the Internet: Tools for Youth Empowerment. *J Med. Internet. Res.* 7(5): 51. URL: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1550685/> [Accessed March 25 2019].
- Wolak, J., Mitchell, K. J., & Finkelhor, D. 2006. Online victimization of youth: Five years on. University of New Hampshire: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 79 pp.
- Žumárová, M., Černá, M. и Maněna, V. 2010. Young Generation and their Internet Communication. Malta: *International Conference on Applied Computer Science*, pp. 313-316.