CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PARENTING IMAGE ON A SOCIAL NETWORK

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Abstract

In the countries with low birth rates studying the factors defining youth reproductive behaviour is particularly relevant. Nowadays formation of such an attitude is largely influenced by parenting image spread by mass media and especially – through social networks. For studying parenting image in the network we have chosen the most popular social network within Russia and the CIS countries - VKontakte. Using snowball sampling technique we selected the largest communities dedicated to parenting and carried out content analysis for 2015 by means of the NVivo program.

As a result, we have found out that social network parenting image almost corresponds motherhood image. The image of a mother is close to the stereotyped image of a modern woman – a sexy girl having 1-2 babies though. The modern parenting image combines both parenting features of Soviet period and new ones. The woman's leading role in parenting as well as baby care are traditional features. The emphasis on psychological, emotional interaction between family members becomes a modern trend. Thus, content analysis of social network communities has shown that, generally, positive image of a family and parenting contradicts the image of a successful young man because of social and economic risks faced by parents.

Key words: parenting image, content analysis, social networks

JEL Code: J11, J12, J13

Introduction

With the development of social networks researchers have noted the exponential growth of their importance in information space. Social networks are used for image making in politics (Malhotra and Malhotra, 2016; Greenwood et al. 2016), lobbying economic interests (Orozco, 2016), establishing certain behaviour patterns (Kee et al. 2016; Boyle et al. 2016). In this regard they become a powerful human capital leverage (Ahmad et al. 2016; Chen and Beaudoin, 2016).

Young people are especially affected by social networks (Keating, et al. 2016; Kee et al. 2016) "where their informational socialization goes on" (Grebennikova and Parkhomenko 2013). For youth social networks are an integral part of communication and pastime therefore the content feed is almost constantly provided in the "background" mode. It makes social networks so effective that it becomes possible to build interaction channels even between the groups hardly communicating in reality (Frazao, 2016; Kee et al. 2016).

The analysis of informational content on social networks is necessary for understanding what images are formed in public consciousness. Such analysis is especially relevant on the most pressing social issues, such as declining birth rates, which the future of the nation depends on. One of the crucial reproductive behaviour determinants is youth's attitude towards parenting. Nowadays formation of such an attitude is largely influenced by parenting image spread by mass media and especially – through social networks. Therefore, studying the parameters of parenting image promoted through social networks can give an idea of reproductive behaviour models widespread among youth.

1   Data and Methods

The research of parenting image on social networks consisted of several stages.

1. The choice of a social network. Choosing a social network for the analysis, we relied on statistical data on the total audience (total number of the website users), its age and sex structure and the website traffic.

2. Structural analysis of the most popular communities of the social network on the subject. The following components were used as units of the analysis.

Communities are virtual pages of a social network uniting people according to their interests and representing the platform for exchanging information.

News feed is a constant information flow of the community which has a special feature of displaying the feed messages to all the participants of the community.

Post (from Italian *posto*, past participle from *porre* «to place», cf.: vulgar Latin *positum* «placed») is a separate information unit (message) in the news feed of the community containing finished thought.

3. Selection of the communities related to family and parenting using the following key words: "family", "parenting", "mum", "mother", "child"/"baby", "dad", "father".

4. Content analysis of the posts of the largest community dedicated to family. Cluster sampling of the posts for the analysis: 5 weeks were chosen by random number generator

(10% of 52 weeks of the year, 1473 posts). Substantive and formal analysis of the posts were made using certain criteria. The analysis criteria were chosen according to the basic structural elements of parenting image (characteristics of a parenting figure, stage of parenting and its functions) and information characteristics (type, emotional colouring and purpose).

2   Results

Quantitative analysis of the data has shown the following results.

1. VKontakte social network is the traffic leader throughout Russia and the CIS with monthly audience of 81 million people at the beginning of 2016 ("Brand Analytics", 2016). 26,8% of users are under 18, 35,3% are people at the age of 18-24 years old, and other 30,5% of users are at the age of 25-34. The structure factor determined using of this network for the further analysis.

2. VKontakte contains 64 largest communities with the audience numbering from 8,2 to 3,3 million people. We roughly divided them into 8 main subject categories: humour (45,3%), movies (12,5%), education (12,5%), quotations (12,5%), cooking (6,3%), beauty (4,4%), sport (3,1%), music (3,1%).

3. The results of the keyword search in the names of communities connected with family and parenting showed the following quantitative distribution (see Tab.1).

Tab. 1 The results of the keyword search in the names of the communities dedicated to family and parenting

Search query	Number of communities	Maximum number of members
«Mum»	83 061	2 063 619
«Parents»	20 474	1 318 795
«Family»	79 546	939 610
«Dad»	21 655	328 217
«Child»	12 192	133 078
«Mother»	14 132	15 151
«Father»	4 633	13 315

Source: author's calculation

The largest community (2 063 619 subscribers) among the selected ones was chosen for the further analysis.

4. Distribution of attention over the categories of the analysis showed the following.

1) Parenting figure. Mother is mentioned as a parent in 70% of cases. Father appears only in 13% of the records, more often (in 17% of cases from the total number of the posts) together with mother. It is remarkable that there are only 2% of men in the total number of the

community subscribers. Grandmother is sometimes mentioned as well (12% of cases). Grandfather as a parenting figure isn't presented at all. Other actors who perform parental functions, such as establishments, substitute mothers etc., aren't represented as parenting figures.

Child is presented in 92% of the posts together with mother, it is the only baby in 91% of cases. Two or three children appear only in 9% of the records. More than 3 children weren't mentioned in the analysed information content.

2) Half of the information placed refers to newborn and infant stage of parenting, 40% - to a preschool stage. 2% is concerned with schoolchildren. 5% are dedicated to pregnancy (a perinatal stage). Other stages of parenting were not presented in the chosen range.

3) Amount of attention paid to parenting functions was distributed over three main groups. One third (32%) was given to everyday childcare, another third (28%) - to development of elementary skills (speech, motility etc.), 18% - to organising leisure activities. The rest of attention (22%) is somehow paid to socialization processes.

4) Specifics of the content is that 96% of the records represented visual information (image or, in 4% of the cases, video) accompanied with a text (98%) or audio recordings (6%). General emotional colouring of the posts matches normal distribution: 60% are mainly neutral, 19% are positive and 22% are negative or contain problematics.

5) By its type information was equally distributed between cognitive and emotional blocks. In the cognitive block 13% of the content was purely informative, 81% was description of useful technologies, 7% - advertisement. In the emotional block 61% was jokes, 32% - "statuses", 5% - poetry. On average, posts of the emotional block were more popular than just informative ones. "Statuses" are the category which best reflects an image, and they don't have additional meanings. For this reason semantic analysis of the text was based on this category.

6) Semantic analysis (SEO analysis) of the statuses' texts as figurative information showed that the most often found word was "child". It is followed by repetitions of the words "everything", "happiness", "to be", "life", "to love", "husband". The word "woman" takes the 8th place among the words most frequently used in the status texts, "wife" ranks 11th (after the word "God"), and "mother" is only 15th among the most frequently mentioned words.

3   Discussions

As a result of the content analysis and semantic analysis of the text, the following conclusions were made:

1. VKontakte social network is the most popular social network throughout Russia and the CIS countries, and 90% of its audience is young people under 34 years old. Nevertheless, among the most popular communities of the network there are no communities dedicated to family. It demonstrates information policy gap in the sphere of promoting family values among youth.

2. Almost all the information content refers to infant and preschool stages of parenting. It might be explained by recent popularity of the Internet and young age of its users. Those parents, whose children have already grown up and belong to other stages of parenting, just are not active users of this social network due to their age. Possibly, over time the content will change to match requirements of the audience. However, it explains why the analysis of parenting content presented in the information stream has shown that it is dedicated more to physical baby care and primary socialization.

3. The most numerous communities are dedicated to motherhood – "mum" search query matches at least 4 times more groups in the network than other queries. The content analysis of their contents also confirms that the key figure of parenting image is mother.

The analysis has shown that modern parenting image combines both parenting features of Soviet period and new ones which have appeared recently. The "Soviet" historical heritage is reflected in woman's leading role in parenting as well as traditional baby care. Modern image of a mother is no more a strong middle-aged labour woman having several children, as shown in the posters of the Soviet period (Numanov, 2010). In the USSR Constitution of 1977 woman's part in the society was declared as "a toiler, a mother, an educator for the children and a housewife". In the modern world the role of a woman as a mother and a worker is being gradually displaced by love-mate and girlfriend roles, woman as a forever young girl. It is confirmed by the results of the semantic analysis of the text – the words "woman" and "wife" appear in the community dedicated to motherhood more often than the word "mother". Mother's focus on physical baby and child care (a third of attention) is being gradually displaced as well by the focus on establishing emotional bonds with the child and his socialization (two thirds of attention amount). The emphasis on psychological, emotional interaction between family members becomes a modern trend.

The image of a woman has changed over recent years, it has become closer to sexually attractive girl than to a housewife having many children. Therefore, "Soviet" content of parenting as a process of continuous physical work mismatches the image of a well-groomed carefree girl widespread today.

According to the content analysis of information on the social network, a father's role in parenting isn't so obvious. Nevertheless, the word "husband" appears in the text of the posts more often than "woman". His indexterity in doing household chores is leniently excused, and manifestations of fatherhood are considered not as something natural but as something contrasting, something special (for example, the image of a huge brutal man with his little daughter is widespread). It shows that a man keeps holding some dominant position in a family. Such division of gender roles is also typical for the Soviet model of a family. However, if earlier division of functions in a family didn't cause role conflict, then currently declared image of a woman as an infantile well-groomed lady contradicts the need to play the leading role in housekeeping and parenting.

4. Content analysis of humour, which focuses on the most displeasing aspects of young parents' life, best revealed asymmetry problems in parenting. There are three key blocks of the problems emphasized by satire – financial and household difficulties, mental and physical fatigue and interpersonal relationships connected with the division of gender roles in a family. Emotional posts exposing vital problems are very attractive and stick in memory. Thus, parenting difficulties conflict with the image of a successful young man. It latently forms suspicious attitude to parenting (especially to having many children) among young people.

In addition, quantitative and qualitative analysis of posts' emotional colouring has shown that despite the declared parenting value, "problem" and "negative" posts appear a little more often than absolutely positive ones.

5. The main parenting image promotion tools on social networks are visual information instruments - image and text. It should be considered while forming information strategy for the purposes of population policy advancement on social networks.

Conclusion

Thus, social network communities content analysis has shown that positive image of a family and parenting contradicts the image of a modern successful young man. In our opinion, formation of "a successful parenting" mass-media image is a considerable resource of parental

work provoking. Taking into account the specifics of this information channel, it would be reasonable to use social networks channels as a population policy tool under the conditions of depopulation continuing throughout Russia and Europe.

Acknowledgment

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