

VIDEOBLOG AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INFORMING YOUTH ABOUT DISEASES AND THEIR PREVENTION: A CASE OF YURI DUD'S VIDEO ABOUT HIV IN RUSSIA

Dmitry Rudenkin

Abstract

Informing youth about diseases and their prevention is one of the most difficult tasks of social policy. It is important to inform youth about such issues. Low awareness of youngsters about diseases and their prevention increases their vulnerability to such diseases and negatively affects their life expectancy. The problem is that hedonistic way of life and absence of current health problems often make youngsters careless about such issues. So, it is becoming important to find an effective tool for informing young people about such questions. The key idea of the paper is that this task can be solved by using of videoblogs. Relying on the principles of systematic approach to communication, the author analyzes specific areas of using of videoblogs for informing young people about dangerous diseases and their prevention. The analysis focuses on a case of popular Russian videoblogger Yuri Dud and his video about the spread of HIV (human immunodeficiency viruses) in Russian society. Using the methods of secondary data analysis, and sociological survey, the author traces how exactly the release of this film could affect the interest of Russian youth in information about the risks of HIV infection and about measures of its prevention.

Key words: Videoblog, social media, Internet, youth, healthcare

JEL Code: I12; I18; J13;

Introduction

Informing society about dangerous diseases and potential ways of their prevention is one of the most important tasks of social policy. In fact, the degree of society's vulnerability to such diseases largely depends on the measure of efficiency of solving of this task. If most people know the forms of manifestation of dangerous diseases and the understand the ways of their prevention - this allows society to avoid the spread of such diseases, or at least to reduce their circulation. Mass ignorance in such matters, on the contrary, can stimulate people vulnerable to such diseases and stimulate their wide distribution. The problem is that often informing the

society about dangerous diseases and ways of their prevention becomes ineffective, because it challenges with a lack of interest on the part of people. And one of the most problematic segments of society for such informing is youth. Due to the age specifics, most of young people rarely face real health problems. Besides, their life values and attitudes are often hedonistic and even nonchalant. So, young people often demonstrate relatively rare interest in information about healthy lifestyles and related issues. As a result, informing representatives of youth about dangerous diseases and ways of their prevention turns into a serious management task. How can we inform young people about dangerous diseases if they do not demonstrate interest in such topics? Is it possible to do something to attract their interest to such questions? And is it possible to turn this interest into real changes in their behavior? This article is devoted to the search for answer for these questions. The initial idea of this paper is that informing of young people about dangerous diseases and ways of their prevention can be organized by using the resources of videoblogs. In this paper we will describe the result of our own research, which was organized for testing of this assumption.

Literature review

An analysis of recent scientific literature demonstrates that the idea of the possibility of using videoblogs to influence the moods and attitudes of young people is not completely new to social science. Recent publications not only mention the idea, that videoblogs can be used for influence on public opinion of youth, but also describe some particular cases of such influence (Eek-Karlsson, 2018; Gonzalez Gomez, 2018; Folkvord et al, 2019). And the occurrence of the idea of the possibility of using videoblogs for influence on youth audience looks logical. Recent studies demonstrate, that the amount of young people actively using the Internet and the videoblogs is growing in many countries of the world (Pereira et al, 2018) and these services start to play very important role in their life (Simpson, 2020). The toolkit of such services is quite flexible and allows to present information in the form in which it can arouse maximum interest among the audience. So, we can say that videoblogs are turning into one of those tools for working with the public opinion of young people, which potentially allows to transmit certain ideas in the most accessible and noticeable form for young people.

Unfortunately, it can be noted, that in recent scientific literature videoblogs are mainly described as a resource for forming the beliefs and attitudes of young people only in a limited list of areas. Most often, researchers focus on the impact of videoblogs on the formation of political views and attitudes of young people (Mohamad et al, 2018), their values (Caron et

all, 2019) or behavior in private life (Wood et al, 2015). Despite the obvious importance of the researchers' attention to the role of videoblogs in the formation of attitudes and moods of a youth audience in all of these areas, a whole series of other significant problems remains outside the scope of the analysis. In particular, the initial topic of the impact of videoblogs on young people's interest in information about dangerous diseases and their prevention is not so often described in scientific literature. Of course, some authors describe particular cases of using videoblogs in this area (Madathil et al, 2015). But unfortunately, papers devoted to the possibilities of videoblogs in this direction appear not very often. So, probably it can be even said, that contemporary social science understands the opportunities that videoblogs can create for managing the political, economic or cultural needs of a youth audience, but it is only beginning to understand how this tool can be used for informing young people about various diseases and ways of their prevention.

At the same time, projects in this area could become a promising area of research and would contribute to the solution of an important managerial task. Actual research projects in the area of prevention of dangerous diseases demonstrate that often their circulation happens because people have a few information about ways of their prevention (Hooper, 2018) or have only distorted or even false knowledge about such topics (MacIntyre et al, 2020). Without adequate understanding of how and in which situations it is possible to become infected with such diseases, people do not take adequate protective measures and become infected more often. And young people are the most vulnerable social group. The relative rarity of health problems and the presence of pronounced hedonistic attitudes often make them careless about their health and increase their risks of being infected even higher than in the case of other social groups. And some researchers think, that raising the awareness of youth about relevant issues can reduce the risks of the spread of many diseases. That is why it is so important to find an instrument for informing young people about dangerous diseases. And if the question about possible impact of videoblogs on youth awareness of such issues was considered more often, it could stimulate solving of this complicated task.

So, we can assume that videoblogs can become one of those resources that can help to inform young people about various diseases and ways of their prevention. Videoblogs have a mass youth audience and are able to present important health information in a visual and interesting way. Therefore, it is likely that they can be effectively used for informing young people about relevant issues. However, now this is only an assumption that needs empirical verification.

Methodology

An empirical test of the formulated assumption was carried out by us in the course of our own sociological research, which was conducted at the Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg, Russia, in early 2020. This research project was focused on the analysis of the reactions of youth audience to the film about the spread of HIV (human immunodeficiency viruses) in Russian society, which was released by popular Russian videoblogger Yuri Dud in February 2020. The initial goal of this research was to check, if watching this film could stimulate any significant changes in young people's awareness about the HIV and motivate them to avoid real risks of being infected by this disease. Of course, this film of Yuri Dud was only a single case of using the videoblogs for broadcasting the information about diseases and ways of their prevention. So, our research was not intended for making any final conclusions about certain ways of using the videoblogs for informing youngsters about diseases their prevention. But the analysis of this case allowed to trace and to describe basic effects, which might happen with youth audience after watching the film about diseases and their prevention in a popular videoblog. And clarification and description of such effects became a purpose of the research.

The focus on the case of Yuri Dud's film about HIV was made for a number of reasons. Firstly, Yuri Dud not only relies on the interest of youth audience on his channel, but also becomes one of the most popular videobloggers on the Russian segment of the Internet (at the time of writing of this article, the number of subscribers to his YouTube channel exceeds 7 million people). Secondly, the HIV theme (as well as issues related to health in general) is not typical for Yuri Dud's channel: usually he demonstrates only interviews with famous politicians, actors and singers. Thirdly, the appearance of this film caused a great resonance in Russian society and stimulated interest in the topic of HIV: immediately after its release, the number of requests from Russian users for relevant topics in search systems increased many times. In other words, the focus on this case helped to understand basic changes in moods and demands of youth audience, which can happen after one of the most popular videobloggers speaks on his channel about an extremely dangerous disease.

The research was conducted among the youth of the city of Yekaterinburg, Russia and was performed as a sociological survey. This survey was based on the quota model of the sampling (the quota criterias included gender, age subgroup and the district of residence of the respondents). The total number of respondent included 214 representatives of the youth of the city in the age between 18 and 30. It is important to explain one important detail about the the research procedure. Having limited resources and facing significant organizational difficulties

due to the quarantine measures, we were forced to conduct a survey in remote form, using the resources of the GoogleForms platform. In difficult organizational conditions, the use of this resource made it possible to collect necessary data and to trace the main patterns of the influence of the film by Yuri Dud on the mood of the youth audience. Nevertheless, it is worth considering that the context and method of conducting the survey were quite specific. Therefore, the conclusions basing on the analysis of collected data require a cautious interpretation and need to be checked during further research projects.

During the research we tested three basic hypotheses. The first hypothesis: youngsters demonstrated significant interest in the film by Yuri Dud and most of them heard about it or even watched it. The second hypothesis: watching this film increased the real awareness of young people about HIV and its preventive measures. And the third hypothesis: those young people who watched the film by Yuri Dud began more motivated to make some particular steps in order to reduce the risk of being infected by this disease. So, in order to check these hypotheses, we focused the main questions of the questionnaire on the topic of watching the film of Yuri Dud and on the typical knowledge of respondents about HIV. Analyzing the answers to such questions and comparing the opinions of those who watched the film and those who didn't, we got an opportunity to check if these hypotheses were correct or not.

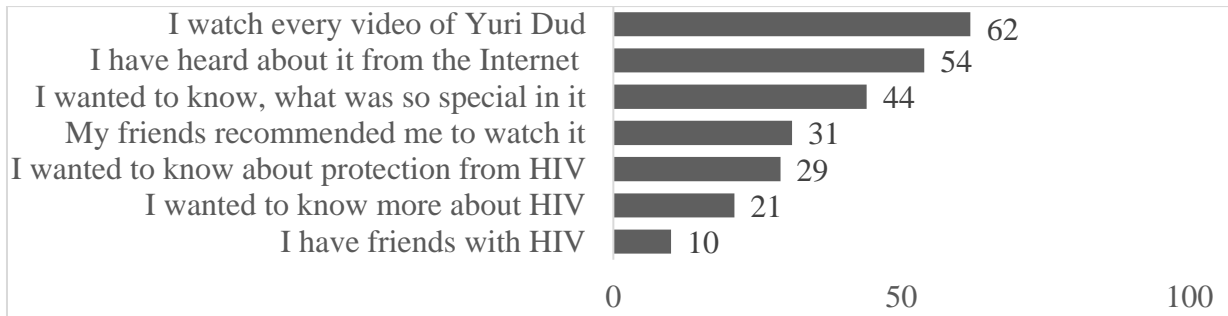
Results

In general, the analysis of the data allowed us to make some noteworthy conclusions about the influence of the film by Yuri Dud on the moods and attitudes of youth audience.

First of all, we can note that at least one of mentioned hypotheses seems to be correct: our analysis confirms, that the film by Yuri Dud aroused a considerable interest among the youth audience. 82.5% of respondents have heard about the release of this video and 70.5% watched it. The mentioned reasons for watching this video look remarkable. As can be seen in Figure 1, the respondents said that the dominant motive for watching the film was the interest to the person of the author. 80.5% of the respondents say that they watched the film simply because they were used to watching any new videos created by Yuri Dud. It can be seen that interest in the initial topic of HIV and the ways of its prevention were also mentioned among the reasons for watching the film. But it also can be seen, that these reasons were mentioned less often. In other words, we can say that the interest to the opinion of popular videoblogger had become a significant factor in the formation of interest in the film. In fact, many of the respondents directly confirm that they watched the film not because it raised important issues,

but because it was released by Yuri Dud. So, it looks obvious, that the release of the film indeed became a remarkable fact for young people and many of them heard about it.

Fig. 1: Motivation for watching the Yuri Dud’s video about HIV (% of number of respondents, more than one answer was possible)

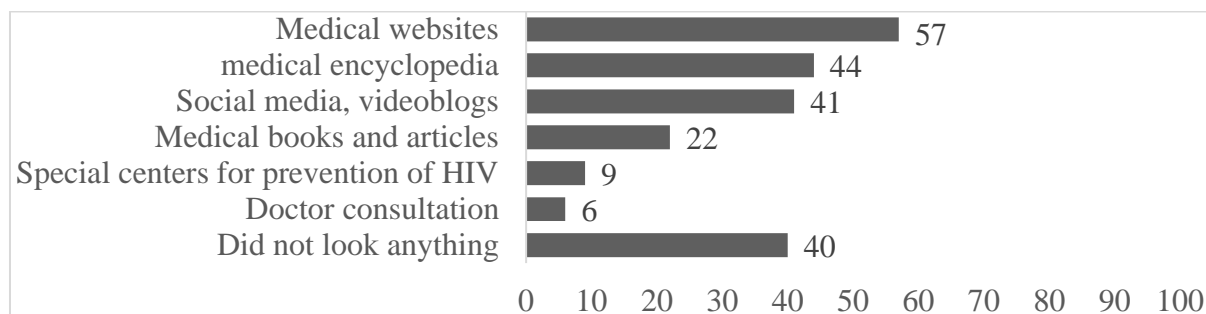


Source: Author’s data

The analysis demonstrated that the second hypothesis was also generally correct. The data of the survey confirms, that the film managed to tell youngsters facts about HIV that many of them did not know. The majority of those young people who watched the film (62.3%) said that they learned a lot about the essence of HIV and its manifestations from the film. It is also important that more than a half of those who watched the film noted that before watching it they did not know the real symptoms of HIV and the effects of its influence on the health in general. In addition, more than a third part of those who watched the film admit that previously they had no idea about ways of transmission of HIV and could not say anything about possible risks of infection. So, in general, we can confirm that the educational potential of the film turned out to be quite significant.

It is also important to mention one additional detail, which was also discovered during the analysis. Most of the respondents note that after watching the film they searched for more detailed information about HIV and its preventive measures. As can be seen from Figure 2, most of them did not look for such information from specialists, but from open sources (books or websites). However the presence of such interest looks indicative. In fact, it confirms that Yuri Dud not only raised a significant topic among the youth audience, but also stimulated some of its representatives to look for more information about it. So, the second hypothesis turned out to be correct as well as the first one: watching this film of Yuri Dud increased the awareness of young people about HIV and measures of its prevention.

Fig. 2: Sources, where respondents looked for more information about HIV after watching the video (% of number of respondents, more than one answer was possible)



Source: Author's data

However, the same can not be said about the third of mentioned hypothesis. At least our analysis didn't confirm, that those youngsters who watched the film began to demonstrate heightened motivation in making particular steps for reducing the risk of being infected by HIV. Partly it can be seen in the fact, that the influence of the film on the real behavior of the respondents was only temporary. Most of those who watched the film note that they searched for additional information about HIV only in the first days after watching and stopped doing it later. Moreover, as Table 1 demonstrates, at the moment of the research the majority of them did not do anything to avoid the risks, which were mentioned in the video of Yury Dud. It looks very remarkable, that more than 70% of those who watched the film did not change their real behavior in order to reduce the risk of infection.

Tab. 1: Opinions about risks of infection of HIV (% of number of respondents)

Opinion	% of answers
I don't think about risks and do not try to avoid them	74
I try to be careful to avoid the risks mentioned in the film	26

Source: author's own data

In fact, this result demonstrates that for most of them the film had become a source only for a short-term curiosity for a topic of HIV and failed to change their behavior. After the film went out of memory and the topic lost its relevance, many of them became indifferent to the questions of HIV and its prevention.

Further statistical analysis also confirmed, that watching the film did not have strong impact on real practices of behaviour of young people. The analysis demonstrates, that there is no significant difference in real behaviour between those young people who watched the film and those who didn't. As can be seen in Table 2, the answers to the relevant questions

from those young people who watched the film, and those who did not see it, were almost the same. And the meanings of correlation coefficients confirm, that the answers for all these questions did not depend on the watching the film of Yuri Dud.

Tab. 2: HIV behaviors for those who watched the film and those who did not

Parameter	Those, who watched the film		Those, who didn't watch the film		Correlation coefficient (Pearson)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Have you ever searched for information on how to avoid becoming infected with HIV in recent years?	43,33	56,67	40,63	59,38	0,079
Do you discuss HIV with your family or friends?	31,33	68,67	35,94	64,06	0,065
Do you take any special measures to protect yourself from HIV infection?	18,00	82,00	20,31	79,69	0,081
Have you ever refused from any behavior to protect yourself from being infected with HIV?	21,33	78,67	21,88	78,13	0,012
Have you ever thought you might be infected by HIV but not know about it?	27,33	72,67	29,69	70,31	0,069
Have you ever thought about having an HIV test?	43,33	56,67	40,63	59,38	0,099

Source: author's own data

So, let's go back to the initial hypotheses and make conclusions about their correctness. Our analysis allows us to conclude, that two of them were correct. We can confirm, that the first of our hypothesis was correct: youngsters demonstrated significant interest in the film by Yuri Dud and many of them preferred to watch it. We can also confirm, that the second of our hypothesis confirmed: this film allowed to inform young people about HIV and its preventive measures (at least it's true if we speak about the majority of them). But at the same the third of our initial hypotheses was not confirmed: during the analysis we did not find any strong evidences, that watching the video of Yuri Dud could motivate young people to make some particular steps in order to reduce the risk of being infected by HIV.

Of course, we must admit, that the nature of sociological data gathered during the research limited our resources for analysis. We could use specific statistical procedures only for testing of the third of initial hypotheses (because testing of this hypothesis required comparison of answers between two groups of respondents and evaluation of significance of differences between them). Testing of the first and the second hypotheses could be based only on interpretation of total number of young people, who had chosen concrete options of answer (because their testing required only an evaluation of typical trends of opinion and behavior).

But these limitations of analytical tools did not interfere us to understand the situation in general. Our research has shown, that most of young people demonstrated significant interest in the film of Yuri Dud about HIV and watching of it helped them to know many new information about HIV. But watching of this film did not stimulate any significant changes in

their behavior. Perhaps, this thesis can be described as the main conclusion of the empirical research.

Conclusion

The initial idea of this paper was that videoblogs can be used for informing young people about various diseases and measures of their prevention. The results of the research, which were described in the text of the paper, demonstrate a contradictory picture.

On the one hand, videoblogs can really be used to stimulate the interest of young people in the problems of the spread of dangerous diseases and ways of their prevention. The interest in the personality of the author of the videoblog and the wide public resonance around the topic can stimulate interest in such topics even among those young people who have never been interested in such problems.

On the other hand, the effect of using videoblogs in this area is probably limited and rather short-term. The interest of young people in the topic of disease and measures for its prevention can greatly increase immediately after the release of the video dedicated to it on the channel of the popular videoblogger. But this effect is temporary. Videoblogs stimulate only a one-time surge of young people's interest in relevant issues without changing their general indifference to the topic of health and measures to maintain it.

In general, it can be noted that potentially videoblogs can be used to inform young people about dangerous diseases and their preventive measures. However, as our analysis showed, without a full-fledged information campaign built on other tools for working with youth audiences, videoblogs can stimulate only a one-time surge of youth's interest in a topic that can quickly disappear in the future.

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Contact

Dmitry Rudenkin

Ural Federal University

Mira st., 19, Ekaterinburg, Russia, 620002

d.v.rudenkin@urfu.ru